

EL PASO COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH

May 25, 2022

BOARD OF HEALTH MINUTES

The El Paso County Board of Health met at the Citizens Service Center at 1675 W. Garden of the Gods Road, Colorado Springs, Colorado, on May 25, 2022. Seven Board of Health members were physically present. Two were absent.

Dr. James Terbush, President, called the meeting to order at 8:31 a.m.

Board of Health Member Roll Call:

Present:

Dr. James Terbush, President
Councilmember Dave Donelson
Commissioner Longinos Gonzalez, Jr.
Dr. Richard Vu
Doris Ralston, Vice President
Trustee Ron Stephens
General Jack Briggs

Absent:

Ted Collas
Commissioner Cami Bremer

Directors and Officers Present:

Susan Wheelan, Public Health Director
DeAnn Ryberg, Public Health Deputy Director
Dr. Christopher Urbina, Interim Medical Director
Carolyn Gery, Development Officer
Heather Graves, Community Health Promotion Division Director
Brenda Heimbach, Health Services Division Director
Michelle Beyrle, Public Health Information Officer
Jared Verner, Deputy Public Health Information Officer

Others Present at Regular Session:

Vicki Bennett	Teresa Bassma	Marigny Klaber	Dee Lambert
Jennifer Mariano	Samantha Montmeny	Andy Phelps	Lisa Powell
Mary Ritchie	Melissa Seidenberg	Erin Thompson	Kelsey Tillema
Nora Todd	Fadi Youkhana	Mark Wester	Haley Zachary

Two American Sign Language Interpreters from Sign Language Network

Approval of Agenda

MOVED: by Doris Ralston, seconded by Commissioner Gonzalez to approve the agenda for the May 25, 2022 Board of Health meeting.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Board of Health Comments

Dr. Terbush welcomed General Jack Briggs, President and CEO of Springs Rescue Mission, as the newest member of the Board of Health. General Briggs represents the non-profit, private, or public education sector in his seat on the Board. He is a member of El Paso County Criminal Justice Coordinating Council-Behavioral Health and Legislative Affairs Committee and the Colorado Health Partnership Co-Occurring Disorder Working Group. He is a retired Air Force General who has also recently worked at New York University, serving as the Vice President of Global Resiliency and Security.

General Briggs stated he is humbled by the opportunity to work on the Board of Health and engage with the staff whose work contributes significantly to the sense of healthy living so valued in the region.

Dr. Terbush stated action items will be moved to the front of the meeting agenda to accommodate those who wish to attend the Air Force Academy Graduation. Additionally, the June Board Meeting will be in room 1019 due to unavailability of room 1017 at the Citizens Service Center on that date.

Commissioner Gonzalez expressed prayers and condolences for those who passed away in a Texas shooting May 24. He also welcomed General Briggs to the Board of Health. He was very pleased at the outstanding pool of candidates that came forward for the role and he hopes those candidates continue to look for future engagement opportunities with the Board or committees in the city or county.

Approval of Minutes

Dr. Terbush entertained a motion to approve the April 27, 2022 Board of Health Meeting minutes.

MOVED: by Councilmember Donelson, seconded by General Briggs to ratify the minutes from the April 27, 2022 Board of Health meeting.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Finance and Budget

Samantha Montmeny, Financial Services Budget Supervisor, provided the April 2022 financial summary. Revenues reflect below budget due to *Program Specific Grants* and *Licenses, Fees, and Permits* presently remaining low. *Program Specific Grants* are received through reimbursements for staffing expenses so position vacancies cause that line item to reflect low. A new Environmental Health division system has experienced delays in invoice processing causing low revenue in the category of *Licenses, Fees, and Permits*. The delay is resolving and *License, Fees, and Permits* numbers should correct closer to budgeted figures by June's financial summary report. Expenditures continue below budget due to personnel vacancies which is a continued challenge for Public Health in addition to other area agencies. Overall, Financial Services has no concerns.

Ron Stephens asked what kinds of reserves Public Health keeps on hand.

Director Wheelan stated the Board policy is to maintain three months of operating costs in reserves with a goal of 18%-20% of the annual budget. Samantha highlighted the Fund Balance noted on the financial summary is the 18%-20% reserve amount, which is presently slightly high.

Four contracts were presented for Board of Health approval:

1. Immunization Core Services Funding

2. Nurse Home Visiting Program
3. Public Health Core Funding
4. Shared Risk and Protective Factors Approach to Substance Misuse Prevention

The Immunizations Core Services Funding and the Nurse Home Visiting Program Contracts are slightly increasing in funding over prior years. The Public Health Core Services Funding Contract is funded based on county population plus additional core funding through 2024 due to the passage of [SB21-243](#). The Shared Risk and Protective Factors Approach to Substance Misuse Prevention contract amount remains unchanged in funding since last year.

Councilmember Donelson asked how the success of the Nurse Home Visiting Program is measured. Brenda Heimbach, Health Services Division Director, shared the program is evidence-based and shows very positive outcomes for first-time low-income moms and their infants up to age two. Doris Ralston commented that the program is demonstrative of upstream, prevention-oriented work that helps children become healthy and productive citizens. Brenda stated more information regarding the program and its measures could be shared at a future meeting.

General Briggs asked how reductions in risk factors, improvements in protective factors, and building of public support are measured with respect to the Shared Risk and Protective Factors Approach to Substance Misuse Prevention contract. Heather Graves, Community Health Promotion Division Director, stated she and the Communities That Care (CTC) model can share collected data at a future Board meeting. Director Wheelan stated some of the challenge in prevention is that long-term investment in community collaboration is required before sustainable results are evident.

Dr. Terbush asked for a motion to approve the contracts

MOVED: by Doris Ralston seconded by Dr. Vu to approve all four contracts.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Public Health Champion Awards

Director Wheelan offered congratulations to the Air Force Academy Cadets graduating today and recognized General Briggs and Commissioner Gonzalez as Air Force Academy alumni.

Four partners were recognized for making the Homeless Quarantine and Isolation Shelter possible throughout the COVID-19 pandemic: Community Health Partnership, the City of Colorado Springs, Springs Rescue Mission, and ComCor. Representing their organizations are Jennifer Mariano, Director of Programs for Community Health Partnership, Andy Phelps, Homelessness Prevention and Response Coordinator for the City of Colorado Springs, General Jack Briggs, President and CEO of Springs Rescue Mission, and Mark Wester, Executive Director of ComCor. The Pikes Peak Regional Office of Emergency Management and the Public Health Emergency Preparedness and Response team also contributed to this effort.

Individuals experiencing homelessness are among those that faced and continue to face the most severe consequences of COVID-19. In the early period of the pandemic, it was noted that people experiencing homelessness would have difficulty following the public health recommendations - to have access to clean masks, practice frequent handwashing and observe social distancing. It would also be difficult to have ill individuals in the shelters without exposing others to COVID-19.

The Homeless Quarantine and Isolation Shelter began operating at the Colorado Springs City Auditorium on April 5, 2020. Community Health Partnership, the City of Colorado Springs and Springs Rescue Mission

spearheaded the efforts to open the shelter in just a matter of weeks. Overcoming obstacles and following this project through for 14 months was truly a testament to the steadfast dedication these individuals and organizations have for this population.

The shelter at the City Auditorium remained in operation until June 2021, when these services transitioned to a smaller facility. In August of 2021 it became apparent that the needs for quarantine and isolation surpassed the current capacity, and Andy Phelps worked with Mark Wester of ComCor to stand up City Hope, which remains in operation. Previous planning and community partnerships allowed for this facility to open within days of the identification of need. City Hope can currently accommodate up to 100 residents in quarantine or isolation and Comcor provides the physical facility, meals, and day to day operations.

Dynamics changed very quickly throughout the pandemic and this group worked tirelessly to ensure the homeless population would be protected. It is difficult to quantify exactly how many infections were prevented, but the efforts of this group prevented increased infection which would have impacted the community and the healthcare infrastructure. Director Wheelan thanked these organizations for their work and recognized them as Public Health Champions.

Jennifer Mariano, Andy Phelps, Mark Wester, and General Briggs each thanked the Board for the recognition and thanked the many team members and community leaders involved in this important work.

Public Comment on Items not Scheduled on the Agenda

No comments presented.

Director's Report

Director Wheelan introduced Brenda Heimbach, Health Services Director, to share information regarding the mobile Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) services and how WIC is assisting families during the baby formula shortage. The WIC program is an evidence-based program of educators and registered dietitians providing nutrition education and issuing nutritional benefits for low-income pregnant women, postpartum women, and children to age five. There is also a breastfeeding peer counselor program which has received U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Awards of Excellence in 2018 and 2021 for the impacts made in assisting women with beginning and continuing breastfeeding. There is also a breast pump loan program which helps women increase breast milk quantities. WIC has been involved in helping families respond to the current formula shortage. Many families are frustrated and anxious about the difficulty in finding formula for their babies, and national and local efforts are important supports to help families manage the situation. The shortage was caused by a combination of supply chain issues and Abbott Nutrition's voluntary recall and subsequent plant closing in Michigan. Other manufacturers have increased formula production in response. Many stores have placed limits on quantities of formula to be purchased in an effort to reduce panic-buying, but this creates unintended consequence of increasing hardship on lower income households as they must return to stores repeatedly. The FDA stated on May 16 they would increase flexibility and prioritize manufacturers to quickly evaluate if existing products can be used safely and meet nutritional needs. Abbott Nutrition and the FDA are working to reopen the Michigan plant, which should take an estimated 8-10 weeks for new products to reach consumers.

Parents are encouraged to work with healthcare providers to see what can be used for their infants. WIC is asking providers to share multiple formula options with families so they may take advantage of whichever product is available. Homemade formulas and diluted formulas should not be used per the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP). The AAP's [healthychildren.org](https://www.healthychildren.org) website contains helpful information regarding options for families. WIC clients can contact the WIC office and staff will work to connect them to locations where formula is available.

Director Wheelan stated the Colorado Department of Public Health (CDPHE) is working with community providers and have asked that they be the primary media contact for the statewide shortage. EPCPH has about 13,000 WIC clients and breastfeeding has always been heavily promoted, though that option is not feasible for everyone. There have been numerous calls to Public Health for help and WIC, as well as other Public Health programs that interact with families, have been aggressively working to help clients locate appropriate formulas.

Dr. Vu reiterated the importance of families consulting with providers on an individual level to address their needs. Director Wheelan stated Public Health will continue to work with CDPHE to be proactive and link to pertinent communication as possible.

Brenda stated there are three WIC clinics in El Paso County. Telehealth has been provided over the last couple of years and many have found that service useful. Mobile services are now available in the county as an alternate way to reach eligible clients. Starting in March 2022 a bilingual educator has mobilized to immediately enroll clients through partnerships with organizations such as Catholic Charities, Hillside Community Center, CPCD HeadStart, Fort Carson, Tri-Lakes Cares, Lutheran Family Services Refugee and Asylee Programs, Family Promise Shelter, and Calhan Community Outreach. These partnerships have helped WIC to meet with people where they are, further reducing barriers to needed services.

Director Wheelan introduced Dr. Urbina, Interim Medical Director, to provide an update on opioids and fentanyl in the community. Dr. Urbina stated Public Health is continuing to work across multi-sector partnerships with a focus largely on education and information on the dangers of opioids and fentanyl. There is much information on our website as well as on state and national media sources. A Behavioral Health Planner has been hired to work with community partners to assess and evaluate resources, services, and gaps. Director Wheelan stated that a Teen Suicide Prevention Planner was hired when suicides in the county were high and that Planner worked with partners to develop action plans. This model will be adapted by the Behavioral Health Planner who will work with partners on the community continuum of care.

Fadi Youkhana provided an update on COVID-19 trends. Most of the country is still considered at a low level of COVID-19 infection. The variants are mostly unchanged. BA.2 and BA2.12.1 remain the most dominant strains. Local cases in May indicate a higher number of cases and more hospitalizations than in March and April. There has been only one death reported during this period, though that number is noted to be lagged and might increase as is also the case with hospitalizations.

Councilmember Donelson asked Dr. Urbina how many flu hospitalizations and deaths there were in May. The information is available on the Public Health website and Michelle Beyrle, Public Health Information Officer, stated there have been 55 flu hospitalizations in May.

Director Wheelan stated that at some point COVID-19 will be reporting disease hospitalizations as opposed to positive tests and those decisions will be driven by the state. Public Health will continue to track reporting transitions.

Director Wheelan stated El Paso County has been recognized by the National Association of Counties (NACo) for the development and the response of the El Paso County and Colorado Springs Vaccine Consortium. A vast multi-sector group was convened in response to COVID-19 to bring a coordinated, efficient, and effective service delivery model to provide COVID-19 vaccines to El Paso County communities. This recognition by NACo reflects how well the community works together.

Dr. Urbina discussed the zoonotic disease of monkeypox. Monkeypox was discovered in the 1950s in West Africa and spread from rodents to humans. The disease is related to smallpox and a recent case who was

exposed to the virus in Canada traveled to the United States. The national surveillance team began identifying additional cases. As with any condition, attention was raised to increase awareness. He stated the disease looks in many ways like chickenpox. There are no treatments but there is a vaccine, though the vaccine is not generally available to the public. The disease is rare and remains under surveillance.

Councilmember Donelson asked how many cases there are in the United States. Dr. Urbina stated there is one reported case and four or five under investigation. There are presently no cases in Colorado.

Ron Stephens asked if monkeypox is life threatening. Dr. Urbina stated it causes a lot of irritation and damage but it is generally not life threatening.

Dr. Urbina stated there exists a form of hepatitis of unknown cause being reported in youth in association with an adenovirus. There have been 13 cases identified in Colorado since November 2021. All individuals have recovered. From a clinical perspective if an individual becomes ill with adenovirus and experiences liver symptoms they should consult with a provider. At this time, it is not vaccine preventable and there remain many unanswered questions so it is being very closely tracked.

Director Wheelan stated the Public Health 2021 Annual Report has been published. Michelle Beyrle was introduced and thanked the Public Health Communications Team and the agency for capturing the wide variety of work accomplished during 2021. At the close of 2021, more than one million doses of vaccine were administered to El Paso County residents and more than one million COVID-19 PCR tests were completed at sites throughout El Paso County, including more than 26,000 at the Public Health South facility. El Paso County was prioritized as one of the state's first sites for the mobile monoclonal antibody treatment bus providing treatment to more than 500 individuals. Many key agency priorities of healthy eating, active living, improving mental health, and reducing substance misuse were re-activated in 2021. WIC continued serving approximately 13,000 clients per month through the WIC program and despite the hardships of the pandemic the Environmental Health (EH) team has seen retail food establishments increase to more than 2800 locations. Onsite Wastewater Treatment Systems continue to see growth from new construction in the eastern part of the county and the EH team has worked to improve the customer experience through streamlined processes. The Annual Report is available for review at elpasocountyhealth.org.

Dr. Terbush entertained a motion to adjourn.

MOVED: by General Jack Briggs, seconded by Councilmember Donelson to adjourn.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Adjournment at 10:17 am.

Next Board of Health meeting

The next Board of Health meeting will be:

Wednesday, June 22, 2022 8:30 a.m. - 10:30 a.m., located at The Citizens Service Center, 1675 W. Garden of the Gods Rd. in Colorado Springs.

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