

## **PUBLIC HEALTH SOLUTIONS District Health Department**

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**Board of Health**

**June 18, 2020**

***Board Members in Attendance:***

Larry Cerny	Dr. Josue Gutierrez	Janet Henning
Judy Henning	Dr. Bruce Kennedy	Stephanie Knight
Christy Lucking	Dave Norton	Timothy Pickering
Mark Schoenrock		

***Board Members Absent:***

Dave Bruning, John Hill

***Staff Members in Attendance:***

Kim Buser, Director; Sonya Williamson, Fiscal Administration; Debra L. Wendelin, Office Coordinator

***Call to Order.***

The virtual meeting was called to order at 8:30 a.m. by President Larry Cerny. Notice of the meeting was given in advance thereof by posting required by law.

***Approval of Agenda:***

Meeting agenda was reviewed. Motion to approve the agenda by Mark Schoenrock, seconded by Dave Norton. All ayes, motion #1 carried.

***Approval of Minutes:***

Larry Cerny asked Board of Health members for their acceptance in approving previous meeting minutes from January 16, 2020 and March 19, 2020 as one vote. Motion to approve both sets of minutes with one vote by Dr. Bruce Kennedy, seconded by Mark Schoenrock. All ayes, motion #2 carried.

***Financial Reports: Acceptance***

Sonya Williamson presented on the Financial Reports. Even with the crazy times we are experiencing with the COVID-19 pandemic it hasn't had a huge impact on our budget. Financially speaking the pandemic has been good for us with funds being reimbursed to us for COVID-19 related expenses.

On page 2 of the Custom Transaction Report (checks written) we issued check #15660 in the amount of \$8,626.20 to pay our Public Officials Policy premium. Due to a claim filed against us by the Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC) of Nebraska on behalf of a former employee we have seen an increase of \$3,100 in premium from last year. It will take approximately one to two years for this to drop back down.

Also note on Page 4 of the Custom Transaction Report that check #16001 is out of order. Sonya placed a print order for high security checks and used this first check as a draft to make sure it cleared our bank before continuing with the new checks.

Board of Health members moved directly into the FY 2020-21 budget.

Kim shared that next year's budget has been crazy for her and Sonya to put together. We have been very grateful for COVID-19 money through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Strength (CARES) Act. Our department is now able to install a new telephone system which has been needed for a long time. Staff who have been reassigned to COVID-19 activities have not had the time to devote to their grant work plans thereby relinquishing funds to compensate for their salary. These hours are being submitted to the CARES Act for reimbursement. The CARES Act funds are available to the end of December, 2020. We have been very prudent with department funds and projections indicate that with the CARES Act reimbursements we should recoup any losses we may have.

## Minutes of PHSDHD Board of Health Meeting

Our Healthy Families America (HFA) program has a huge expansion coming up. We will now cover families in all five of our counties where previously we represented Gage and Jefferson counties. This expansion includes a 1.5 supervisor position and up to four more home visitors to cover the additional counties. Tim Pickering asked for clarification as to the increase these additional hires will have on our employee health insurance premiums. Sonya shared that our employee insurance package (health, life and dental) costs approximately \$895.00 per month per employee. On March 1, 2020 we had a 17% increase in premiums. On average per employee over a twelve-month period that is approximately a \$70.00 increase per employee. The HFA program has their own self-contained budget. Whatever HFA gives to them they use. Employee insurance costs are not absorbed by our department.

Negotiations are now finalized with the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) on our indirect cost for this year. Our prior indirect rate of 19.77% ended on June 30, 2020. The direct rate effective July 1, 2020 is 20.20%. This makes for easy budget calculations as we don't need to justify and get pre-approval.

Kim has contracted with an epidemiologist through December 31, 2020 with her salary being paid through the CARES Act funds. Our department's Strategic Plan has shown the need for this position the last couple of years. Kate has been doing both epidemiology and emergency response and can't continue to do both. Kate will transition to strictly emergency response. The hope is that we can continue this position in the future.

The budget is currently in draft form at this time. BOH will approve the finalized budget at their July meeting.

Motion to approve the financial reports Larry Cerny, seconded by Janet Henning. All ayes, motion #3 carried.

### ***Grants and Contracts - Acceptance***

No discussion at this time.

### ***Directors Report:***

Kim asked for the BOH's official word on employee salary increases. Previous discussion included a recommendation of a 3% not to exceed 5% raise per employee based on their standard employee evaluation. Motion that we approve the employee salary increase recommendation as noted by Mark Schoenrock, seconded by Janet Henning. All ayes, motion #4 carried.

On May 1, 2020 available BOH members met with Kim to discuss whether our department should comply with requests from first responders to provide them with the name and address of COVID-19 patients. The decision was made that based on advice given to us and information available the BOH chose not to release this information to first responders. Kim felt we should make this an item in our official minutes and secure a vote on that decision. Motion that we make this decision a part of our official minutes by Mark Schoenrock, seconded by Tim Pickering. All ayes, motion #5 carried.

On June 12, 2020 the BOH Executive Committee met remotely with Kim to discuss public release of records. Our department has been under pressure from the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) to release to them any emails that contain specific key words. Four counties were targeted due in large to their meat-packing plants. The ACLU's main concern is the safety of plant workers. Kim contacted our department's legal firm, Cline, Williams, Wright, Johnson & Oldfather, who have been amazing in their response and guidance to these inquires. Our legal firm instructed Kim that no further response is needed, we have met all standards within our authority and have taken all necessary steps. Our BOH Executive Committee met with Kim and made the decision that we have done everything within our current authority and power to watch over the health and safety of all plant workers and the public in general, and no further response to the ACLU inquiries is warranted at this time in accordance with the legal advice of our attorneys.

## Minutes of PHS DHD Board of Health Meeting

Our legal team is working with Kim in the pursuit of authority resolutions to present to attorneys within our five-county service area giving PHS the authority to issue Direct Health Measures (DHM's). Kim will invoice legal fees to the CARES Act funds for reimbursement.

A claim filed by the EOC of Nebraska representing a former employee has been resolved. The ruling, found in our favor, stated there was no discrimination against the former employee on our part.

Kim has contracted with a part-time epidemiologist/data specialist who is working on a PHS dashboard for our website. A dashboard is currently being used by other local health departments or their website to organize, store and display information in one easy-to-access place. A draft copy of our dashboard should be to Kim this week. Another feature to be added to our website soon will be a COVID-19 risk dial. The COVID-19 risk dial provides a summary of current conditions within a community. The risk dial goes from red (stay home, take precautions) to green (very low viral transmission) and will be used when determining when local businesses can reopen safely.

When the outbreak of COVID-19 cases increased dramatically DHHS appointed a team of thirty people to make contact tracing calls for our department. This team is still operating for us. COVID-19 positive case numbers have been going down. We have had one small outbreak in Fillmore County. We had our first day with no positive cases last week. "Test Nebraska" National Guard events were held in Crete, Beatrice and Fairbury with only one positive case from the Jefferson County test site. With the National Guard relinquishing their involvement at the test sites, the State is contracting with local health providers to provide testing. At this time the State has contracted with Jefferson Community Health & Life and Dr. Josue Gutierrez (Saline Medical Specialties). Kim has recommended contracting with Beatrice Community Hospital and Health Center as another potential test location in the future.

Kim has been busy reviewing and approving requests submitted for reopening guidance and summer event planning. Governor Ricketts pushed up Phase III of his reopening plan to Monday, June 22, 2020. The requests she had previously contacted are now resubmitting new thoughts with the new expanded guidelines outlined in Phase III.

The 4<sup>th</sup> of July holiday falls on a Saturday this year giving staff Friday, July 3, as their paid holiday. Kim is extending the holiday to a four-day weekend by giving staff Monday, July 6, off as well.

We have received a \$20,000 CATCH consortium grant for integrated health care. Part of Johanna's time working with Dr. Josue Gutierrez in the Healthy Community Alliance clinic will be expended to this grant. A transition of .5 of Johanna's time has been transitioned as she was chosen as a supervisor for the HFA program based on her prior experience with the program. Our work on this grant will lay the groundwork for an environmental scan on substance abuse grant that is being made available through the University of Nebraska Medical Center (UNMC).

Our department was not awarded a \$100,000 Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) to conduct an environmental healthscan.

One positive takeaway from the COVID-19 pandemic is we have got to witness first hand how communities really feel about public health and our team. People have had to rely on us and now better understand the importance of public health. To capitalize on this opportunity, we are making a staff change. Jen will use this time to stay in front of our communities engaging with them that we have been here for you during this pandemic ... not let us show you how to move forward after the pandemic. The next big stressor for our department is planning for a COVID-19 vaccination that should be available early next year. Kate and Kim have been busy contemplating how this will actually look with mass vaccinations being done by local health departments.

Mark Schoenrock asked for Kim's thoughts on the future of Husker football. Kim feels Governor Ricketts will do whatever he can do to move forward with the upcoming season. Kim shared she could see capacity limits being enforced, but Governor Ricketts is going to move forward as quickly as possible to get people back to their normal lives.

## Minutes of **PHSDHD** Board of Health Meeting

Stephanie Knight and Fillmore County Hospital were "blown away" by all the help they received from PHS and are very grateful to have their support. The hospital has a whole new appreciation for PHS and public health.

Mark Schoenrock shared he has received many positive comments in the community about PHS and its employees. He commended staff for doing a great job. Mark prays for our health and strength as we face another day dealing with the pandemic.

Larry Cerny voiced his empathy towards long-term care facilities, staff and residents. Kim said when this pandemic first started that long-term care facilities and packing plants were not even on our radar. Goldcrest Retirement Center in Adams, Nebraska proved to be our first positive case, and, unfortunately, our first death. Of the six deaths in our five-county district, four were associated with long-term care facilities.

### ***Open Forum:***

Sonya was excited to see Geneva being featured on 1011 NOW "Our Town"! Stephanie Knight did an amazing job in her presentation!

### **The next Board of Health Meeting is Thursday, July 16, 2020 at 8:30 a.m. in Crete, NE.**

This meeting will be held "in person" at PHS. We will continue to follow social distancing guidelines and will move to Conference Room 2 to allow for more space. Masks will be required.

Being no further business, the meeting was declared adjourned.

Debra L. Wendelin  
Office Administrator

