

Erie County Board of Health

Monday, October 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

Laura Lewis, PhD, LSW

Bishop Clifton McNair, III

Timothy Zieziula, JD

Also In Attendance:

Melissa Lyon

Nicole Bolash

Mark Matlock

Erin Mrenak

Ellen Schauerman

Tina Burling

Excused:

Mary Jean Taylor, PhD

- I. Call to Order - Dr. Ortoski, Board Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 5:03 p.m.
- II. Public Comments - None
- III. Presentations - None
- IV. Approval of Minutes - The Board of Health meeting minutes and division reports from July 26, 2021 were approved on a motion from Dr. Picardo and seconded by T. Zieziula. All in favor.
- V. Board Updates
 - a. Division Reports - Formal Written Reports Provided in Advance of Board Meeting
 1. Clarified that STD clinics continue to be held by appointment only. Services had to be reduced due to nursing staff shortage. The most critical aspects of the program continue. Clients are referred to Central Outreach and Adagio, who are able to accommodate.
 - a. Discussed providers' resistance to providing PrEP for HIV. M. Lyon will follow up with the Community Health Services division director and respond back to the Board of Health chair.
 2. M. Lyon highlighted that E. Mrenak transitioned from the role of Director of Strategy and Policy to the Deputy Director, overseeing ECDH operations and serving as Chief of Operations for the COVID-19 response.
 3. Restated that ECDH does not support the bill introduced to amend the Sewage Facilities Act. The amendment would allow for floor drains and foundation drainage to be connected to a treatment tank of a septic system, thereby shortening the longevity of the septic system

due to a larger quantity of water passing through the system that doesn't require treatment.

4. Clarified that the changing tables for men's rooms donated by Pampers are free of charge to businesses who will install and maintain them. The pilot program will begin by offering the changing tables to local restaurants for use in their men's rooms.
5. An additional Sewage Enforcement Officer (SEO) position was requested for the 2022 budget, but was removed by County Administration. The demand for sewage installation has increased significantly with the increase in construction and use of more robust and complicated systems. There is an increased need for system inspections and plan reviews, but the two current SEOs are unable to manage the increased workload. This new position request will be presented to County Council in 2022 as an ordinance separate from the budget process.

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

- a. Disease Prevention and Control Law (DPCL) - This law is used to prevent spread of infectious or communicable disease, such as with Tuberculosis, sexually transmitted diseases, meningitis, and infection control practices in businesses. The law provides for collaborative work on disease investigation/contact tracing and mitigation measures to be conducted appropriately to prevent spread of existing or emerging diseases.
 1. Bills have been introduced by Republican legislators in the PA House and Senate in response to mandated mitigation measures for the COVID-19 pandemic, such as masking in schools. The new legislation would prevent health departments from putting disease prevention measures into place, and a right to know law would affect individuals' confidentiality to make more information publicly accessible.
 2. M. Lyon has been holding discussions with both Democratic and Republican legislators on how the potential legislation could have an impact locally and statewide, and she is in constant contact with the PADOH.
 3. Board members may be called upon to speak to legislators about the impact of the legislation.
- b. Innovative Approaches to COVID-19, e.g. Community Health Workers (CHWs) - Funds were received from PADOH to build up the public health workforce.
 1. The funds would not have the best impact at ECDH as it already has a workforce plan and many vacancies. ECDH is subcontracting with school districts to hire CHWs to extend COVID-19 pandemic coordinator work.
 2. The long-term plan is to have CHWs embedded in each school district as an extension of the public health workforce. The CHW will be a

trusted community member to address public health issues that schools face.

3. This process is under public scrutiny as the funds total over half a million dollars and schools have already received CARES Act funds.
- c. COVID-19 Vaccinations Update, presented by E. Mrenak
1. Boosters for Pfizer, Moderna, and Johnson & Johnson are approved and available, as well as mix and match doses of manufacturer.
 2. For Pfizer and Moderna, a booster dose is recommended six months after completion of the two-dose series. For Johnson & Johnson, a booster is recommended two months after the first dose.
 3. Daily numbers increase exponentially for booster doses administered in Erie County.
 4. The Moderna booster is a half dose, but no there is no harm or detrimental effect if an individual gets a full dose.
 5. It is expected that tomorrow the FDA will authorize the Pfizer vaccine for emergency use in children aged five through 11, and then the CDC ACIP will vote next week.
- VII. Financial Report, presented by M. Matlock
- a. The 2022 budget was presented to County Council last week. ECDH's budget totals \$14.2 million. An additional \$4-5 million in grant funds are expected in early 2022.
 1. Attention was called to "Operating transfers in" on the budget report. This category shows the expenses that are not covered by grant funds and are covered by the county general fund. The amount totals \$1.4 million, which is about 13% of all ECDH dollars spent.
 2. The complete budget is available on the Erie County website.
- VIII. Old Business - None
- IX. New Business
- a. COVID-19 Discussion - No further discussion was held.
 - b. 2022 Meeting Dates - Board meetings will be held quarterly on the last Monday of January, April, July, and October at 5:00 p.m., remotely via the Zoom platform until further notice. A motion to accept the meeting dates for 2022 was made by Bishop McNair and seconded by L. Lewis. All in favor.
 - c. Board Member Reappointments - Dr. Ortoski confirmed the Board's request for reappointment of the following members whose terms expire December 31, 2021: Laura Lewis, PhD, LSW; Richard Ortoski, DO; and Carla Picardo, MD, MPH.
 - d. Open director positions (not on agenda)
 1. E. Mrenak transitioning to the Deputy Director position left the Director of Strategy & Policy vacant. There is a supervisor and one

employee in the division. Other positions have been approved, but hiring for the division is postponed for now.

2. The Director of Health Assessment and Preparedness position is vacant. The division supervisor is overseeing some staff and programming. The director's job qualifications are being modified from epidemiology to data analysis in order to manage and make data available to the public and community stake holders. The job will be posted soon.
 3. Additionally, many new managers at ECDH need mentored.
- e. ECDH Security (not on agenda) - The ECDH locations will be reviewed and inspected for safety and security by the County Safety Officer and a member of Homeland Security this Wednesday, October 27.
- X. Adjournment - The meeting was adjourned at 6:07 p.m. on a motion by T. Zieziula and seconded by Dr. Picardo. All in favor.

Respectfully Submitted,
Tina Burling, Recording Secretary

ECDH Division Reports - October 25, 2021

Administration Division Report: Melissa Lyon, Director

1. **Old Business/Current Projects:**
 - a. Staff morale and turnover continue to be a problem.
2. **New Business:**
 - a. Erin Mrenak has been promoted to Deputy Director. She had been hired as the Director of Public Health Strategy and Policy. She is currently serving as Deputy Director and Chief of Operations for the COVID response.
3. **Accreditation:**
 - a. Kate Ebersole completed the Strategic Planning Assessment. Thank you to those that participated in the assessment interviews. The consultant is currently working with the internal Steering Committee to set the priorities that will serve as the framework for the strategic work plans.
4. **Future Planning/Areas of Concern:**
 - a.

Community Health Services Division Report: Charlotte Berringer, Director

1. **Old Business/Current Projects:**
 - a. Division Director continues to participate in Ops meetings and PA DOH bi-weekly calls related to epi and COVID vaccine. This facilitates having a back-up position for media calls as needed and provides info to keep the Nurse Supervisors up-to-date for on-call.
2. **New Business:**
 - a. COVID call center remains active, as case counts and subsequent increase in COVID calls occurred before the scheduled transition to nursing intake on 8/16.
 - b. STD clinical services have been reduced to the level provided during COVID: Syphilis treatment and contact investigations, rare STD treatment as provider of last resort. This temporary change is related to staffing (next point below).
 - c. CHS is operating essentially in crisis staff mode related to communicable disease diagnosis, treatment and control. We met with staff and reviewed core public health functions while deciding on temporary program changes
 - Public Health Nurse (PHN)-Three are on long term medical leave. One may be back in November and another in December. The third is two weeks into her anticipated 12-week maternity leave. We also have two vacancies. These translate to a 25% reduction in staff PHNs.
 - Disease Intervention Specialist (DIS)-The STD DIS bid into another County job. She is the only person who routinely performs this work. STD/Communicable Disease PHNs are cross trained.
 - Clerical-Two out of six positions are vacant. Out of the four, two are very new to the County and still learning their roles. The third one has been with us for 10 months. We do have a 20 hour/week per diem retiree assisting with one of the vacancies.
3. **Accreditation:**
 - a. No news
4. **Future Planning/Areas of Concern:**

a.

Health Assessment and Preparedness Division Report: Director-vacant

1. Old Business/Current Projects:

a.

2. New Business:

- a. Currently updating the job description for the Division Director
- b. The Script to Scrap website launch was delayed due to the Director's departure. The HPQI Director is now working with the website developer to finalize the website content and launch by the end of October.
- c. The HPQI Director has started working on the Hidden in Plain Site (HIPS) virtual trailer tour. The roll out date for this has been pushed to December 2021.
- d. The AmeriCorps*VISTA decided to leave the program to pursue other professional interests. His last day with ECDH is 10/22.

3. Accreditation:

a.

4. Future Planning/Areas of Concern:

a.

Environmental Health Services Division Report: Breanna Adams, Director

1. Old Business/Current Projects:

- a. Follow up from November 2020: Senator Laughlin has introduced a bill to amend the Sewage Facilities Act. The amendment would allow for floor drains and foundation drainage to be connected to a treatment tank of a septic system.
<https://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/legis/PN/Public/btCheck.cfm?txtType=PDF&sessYr=2021&sessInd=0&billBody=S&billTyp=B&billNbr=0776&pn=0918>
 - i. We are not in favor of this bill and are following it closely with DEP for next steps.

2. New Business:

- a. An additional Sewage Enforcement Officer was requested during the budget season but was removed by Erie County Administration.
- b. We have enrolled in the FDA Voluntary Food Safety Standards program and are seeking funding through National Environmental Health Association grants to meet standards and plan for the future.
- c. Mosquito and Beach seasons have ended with nothing incredibly unusual occurring in either program.

3. Accreditation:

a.

4. Future Planning/Areas of Concern:

- a. We are starting to put additional focus on climate change. We are working closely with CRANE (Climate Resiliency Action Network of Erie) and will be seeking future grants.

Health Promotion & Quality Improvement Division Report: Nicole Bolash, Director

1. **Old Business/Current Projects:**
 - a. N/A
2. **New Business:**
 - a. The Tobacco Control Program is expected to receive an additional \$230,400 for programming related to increased tobacco cessation, mass media efforts and campaigns, and healthcare provider training throughout the NWPA region. These are funds that were not expended in prior fiscal years throughout the state.
 - b. The Health Equity Educator was asked by The PA Department of Health's Office of Health Equity to present at its Virtual Health Equity Conference in November.
 - c. The Safe and Healthy Communities program is working with Duda Digital and the Food Policy Advisory Council (FPAC) on the creation of a farmer's market website.
 - d. The Pampers company has pledged to give 5000 changing tables to men's restrooms throughout the country, free of charge, as a way to address what it calls "changing table inequality". ECDH's **IDEAS Team** has picked up this project and will be ordering 10-20 changing tables that will be stored at the warehouse while a promotional plan for distribution is established. Additional information about the program can be found at the links below.
<https://www.pampers.com/en-us/about-us/sustainability/article/changing-tables>
<https://richlandhealth.org/diapers/>
3. **Accreditation:**
 - a. Performance Management planning on hold until after the strategic plan is complete.
4. **Future Planning/Areas of Concern:**
 - a. Staffing-unable to fill clerical/technical vacancies.

Public Health Strategy & Policy Division Report: Director-Vacant

1. **Old Business/Current Projects:**
 - a. Division continues to work within the COVID response team to establish Strategy and Planning for testing/vaccine efforts.
2. **New Business:**
 - a. Division Director position is vacant.
3. **Accreditation:**
 - a. n/a
4. **Future Planning/Areas of Concern:**
 - a. n/a