

EL PASO COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH
November 10, 2021
BOARD OF HEALTH MINUTES

The El Paso County Board of Health held an Announced Special Meeting virtually through Microsoft Teams on Wednesday, November 10, 2021. Nine Board of Health members attended virtually through Microsoft Teams, and none were absent.

Dr. James Terbush, President, called the meeting to order at 2:01 pm.

Board of Health Members Present:

Dr. James Terbush, President
Doris Ralston, Vice President
Commissioner Cami Bremer-
Ted Collas-
Councilmember Dave Donelson
Councilmember Sam Gieck
Commissioner Longinos Gonzalez, Jr.
Kari Kilroy
Dr. Richard Vu

Directors Present:

Susan Wheelan, Director
DeAnn Ryberg, Deputy Director
Dr. Robin Johnson
Carolyn Gery, Development Officer
Heather Graves, Community Health Promotion Director
Brenda Heimbach, Health Services Director
Michelle Beyrle, Public Health Information Officer
Jared Verner, Deputy Public Health Information Officer

Others Present:

Vicki Bennett	Dee Lambert	Diana May	Melissa Seidenberg
Kelsey Tillema	Paula Linhares		

Two American Sign Language Interpreters from Sign Language Network
Over Fifty-five members of the Public on Teams.

Approval of Agenda

MOVED: by Doris Ralston, seconded by Ted Collas to approve the agenda.
MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Resolution

Dr. Terbush stated a resolution is being presented today in support of vaccinations. This resolution does not speak in any way to vaccine mandates. Due to the nature of the virtual meeting, he indicated his intent to call on Board members individually to ensure each has an opportunity to comment on the resolution. Over 200 members of the public had indicated interest in commenting during the Public Comment portion of the meeting. Due to this high number, each Public Comment was limited to one minute in length, as approved by legal counsel. Dr. Terbush urged continued professionalism in Public Comments consistently seen by the Board of Health in the past.

Dr. Terbush stated that vaccines are being rolled out to the 5-11 year-old age group at this time and Director Wheelan will be providing an update. With many tools in our toolkit, vaccines are one of the best tools to navigate the pandemic. He stated that some age groups benefit more from vaccination, but all age groups benefit to some degree. The vaccine is most helpful for seniors but having children vaccinated prevents serious disease among unvaccinated seniors as well. During pandemic planning in past years prior to COVID-19, discussions of layered mitigation strategies had been documented into plans and it was clear investment into vaccinations was key to pandemic response. A strong public reaction against vaccinations was not anticipated and has decreased the use of this prevention measure. The Board of Health therefore determined to come forward with a resolution statement in full support of vaccines to align with the timing of approval of vaccines for the 5–11 year-old age group.

Commissioner Gonzalez stated that information had been released through media sources indicating today's meeting was advocating vaccination mandates. He reiterated Dr. Terbush's prior statement that this is not the case. He articulated his support of vaccination among the public while he opposes state and federal vaccine mandates. He recommended a change to the title of the resolution to note it is a "Resolution in Support of Voluntary COVID-19 Vaccinations." He also recommended the "therefore" paragraph referencing governing boards and other municipalities within El Paso County be changed or deleted.

Councilmember Dave Donelson stated he would like to move to table the resolution until the Board's next regularly scheduled meeting to allow for more time for review as he presently would not be able to approve the resolution. He stated he was unaware of the Board issuing any such statement in support of a specific medical treatment and he stated concerns with that action at this time. He believes the decision to vaccinate is for individuals or parents of individuals and their physicians. He stated he is interested in hearing comments from other Board members and members of the public before voting. He added that he is not certain it is clearly established for the younger age groups that the risk of becoming ill with COVID-19 is more significant than the risk of receiving the vaccine. Dr. Terbush acknowledged his recommendation and stated the chair will hold the right to ask for a motion once all Board members have had opportunity to comment.

Councilmember Sam Gieck stated his agreement with Commissioner Gonzalez that vaccination is a recommendation, not a mandate. He also stated this will be his final meeting as a Board Member as he is term-limited. He appreciates all that has been done by Public Health for the City of Fountain.

Commissioner Cami Bremer thanked members of the public who have taken interest and time to attend this meeting. She stated over the last 21 months there has been much misinformation and confusion resulting in substantial damage to how we work together in our community. Today rumors were started that asserted the local Board of Health is imposing a mandate for vaccines and this is not true. The Board is not and will not be issuing a mandate for vaccines and she foresees no change to that position by this Board. She asks members of the public to continue to bring their concerns to their local, state, and federal elected officials, and asks citizens to also perform their own research to reduce the conveyance of misinformation as what occurred today. Commissioner Bremer clarified she is against vaccine mandates and has cast a vote declaring such with the Board of County Commissioners. She added we also have an effective tool against a Public Health pandemic. Today's resolution is one of supporting the vaccines as one of the most effective tools available to Public Health. She encourages individuals to consult with their own healthcare providers in determining what is best for them and their families.

Kari Kilroy stated she is sorry to see Councilmember Gieck leave the Board and she has appreciated his work. She commented on Commissioner Gonzalez's statement regarding change or deletion of the "therefore" statement

referencing governing Boards of El Paso County, and she expressed flexibility on removal of that paragraph. She stated agreement with statements made by Commissioner Bremer and stated vaccines are the best way we know at this time in our history to slow the pandemic.

Doris Ralston stated agreement with amending the resolution as suggested and added Public Health is about people as a whole and one of the foundational tools of Public Health is prevention. She agreed that vaccines are a matter of choice, not mandate, and hopes the resolution is something all Board members may support to advocate for prevention and the health of the community.

Dr. Richard Vu stated the COVID-19 vaccine is safe, effective, and saves lives, therefore he supports the resolution and will advocate for the vaccine. Additionally, he stated to effectively protect the health of the community it is important to protect the cohesiveness and the unity of the Board of Health.

Ted Collas shared the resolution is a statement about compassion and the Board of Health wants to advocate for what is in the best interest of the community. The Board is advocating that people use the tools available to them to keep from getting sick and prevent those they care about from getting sick. He feels it is not a politically-motivated statement, but one that expresses caring for the community.

Director Wheelan stated that Public Health and the Pikes Peak Office of Emergency Management have been steadily focused on building infrastructure to provide easy access and reduce barriers to prevention tools like vaccines and treatments such as monoclonal antibody treatments and the antiviral pill when it becomes available. First vaccine supplies became available in mid-December 2020 and the team advocated heavily to receive appropriate supplies. She indicated collaborations have been forged within the El Paso County and Colorado Springs Vaccine Consortium to provided access for citizens to make informed decision so those who choose to get vaccines may receive vaccines. We received Emergency Use Authorization on October 29 from the FDA for the use of Pfizer BioNtech COVID-19 vaccine for children ages 5-11. Public Health was poised to offer the vaccine for parents of children who wanted them to get vaccinated. Clinics were offered alongside Children's Hospital and other medical providers over the past weekend. Over 28,000 doses have been provided to pediatric population (ages 5-17). To date, 883,700 doses of vaccine have been provided to the El Paso County population. Director Wheelan has asked Dr. DiStefano, Medical Director from Children's Hospital, to share his expertise regarding vaccination trials for youth in the 5-11 age group.

Dr. DiStefano stated that Children's Hospital of Colorado has been a strong partner through the pandemic, not only treating and healing children but also equipping officials and families with information to make the best decisions they can. Children's was one of 81 clinical trial sites across the U.S., Spain, Finland, and Poland and was the largest Pfizer trial site for those aged 5-11. The trial began at the Anschutz campus during the summer and parents of more than 5,000 Coloradans applied to be a part of the study. About 252 individuals participated. This made up roughly 10% of those participating in the trial. One of the hospital's goals was to mirror the diversity of the state's children and include children with varying medical conditions such as cystic fibrosis and autism. Dr. DiStefano stated the team and the kids involved have done amazing things and he could not be prouder of their contributions. Fortunately, most children are not severely sickened by COVID-19, but children are impacted, specifically with the spread of the Delta variant. As a pediatric ER doctor, as well as the Chief Medical Officer at Children's, he has treated numerous children and families who have come into the department with trouble breathing and other complications from COVID-19 infection. More than 2,000 children have been hospitalized in Children's system since the beginning of the pandemic. Early in the pandemic children and adolescents under age 18 comprised less than 5% of the infections. Now with the spread of the Delta variant they comprise 25% of all infections. Children aged 5-11 now account for 50% of the pediatric infections. He stated the vaccine was nearly 91% effective in preventing COVID-19 infections in children and was safe. There were no serious side effects seen in the vaccine recipients and local and more generalized reactions were similar to those in older adolescents. Dr. DiStefano indicated it is important for our community to know that hospitals across communities in Colorado, including Children's are unusually busy at this time. Since before school started, high numbers of children were being seen with respiratory illness caused not only by COVID-19, but other more common viruses, such as RSV, along with children experiencing mental health crises. Influenza is anticipated to place even more stress on the hospital systems. He urges everyone to get their child

vaccinated for COVID-19, flu, and regularly scheduled vaccines. Children's is excited to partner and work closely with local and state officials to vaccinate as many children as they can ahead of the holiday season. He encouraged parents with questions or concerns to speak with their child's pediatrician or family provider about the vaccines to help make the best decisions they can for their family. He stated multiple patient resources regarding safety and efficacy of vaccines are also available at childrenscolorado.org, including frequently asked questions.

Councilmember Donelson asked Dr. DiStefano if he could address myocarditis in children who had been vaccinated. Dr. DiStefano stated it happens in rare cases and he has seen more instances of myocarditis secondary to MIS-C (Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome in Children) than he has as secondary to vaccination. Councilmember Donelson asked about deaths in the under 18 age group and Dr. DiStefano stated that the mortality in COVID-19 for those under 18 has not been high, but the morbidity, or secondary complications resulting from COVID-19 infections, has been significant.

Dr. Vu asked Dr. DiStefano approximately how many children have been admitted to Children's Hospital because of side effects of a COVID-19 vaccine. Dr. DiStefano stated he does not have those formalized numbers, but as Chief Medical Officer he normally would hear of such instances and he has not heard of any cases.

Dr. Terbush requested the position of each Board member with regards to the Resolution, indicating three options as: 1) pass the resolution as it stands, 2) recommend a modification, and 3) reject the resolution.

Commissioner Gonzalez reiterated his previous suggestions to amend the resolution to include the word "voluntary" in the title and to change or omit the "therefore" paragraph referencing governing boards and other municipalities within El Paso County. Commissioner Gonzalez asked for some clarifications between state and local data around hospitalization strain. He also seeks data regarding local breakthrough cases comparing cases of vaccinated versus natural immunity individuals.

Ted Collas stated he was in support of adding the word "voluntary" to the document title. He also agreed to removal of the paragraph referencing other governing bodies. Otherwise, he supports the resolution.

Councilmember Sam Gieck stated he agrees with the comments made by Ted Collas and supports the resolution with those change recommendations.

Councilmember Dave Donelson asked if Public Comment would be occurring prior to the Board voting on the resolution. Dr. Terbush indicated the approved Agenda noted the vote to occur ahead of the Public Comment. Councilmember Donelson stated he wished to hear the comments of the public and take time to process the resolution prior to having the ability to vote.

Commissioner Bremer concurs with Councilmember Donelson that we should have Public Comment before Board members cast votes; however, as there might be Public Comment on items unrelated to the resolution, she proposed a Public Comment occur prior to the vote, then another may be held on items not scheduled on the agenda.

Doris Ralston stated in the past Public Comment has not been held prior to voting on resolutions.

Dr. Terbush asked the Board members to vote if they wished for public comment before the resolution vote, solely after, or if they were neutral. A roll call vote was taken:

Commissioner Longinos Gonzalez, Jr. – before

Ted Collas- before

Dr. Richard Vu- neutral

Doris Ralston- after

Kari Kilroy – before

Councilmember Sam Gieck – before
Councilmember Dave Donelson – before
Commissioner Cami Bremer- before

A majority of the Board voted Public Comment be held prior to a resolution vote.

Dr. Terbush read [the Resolution in Support of Vaccinations](#).

Dr. Terbush asked members of the public commenting to identify themselves, if they are with a group, and if they are a resident of El Paso County. Fifty-five members of the public provided comment at the meeting, many expressing concern against a vaccine mandate in El Paso County. Those who commented were: Stacy Adair, Mary Louise Fiddler, Marilyn Leal, Judy Dunfield, Jinae Winkleman, Dr. Nathaniel Brady, Jerry Forte, Barry Farah, Felicia Miller, Dennis Cole, Kimberly Hershey, Laurel Anne, Jim Linna, Wendy Selvig, Sharon Ballinger, Chaim Goldman, Daniel Fenlason, Maddie Fenlason, Holly Lucken, Steve Young, Denise Kmilek, Robin Rock, Jeany Rush, Andrea Roberson, Charity McPike, Tammy Klimek, Dr. Susan Bard, Angela Greene, Tonya Regan, Dr. Kent Roberson, Kathy Cleary (in person), Jennifer Duhan (in person), Barbara Gilson (in person), Todd Watkins, Julie Lee, Naomi Kennedy, Jennifer Hudson, Cassia Barney, T., Tom Kirk, J. Inman, Nick Yaksich, Annie (did not state last name), Starla Mercer, David Winnie, April (did not state last name), Patricia (did not state last name), Anna Mitchell, Sally (did not state last name), Patty Bilberry, Joel Lusby, Jessie Rosado Floyd, Ed Brady, John Heimsoth.

Name misspelling may occur above as the meeting was virtual and there was no option for sign-ins.

Dr. Terbush stated the resolution as written is not ready for passing. Multiple recommendations for change have been made and he would entertain a motion to table the resolution. The Board would then work on it further.

MOVED: by Dave Donelson, seconded by Commissioner Longinos Gonzalez to table the Resolution in Support of COVID-19 Vaccinations.

Kari Kilroy asked that there be discussion by the Board. She stated that given Board member comments, she supports adding the word “voluntary” into the title of the resolution and removing the second “therefore” paragraph.

Ted Collas drafted an additional “whereas” bullet during the meeting indicating it is the responsibility of individuals to make decisions around vaccination with healthcare providers.

Dr. Terbush asked that Board members collect what suggestions they have for the resolution and provide them to him with potential for a future work session.

Commissioner Bremer concurs with Dave Donelson that we need to ensure the resolution does not support mandates and she agreed with a suggestion of a whereas statement shared by a constituent. She documented the statement and will share it with the group to be considered for inclusion.

Dr. Terbush asked for a roll call vote on the motion:

Commissioner Longinos Gonzalez, Jr. – aye
Commissioner Cami Bremer- aye
Councilmember Sam Gieck – aye

Ted Collas- aye
Councilmember Dave Donelson – aye
Kari Kilroy – aye
Doris Ralston- not present
Dr. Richard Vu- aye
Dr. Terbush- aye

MOTION CARRIED.

Public Comment on items not on the agenda

None

Vicki Bennett, Administrative Manager, stated for the record that the agenda for this Special Meeting was posted on the El Paso County Public Health and the El Paso County websites on Thursday, November 4, in accordance with the Board of Health By-Laws, section 1.3.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:28 pm

Next Board of Health meeting

The next Board of Health meeting will be **Wednesday, December 15, 2021, 8:30 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.**, located in Centennial Hall Auditorium, 200 S Cascade Avenue.

10 November, 2021- BOH/MSeidenberg