

## **Erie County Board of Health**

Monday, April 27, 2020

Erie County Department of Health, 606 W. 2<sup>nd</sup> St., Erie, PA

Zoom Conference Call

5:00 pm

### **Present:**

Richard A. Ortoski, DO,  
Chair  
Bishop Clifton McNair, III  
Carla Picardo, MD, MPH  
Mary Jean Taylor, PhD

### **In Attendance:**

Melissa Lyon  
Charlotte Berringer  
Nicole Bolash  
Valerie Bukowski  
David George  
Mark Matlock

Ellen Schauerman, County  
Council Liaison  
R. Anthony Snow, MD  
Tina Burling

1. Call to Order: Richard A. Ortoski, DO, Board Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 5:10 p.m.
2. Public Comments: none
3. Presentations: none
4. Approval of Minutes: The Board of Health meeting minutes and division reports from March 2, 2020 were approved on a motion from Bishop McNair seconded by MJ Taylor. All in favor.
5. Board Updates:
  - a. Division Reports - Formal Written Reports Provided in Advance of Board Meeting
    - i. Dr. Ortoski inquired as to why clients with newly reported HIV infections are being contacted by phone. C. Berringer explained that typically these clients have been notified over the phone and there hasn't been a need to do field investigation.
    - ii. V. Bukowski clarified that the figure in 1c under Data Analysis & Dissemination is in dollars.
    - iii. M. Lyon explained what the health educators are working on in the Incident Command System (ICS), regarding vulnerable populations in the community. It is known that across the country vulnerable populations have more poor health outcomes, and so we are taking a proactive approach locally. We have stood up an entire Health Equity branch in ICS focusing on education and information, linking with screening, and connecting to needed health services. A grant has been submitted to ECGRA regarding this project.
6. Director's Report - ECDH has been in COVID-19 response since the end of February, and work is happening very rapidly. ECDH is utilizing the ICS structure that is used in military response as it is a universal way to assign taskforces and activities.
  - a. Melissa Lyon is the Incident Commander. During the response, Nicole Bolash is the acting director of the health department. David George and Wendy Nielson are overseeing department operations. Karen Tobin has been brought back to assist with the response. Pam Brunner has also been brought back part-time to support Nicole Bolash. Tina Burling is supporting Melissa Lyon in the ICS. It was determined that this structure would help the health department function in the best way possible.

- i. All health department employees are considered essential. Employees have been taking measures to spread out in order to practice social distancing, such as reducing the number of employees in the building by working remotely.
      - ii. All staff are wearing multiple or different hats so that they are able to respond to what's going on in the community immediately.
    - b. Most of the staff are under the Operations Section in the ICS structure, which expands or contracts as needed.
      - i. The Environmental Branch works with businesses on compliance with guidelines.
      - ii. The Law Enforcement Branch is used periodically if additional assistance is needed with businesses or individuals with quarantine/isolation orders.
      - iii. The Isolation Branch assists anyone who can't quarantine or isolate in their home safely. This includes the homeless.
      - iv. The Public Health Branch consists of the Epi Team, Contact Tracers, and the Call Center, which handles high volumes of calls most days.
      - v. The Health Equity Branch is focusing on vulnerable populations, those most at risk
    - c. The Logistics Section is about obtaining supplies, particularly focusing on PPE.
    - d. The Finance Section tracks spending.
    - e. The Planning Section takes into account future event concerns and advises the Operations Section Chief.
    - f. M. Lyon commended the health department staff for working out of their comfort zones or being pushed to new levels to rally to do the work to protect our community. Dr. Ortoski expressed appreciation of the work of the health department. E. Schauerman stated that County Council is amazed at the job done by the health department.
7. Financial Report: Presented by Mark Matlock, Fiscal Officer
- a. The Total Health Department budget for 2020 was presented. M. Matlock pointed out that there have been some changes since January 1. The PHP bureau will be receiving COVID-19 funds. He also clarified that the Great Lakes Research Initiative will be renewed for the period of April 1, 2019 through March 31, 2022. The new bureau that was created for the CDC to Action grant is now fully funded as of a March ordinance that was approved by County Council.
8. Old Business - tabled until next meeting
9. New Business:
- a. Reschedule October 26 meeting: All in favor of rescheduling the meeting to November 2. T. Burling will send out an email to members to confirm the date change.
  - b. Election of BOH Vice-Chairperson
    - i. Carla Picardo, MD was unanimously elected to be the board Vice-Chairperson.
    - ii. There is now a vacant board member since C. Masters resigned in March. The Board will review the resumes of those who were interested during the previous vacancy, consider nominations, and begin the vetting process. The Board will make recommendations for the County Executive to appoint.
  - c. COVID-19 Discussion
    - i. V. Bukowski described the work being done by the Epi Team, such as contact tracing, and the challenges they have faced.
    - ii. C. Berringer answered an inquiry as to whether any healthcare workers have been involved with positive cases. She explained that some have been

- related to group home settings and some are housekeepers at acute care facilities.
- iii. M. Lyon discussed how it seems that people may be becoming complacent with the stay at home order as was evidenced by reports of Easter gatherings. While preparing to open the economy it is important to balance the economy with protecting people's lives. Our resources are limited, and we are concerned that opening the economy will lead to more cases.
  - iv. Testing Availability
    - 1) Both hospital systems have offsite testing facilities. Both require a doctor's order. Inpatient testing is available also.
    - 2) Med Express has limited ability to test based on symptoms.
    - 3) Rite-Aid - A doctor's order is not needed. There is no cost. This has opened up testing, but their contract is only through the end of May.
    - 4) Emergency Rooms can test, but patients should only go there if they need emergency care.
    - 5) C. Berringer explained antibody testing.
      - a) It is available. It is useful as a surveillance tool only for population study, but is useless for diagnosis. The entire population would have to be tested to provide useful info, and to bring added value to the response.
      - b) It is not known if the presence of an antibody gives protection.
      - c) It is not known if immune response would be as severe if one has the antibody and becomes reinfected. Not enough is known about the virus or immunity yet.
  - v. Discussed concerns about a spike in the number of positive cases as Erie County begins to open and more people come into contact with one another. Continue to stress that the only tools we have are social distancing, hygiene, and masking.
  - vi. Hospitals are now seeing people either not coming in or waiting too long to go to the hospital for things like a heart attack.
  - vii. The Health Equity branch has been conducting door to door campaigning, providing education and masks, to help all of the population to understand their role and what they can do. Documents on topics such as handwashing and social distancing have also been translated into other languages. Health literacy is considered when developing documents.
  - viii. It was asked if there has been an increase in abuse of opioids. M. Lyon could not confirm an increase in use, but did confirm there is a state-wide concern about an increase in overdoses.
  - ix. M. Lyon discussed the collection of demographic information, and information regarding pregnancy status. She explained that demographic information is collected at the time a person has their specimen collected and is reported with their lab result, not during the interview process when contacting those who have tested positive. Clarified that one question that is asked of confirmed cases is whether or not they are pregnant, and so far, two have answered yes, and one has miscarried.
  - x. M. Lyon drew attention to the Situational Report that is emailed to Board members daily with numbers and statistics. MJ Taylor added that she appreciates the daily reports.

10. Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 6:20 on a motion from Bishop McNair seconded by MJ Taylor. All in favor.

Respectfully submitted,  
Tina Burling, Recording Secretary

The next Board of Health meeting is scheduled for Monday, July 27, at 5:00 pm.