

**EL PASO COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH**

**May 26, 2021**

**BOARD OF HEALTH MINUTES**

The El Paso County Board of Health met at 1675 West Garden of the Gods Road, Suite 2044, Colorado Springs, Colorado, on May 26, 2021. Five Board of Health members were physically present and three participated virtually through Microsoft Teams.

Dr. James Terbush, President, called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m.

**Board of Health Members:**

Dr. James Terbush, President – in person  
Doris Ralston, Vice President – in person  
Cami Bremer – Teams  
Yolanda Avila – Teams  
Dr. Richard Vu – in person  
Longinos Gonzalez, Jr. – in person  
Kari Kilroy – Teams  
Ted Collas – in person  
*Sam Gieck – absent*

**Directors Present:**

Susan Wheelan, Director – in person  
DeAnn Ryberg, Deputy Director – in person  
Dr. Robin Johnson, Medical Director – in person  
Michelle Hewitt, Public Health Information Officer – in person  
Jared Verner, Deputy Public Health Information Officer – in person  
Carolyn Gery, Development Officer – Teams

**Others Present at Regular Session:**

Vicki Bennett	Lori Cleaton	Cid Cruz	Daniel Garcia	Jordan Linder
Teresa Bassma	James Maxon	Amy Kalmus	Kelsey Martin	Becca Barnhart
Dacia Hudson	Brenda Heimbach	Adrian Stanley	Kat McGarvy	Summer South
Nora Todd	Fadi Youkhana	Dee Lambert	Mary Richie	Diana May

Two American Sign Language Interpreters from Sign Language Network

**Approval of Agenda**

Dr. Jim Terbush asked for approval of the agenda.

**MOVED:** by Doris Ralston seconded by Dr. Richard Vu to approve the agenda for the May 26, 2021 meeting.  
**MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**Board Member Comments:**

Dr. Terbush discussed the resolution passed by the County Commissioners on May 18 that affects the selection of Board of Health Members. The resolution affects three different parts: first, the appointments made by

County Commissioners; second, the term lengths; and third, the reference to selection of representatives from municipalities.

Commissioner Gonzales spoke about ensuring fairness in terms of the process for Board of Health representation. Large cities have always had representation on the Board and the membership methodology is now being moved closer to the same format as smaller city representation. This alignment to mirror each other more closely will allow for fair representation. New members have already been selected.

Dr. Terbush states that the Board is all in favor of clarity. Board of Health bylaws will be changed to reflect this.

Councilmember Yolanda Avila will be ending her Board of Health term in June, with a new member from Colorado Springs City Council to take her place.

### **Public Health Champion Awards**

Dr. Terbush defined Public Health Champions/Heroes. During the COVID-19 response, Public Health has been inundated with many new duties such as contract tracing and vaccination efforts. While Public Health is statutorily charged with leading the COVID-19 recovery efforts, it has been the assistance of partners that has made these efforts successful.

Director Wheelan recognized Public Health Champions and introduced Daniel Garcia. Daniel is part of the Pikes Peak Workforce Center (PPWFC), who has assisted Public Health since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic response. He used a skills-based hiring approach, reviewing hundreds of applications, and interviewing candidates to identify over 50 individuals hired as COVID-19 case investigators. Daniel also hired a front desk receptionist, data entry staff, and administrative support. Daniel's time and commitment enabled Public Health to build capacity quickly and continually for contract tracing while focusing on other COVID-19 response efforts. Daniel, along with his supervisor Erica Romero, and the PPWFC executive director Traci Marques have been a critical part of this effort. Public Health staff have increased from 158 employees to 267 employees, thanks in large part to Daniel and the PPWFC.

Susan recognized Chief James Maxon and the entire Fountain Fire Department. Chief Maxon provided voluntary emergency medical support for the ECPH South location vaccine point of distribution (POD). EMS support for vaccine distribution is an important piece of the vaccine sites and the Fountain Fire Department served voluntarily from February through April 2021. To date, there has been over 20,000 individuals vaccinated at the ECPH South location. Chief Maxon expressed his gratitude for being able to help as part of a united front.

Susan also recognized General Scott Sherman, who has led the state of Colorado's Vaccine Taskforce. General Sherman was not present at this meeting and will be recognized at a later time. Susan acknowledge his outstanding efforts and leadership.

### **Approval of Board of Health Minutes**

Dr. Terbush asked for approval of the April 28, 2021 meeting minutes.

**MOVED:** by Commissioner Gonzales, seconded by Doris Ralston to ratify the minutes from the April 28, 2021 Board of Health meeting.

**MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

## **Finance and Budget**

Lori Cleaton, El Paso County Budget Manager, presented the Financial Summary for April 2021. Revenue lines have been coming in close to budget. For the Program Specific Grants area, resources are being dedicated to COVID-19 response efforts with the funding for these efforts coming in from other areas as well. Expenditures show underspending of funds that were allocated for 2021 in both personnel and operating areas. Positive net impact budget of \$435,629. Have not been spending into reserves at all. Significant funding for immunization has come in. Significant Epidemiology and Laboratory Capacity (ELC) grant funding is also coming in for COVID-19 response activities. American Rescue Plan Act funding is coming in to allocate money to Public Health if there is not enough COVID-19 response funding from other areas and grants.

Interim document not moved for approval.

## **Contracts**

Shared Risk and Protective Factor Approach to Substance Misuse Prevention (Communities That Care). This is a renewal, using marijuana tax cash to improve the health of all Coloradans by reducing substance misuse by youth. The renewed funding amount increased by approximately \$36,000 to \$290,375.

Tobacco Education and Prevention Partnership (TEPP) – Community Initiatives of El Paso County. \$719,084, same amount as last year to support tobacco education in Colorado.

TEPP- Establishing Peer Tobacco Cessation Connectors in Low Income Multi-Income Housing in Colorado Springs. The \$190,456 funding, ending in June 2021, was a three-year grant. Director Wheelan explained this was a short-term grant from the state that will need to be evaluated to continue the work. Dacia Hudson, Program Manager for TEPP, stated that some of the work from this funding will fall under the TEPP core grant. Relationships were established with the Colorado Springs Housing Authority which has been a positive outcome; however, the same capacity of work will not be possible without this funding source.

Commissioner Gonzales commented regarding the American Rescue Plan Act. He stated the prioritization of programs that could be funded through this act and the prospect of an extension of the TEPP program as a priority. It must be explored to see which programs and priorities would be eligible for this funding.

Susan Wheelan stated that vaccine distribution and COVID-19 recovery efforts will be prioritized with the American Rescue Plan Act funding. She noted that no El Paso County Public Health program has been unaffected due to the pandemic and funding could be utilized for many different programs.

**MOVED:** by Cami Bremer seconded by Doris Ralston to approve the contracts listed above.

**MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

## **Hearing Postponement**

Rescheduling public hearing regarding proposed changes to onsite wastewater treatment systems (OWTS) regulations to June 23, 2021.

Dr. Terbush commented on major policy decisions that affect both a fee and an administrative requirement will always need to be matched with an increase in customer service. Public Health must align ability to regulate and provide customer service and that is why this hearing has been rescheduled.

### **Director's Report**

Susan provided a legislative update of HB21-1107 bill which passed unanimously last week. Colorado State Representative Terri Carver and Senator Paul Lundeen sponsored bill HB21-1107 which provides Protections for Public Health Department Workers. The bill adds protection of personal information available on the internet for public health workers, including employees, contractors, or employees of contractors of the department of public health and environment, or of county or district public health agencies, who are engaged in public health duties, and for members of county or district boards of health, other than elected county commissioners. Individuals can submit a written request to a government official to remove personal information from public records that are on the internet. Director Wheelan commends the EPCPH team for remaining professional during this volatile time. She states that this bill expresses that care and support for the safety of Public Health workers is valued.

Another bill is in the works to support infrastructure of Public Health. State per capita funds provides approximately \$800,000-\$900,000 currently. \$1.1 million was received by the state last year. El Paso County's population is about 748,000 people with state funding of under \$1 million dollars. The proposed bill would provide three consecutive years of additional funding closer to \$1 million. Additional funding on a per population basis once the census is complete. El Paso County has grown 25% in population since the last census without a change to state capital funds. Public Health agencies across the U.S. serving populations the size of El Paso County have an average of 269 employees while El Paso County Public Health has 158 full time employees, and demand for services has increased. Many grants are time-limited and recurring funding remains flat. 74% of our revenue is restricted. Funding from the state has remained flat for almost a decade; therefore, this bill is important and has already passed through the Senate and will now have a hearing in the House. Susan has connected with Tony Exum, House Representative. A fact sheet will be sent out by Susan. We need an infrastructure that supports our efforts as a public health agency. State level investment is needed to have a robust and proactive local Public Health department. Susan's goal is to maintain and retain much of the staff that has been acquired due to the COVID-19 response. In 2019, the Board of County Commissioners, supported the hiring of 10 additional FTEs, which allowed for the COVID-19 response with the essential Data and Analytics team and data dashboard to inform the public.

Yolanda emphasizes we are under-resourced and need this support to serve the El Paso County population.

EPCPH has been on a roadshow providing information regarding the COVID-19 updates to local entities. Fadi Youkhana, Epidemiologist, presented the COVID-19 updates for El Paso County. Since May 1, COVID-19 incidence rates have been trending downward. On April 24, the state uploaded a backlog of positive cases into the data system which accounts for an uptick in incidents. Fadi explained the current trend is evidence of the vaccine working as COVID-19 cases decrease. We are seeing a trend in positive COVID-19 cases among the younger population. There has been an increase in vaccination rates, most likely due to youth becoming eligible to be vaccinated. Currently about 53% of El Paso County residents are vaccinated. Age 65 and above population is 78% vaccinated, with federal partner calculations closer to 80-85%. Age group 40-64 is 54% vaccinated and the 12-39 age group is 31% vaccinated.

The State COVID-19 Death Dashboard for 2020 displayed El Paso County ranking in the lower half of the top counties with 72 deaths per 100,000. In 2020, COVID-19 was the third leading cause of deaths in El Paso County and we recognize there are families behind these numbers. Fadi estimates that 2021 is not looking as good as 2020 in regard to mortality rates and we must continue to promote vaccination efforts.

Mobile vaccination efforts have kept the momentum up. El Paso County Public Health brought a mobile vaccination site to the Switchbacks home game opener and other downtown events. Public Health has partnered with schools on vaccination PODs and has had great success so far, especially at Cheyenne Mountain High School. The Fire Department has been handling vaccinations for home-bound individuals. “Don’t Wait, Vaccinate!” campaign is ongoing, and the combination of all these efforts have sustained the vaccination momentum.

Dr. Richard Vu commented with a question about how can EPCPH shift its focus to health care providers in the community who are not offering the vaccine right now. Primary care providers are perhaps the third most trusted source for the vaccine. Dr. Terbush posed a question about what lessons we are learning from the pandemic. The vaccine is our generations’ moonshot. There are anti-scientific attitudes which we are combating to advance vaccine efforts, which could help reduce other respiratory illnesses in the future.

Cami Bremer expressed that the work of prevention is hard to measure. Prevention and education are planting seeds for public health; Bremer provided encouragement for the hard-to-measure efforts right now.

### **Public Comment**

Todd Evans, the Chief of Police for the City of Fountain provided a public comment. Todd spoke thanking everyone on the Public Health team and Board of Health. City of Fountain was able to follow the lead of Public Health in regard to COVID-19 policies and restrictions which they are grateful for. The City of Fountain commends Director Wheelan for her leadership and support of the Fountain community. The new El Paso County Public Health South building was praised for the resources provided to the southern region. A thank you note from Gabriel Ortega, Mayor of Fountain, was read.

### **Executive Session**

An Executive session pursuant to C.R.S. § 24-6-402(4)(f), regarding personnel matters pertaining to the annual performance reviews for Executive Public Health Director Susan Wheelan was called.

**MOVED:** by Ted Collas, seconded by Doris Ralston to enter into Executive Session.

**MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

**Stopped video at 11:10**

The Board of Health Concluded Executive Session and motioned to resume the public meeting.

**MOVED:** by Doris Ralston, seconded by Yolanda Avila to end Executive Session and close the meeting.

**MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

### **Next Board of Health meeting**

**Wednesday, June 23, 2021, 8:30 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.**, located in the Snow Conference Room at the Citizens Service Center, 1675 W. Garden of the Gods Road.

Adjournment at 11:01 AM

26, May 2021- BOH/JLinder