

Meeting Minutes – January 25, 2021

Erie County Board of Health

Monday, January 25, 2021

Erie County Department of Health, 606 W. 2nd St., Erie, PA

Zoom Conference Call

5:00 pm

Present:

Richard A. Ortoski, DO, Chair

Carla Picardo, MD, MPH

Mary Jean Taylor, PhD

Absent:

Bishop Clifton McNair, III

In Attendance:

Melissa Lyon

Breanna Adams

Valerie Bukowski

Mark Matlock

Ellen Schauerma, County Council Liaison

R. Anthony Snow, MD

Tina Burling

- I. Call to Order - Dr. Ortoski, Board Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 5:06 p.m.
- II. Public Comments - none
- III. Presentations - none
- IV. Approval of Minutes - The Board of Health meeting minutes and division reports from November 2, 2020 were approved on a motion from M. J. Taylor and seconded by Dr. Picardo. All in favor.
- V. Board Updates
 - a. Division Reports - Formal Written Reports Provided in Advance of Board Meeting
 1. M. Lyon elaborated on ECDH's role in the COVID vaccination campaign.
 - a. Public health departments are required to have traditional emergency response plans, which include strategies for Points of Dispensing (PODs) so the general population could have access to vaccine (or other therapeutics).
 - i. Although phase 1A is not under ECDH's jurisdiction, Subsequent Additional Funds (SAF) were provided to ECDH through the Immunization grant to provide for immunization support, however ECDH does not have the capacity to provide services.
 - ii. LECOM has been subcontracted to provide vaccines to targeted populations similar to the influenza campaign.

A second SAF is coming later this month and LECOM is expected to be the winning bidder for another subcontract to provide mass immunizations in Erie County. ECDH will work with LECOM to plan the approach to mass vaccinations in Erie County. LECOM, as a registered vaccine provider, will be able to order vaccine and provide them in a public setting such as the Bayfront Convention Center. A third SAF is anticipated as well.

- iii. M. Lyon added that local hospital Chief Medical Officers reported that the hospitals have been placing orders but are not receiving the complete amount of what they ordered.
 - iv. She also clarified that Philadelphia is different in that it gets direct funding from HHS (for all public health activities), as they are one of the most populous cities in the country, and operates separately from those health departments that receive funding from the state.
2. M. Lyon further discussed the Reaccreditation site visit that occurred in December. The initial report from the Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB) indicated that every measure was met except for one. She commended the team on their amazing work, and reaccreditation will be the reward for such work. As a result of initial accreditation, significant improvements have been accomplished, such as participation in the State Association of County and City Health Officials (SACCHO), improvements in health equity by engaging the community, and the Blue Zones Project. Areas that still need improvement are access to healthcare, and the process for debating ethical issues, as there have not been enough ethical issues to debate. PHAB will make their final decision at their meeting in mid-February. The Board expressed their gratitude for ECDH's work on maintaining accreditation.
3. B. Adams discussed trends in incoming calls to the call center. She clarified that there are separate call center staff for clinical calls and business calls. The business call takers have been hired on full time to the COVID Response Team. Calls have changed a lot from business questions about positive cases/clinical inquiries and quarantine/isolation to vaccine questions. Callers continue to be agitated. A challenge that call takers face is that ECDH finds out information regarding changes from the state at the same time the public does. C. Berringer added that clinical call takers are also taking a lot of abuse from callers, but they are committed to their jobs. Staff have access to the Employee Assistance Program through Human Resources, which includes free counseling.

VI. Director's Report, presented by M. Lyon

- a. PADOH Leadership changes - Dr. Rachel Levine has been chosen as the Assistant Secretary for HHS in the Biden administration. Dr. Levine made many accomplishments in addressing barriers as the Secretary of Health for Pennsylvania and M. Lyon is looking forward to the work that will come out of HHS with her in a leadership role. Disinvestment in public health for decades has been exacerbated by the pandemic, providing an opportunity to address and invest in public health so that it is meaningful and sustainable. Dr. Levine had been very responsive and supportive in her role in Pennsylvania, and her leaving PADOH could potentially affect ECDH's relationship with and support from PADOH.

VII. Financial Report, presented by M. Matlock

- a. The county's budgeting process was discussed at great length.
 1. M. Matlock explained that ECDH's proposed 2021 budget experienced a large quantity of cuts by County Council, including overtime. He pointed out that ECDH's budget received more cuts than other departments. Many of these are from grant funded programs that are reimbursed by the state. He explained that grant funds are guaranteed and reimburse county expenses. This necessitates going back to council to ask for an ordinance to get those funds put back into the budget.
 2. The Board acknowledged that not only is this a blow to staff morale, but also the process to recover cuts is burdensome and time consuming when ECDH staff need to spend their time working on a pandemic. The Board supports M. Matlock meeting with E. Schauerman to discuss a process to prevent extra work.

VIII. Old Business

- a. New Board member recommendations - A work session was held on December 7, 2020, and two candidates were selected: Laura Lewis, PhD and Timothy Zieziula, JD. Both candidates are still interested in joining the Board.
 1. M. J. Taylor motioned that Laura Lewis, PhD and Timothy Zieziula, JD be presented to the County Executive and County Council for board membership and trustees of ECDH. The motion was seconded by Dr. Picardo. All in favor.

IX. New Business

- a. 10 (New) Essential Public Health Services - The Essential Public Health Services were created by APHA and serve as the foundation from which public health departments are structured and expected to do their work. The DeBeaumont Foundation, NACCHO, and APHA held focus groups

and surveys to review and update the essentials. The new 2020 revision further reflects 21st century public health. Some updates include a strong focus on continuous quality improvement, building and maintaining public health infrastructure, more robust policy development, updated verbiage for many of the essential services, and equity at the center of all the essential services.

<https://www.debeaumont.org/10-essential-services/>

b. COVID-19 Discussion

1. There is currently a heavy focus on vaccinations, which is an important part of the recovery process, but it is also important to continue testing as a means for containing this disease. Eighty to 85% of the population will need to be immunized before being "out of the pandemic". Efforts continue locally to increase testing and accomplish disease containment through traditional public health strategies, such as disease investigation/contact tracing and isolation/quarantine.
2. Nasal swab testing continues to be conducted at the community centers: Booker T. Washington Center on Tuesdays, JFK Center on Wednesdays, and MLK Center on Thursdays. Positive cases are still being identified, although the numbers have been decreasing. The importance of testing will continue to be publicized.
3. There are still open positions at ECDH, such as the Deputy Director, and clerical positions. Job openings have been shared with networks.
4. One open position posted is the Director of Data Analysis and Dissemination. V. Bukowski announced that she will be retiring in March after 18 years at ECDH. The Board thanked her for her service and wished her the best of luck.

X. Adjournment - The meeting was adjourned at 6:23 p.m. on a motion by Dr. Picardo and seconded by M. J. Taylor. All in favor.

Respectfully submitted,
Tina Burling, Recording Secretary