The El Paso County Board of Health met at 1675 West Garden of the Gods Road, Colorado Springs, Colorado, on May 27, 2020. One Board of Health member and seven El Paso County staff members were physically present. The remaining Board members and other attendees were present via conference call.

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

**Board of Health Members:**
Dr. James Terbush, President – in person  
Victoria Broerman, Vice President - conference call  
Yolanda Avila – conference call  
Dr. Robert Bux - conference call  
Sam Gieck - conference call  
Longinos Gonzalez, Jr. - conference call  
Kari Kilroy - conference call  
Doris Ralston - conference call

Not in attendance: Cami Bremer

**Directors Present:**
Susan Wheelan, Director – in person  
DeAnn Ryberg, Deputy Director – in person  
Dr. Robin Johnson, Medical Director – in person  
Dr. Leon Kelly, Deputy Medical Director and El Paso County Coroner – in person  
Brenda Heimbach, Health Services Division Director – conference call  
Michelle Hewitt, Public Health Information Officer – conference call  
Keith Siemsen, Environmental Health Services Division Director - in person

**Others Present at Regular Session:**
Vicki Bennett  Cathy Cane  Dirk Draper  Heyner Gomez  Erin Hickey  
Lonnie Inzer  Betsy Lehman  Paula Linhares  Kelly Mundell  Lisa Powell  
Jim Reid  Jakob Rogers  Lori Seago  Mary Shinn  Nikki Simmons  
Adrian Stanley  Jessi Summers

**Approval of Agenda**  
Agenda item not heard due to Webex technical difficulties. No action taken.

**Board of Health Comments**  
Dr. Terbush said he is optimistic and wants to lead with a thank you to all the people who allowed us to begin to go out to dinner again – Board of County Commissioners, State Health Department and Governor, City Council, local hospitals, and El Paso County Public Health.  
Councilmember Gieck thanked everyone for their recent help for the City of Fountain.

**Approval of Board of Health Minutes**  
Dr. Terbush asked for approval of the April 22, 2020 meeting minutes.
MOVED: by Kari Kilroy seconded by Sam Gieck to ratify the minutes from the April 22, 2020 Board of Health meeting.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Budget and Finance
Nikki Simmons, El Paso County Controller, presented the April Financial Summary for El Paso County Public Health (EPCPH). Revenue is short $387,000, primarily in grants ($200,000) and license fees and permits ($187,000). Grants are short as we redeployed staff for duties outside of their normal grant-funded programs and are not billing grants for their time. We received executive guidance from the State that we can use current Communities that Care, Family Planning and Immunization funding for the COVID-19 response, so we should see that amount go back up. The license fees and permits will continue to go down as we have not been performing normal functions; this may be a permanent decrease or we may see it go back up later on. The $500,000 emergency fund balance approved by the Board can be carried forward into 2021 as we have received significant funding to allow EPCPH to respond to the pandemic this year. El Paso County received $125 million in CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security) Act funding and $8.3 million has been allocated to EPCPH as a best estimate for pandemic response. Four million will go toward staffing and supplies; $200,000 toward mental health for the community and staff; $100,000 for increased communication efforts; and $4 million to a possible purchase of a building in Fountain, Colorado. We do have some flexibility in that funding, and use of reserves if needed.

El Paso County also received guidance from the Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management who stated we should be able to use CARES money as a match to FEMA funding (75/25 split). Four hundred and ninety-four thousand dollars was spent by EPCPH for the COVID-19 response through the end of April and 96% of that was on personnel.

Ms. Simmons is confident the money is being used appropriately and that El Paso County (EPC) is making a commitment to public transparency. She ensures the public there is no fraud, waste or abuse of CARES funding and states EPC will publish a monthly report on their website on how funds are being spent. The County has also allocated a significant amount of CARES funding to economics, workforce development and public safety.

The Board voted that EPCPH and El Paso County Finance have sufficient checks and balances to determine appropriate uses of emergency funds toward the COVID-19 pandemic.

MOVED: by Yolanda Avila seconded by Doris Ralston to approve the April Financial Summary and appropriation of emergency and CARES Act funds.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Resolutions
Dr. Jim Terbush presented a Resolution in support of El Paso County Public Health Director and the entire El Paso County Public Health workforce during the COVID-19 pandemic, to recognize the hard work and dedication of the EPCPH staff and community partners in responding to the pandemic.

Councilwoman Avila said it is a wonderful resolution and that Susan Wheelan and team have been unstoppable, working with the community to make it safe while working to reopen areas of the economy.
MOVED: by Doris Ralston seconded by Yolanda Avila to approve the Resolution in Support of El Paso County Public Health Director and the entire El Paso County Public Health workforce during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Presentations and Updates

a. Epidemiology and Surge Capacity Plan – Presented by DeAnn Ryberg, Deputy Director of El Paso County Public Health (EPCPH) and Dr. Robin Johnson, EPCPH Medical Director

Graphs shown during this presentation are available on EPCPH’s COVID-19 data dashboard (https://www.elpasocountyhealth.org/covid19data-dashboard).

When COVID-19 first came to El Paso County (EPC), we saw a significant number of hospitalizations due to many cases being associated with a bridge tournament group, and we had limited testing at that time. Hospitalizations have decreased from that point.

EPC COVID-19 positive cases are now displayed by zip code and municipality on the data dashboard. Hospitalizations remain stable even as the number of COVID-19 cases begins to rise again (due to relaxed orders and increased testing). The death rate in EPC is 12.1 per 100,000 people; Colorado’s is 18.9 per 100,000 people; and the U.S.’s is 29 per 100,000 people. More than 75% of fatalities have occurred in individuals 70 years and older. Nearly 50% have been associated with long term care facilities (LTCFs). The Emergency Coordination Center (ECC) has set up a steering committee to communicate with directors of LTCFs and has a LTCF team to educate them on best practices and resources available to prevent further spread. Fifty-four percent of all COVID-19 cases in EPC are female, but twice as many deaths are occurring in the male population. We are starting to see increasing incidences in younger age groups, particularly those who are 20-40 years. El Paso County has seen fewer cases and incidence than most other Colorado counties. Our ability to test has increased, and we need to keep the positivity rate around 10% to stay safe.

EPCPH has a Communicable Disease team who are required to monitor more than 60 different conditions per state statute and provide public health response and interventions. They are also busy conducting case investigations and doing contact tracing for COVID-19. Contact tracing is a fundamental tool of public health. We identify cases and look for people who may be at risk, provide them with public health guidance and information about symptoms and next steps to help stop disease transmission chains. We are currently increasing our staffing capacity to respond to the need, as this is a 24/7 response. We are hiring new staff (focusing on those who are bilingual in English and Spanish) and utilizing EPC Coroner’s staff, contract staffing, Medical Reserve Corp volunteers, and UCCS Beth-El School of Nursing volunteers. Meeting demands is challenging to do with volunteers and students, as those are short-term solutions. Estimations show that for a community of our size to perform robust contact tracing, we would need one contact tracer per 1,000 population.

We are also working with partners at the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) to leverage additional tools such as texting platforms and symptom trackers.

The Communicable Disease team is working with facilities experiencing outbreaks and posting outbreak information on the EPCPH website. Observed weekly trends are an increased reluctance from the public to engage in contact tracing, increased contacts per case outside of household; increased need for Spanish language capacity; increased targeted testing for LTCFs and capacity to do repeat testing; increased need for staff capacity; increased information available regarding outbreaks by posting on website; and decreased deaths and hospitalizations.
Contact tracing is voluntary, but it is essential for community members to work with us to address the pandemic; collaboration with the community is extremely important. What we are trying to prevent with contact tracing is to keep the spread limited and put out “fires”. We are not tracking people but tracking the virus. In order for us to be successful we need the public’s help, and the more successful we will be as a community.

We have not reached testing capacity so far and are encouraging testing symptomatic people. Testing asymptomatic people is only a snapshot in that moment in time and false negative rate is very high. As this is a novel virus, testing strategies in our community will continue to evolve.

b. Regional Recovery Council on Economic Development and Public Health Partnership – Presented by Dirk Draper, President and CEO of the Colorado Springs Chamber and Economic Development Corporation (EDC) and Keith Siemsen, EPCPH Environmental Health Services Division Director

Mr. Draper stated the mission of the Chamber and EDC is to achieve economic prosperity for our region and act as a catalyst for business innovation and growth. They have been working closely with EPCPH, forming an ongoing partnership during the pandemic to ensure balancing economic health with public health. Clear guidance is necessary for businesses and economic recovery. By working with EPCPH, they were able to allow some businesses to open early by doing curbside pickup, delivery, etc. Worked on restaurant variance to open dining rooms. Consumer confidence is also necessary for economic recovery. They need to know businesses are following guidelines and staying safe. By working together, we are providing a better platform for businesses while keeping the safety of them and the public in mind. Mr. Draper also participates on the Governor’s Council on Economic Stabilization and Growth.

Susan Wheelan mentioned that the Chamber and EDC provides guidance on economic influencers in EPC. We can’t supersede state law but can be proactive. Innovative and creative solutions are key to large gathering events (graduations, drive-in theaters, etc.). Focus is on what can we do, not what can’t we do.

Keith Siemsen added EPCPH has been working to pull together a documented process for variances, and provide guidance and interpretation for the swiftly changing public health orders from the state. have staff members working to analyze what has been approved and denied in all variances. Will continue to work with Mr. Draper’s team very closely and track what’s happening in the state.

c. Pikes Peak Regional Office of Emergency Management (PPROEM) – Presented by Jim Reid, Regional Director of PPROEM

PPROEM was established in January 2019, after City and County emergency services united. They activated an Emergency Coordination Center (ECC) to help support EPCPH after one week of working together, to establish a single command center (“one team, one mission”). The ECC must be flexible, adaptable and scalable to respond as needed to the pandemic. The ECC has experienced many successes, especially having many partner, director and recovery coordination calls each week; establishing the Joint Information Center (JIC); providing personal protective equipment (PPE) to community partners; coordinating a volunteer group who make facemasks for City and County staff; and establishing the COVID-19 call center.

**Director’s Report – Susan Wheelan**

Variances for places of worship and Cheyenne Mountain Zoo will be presented to the Board of County Commissioners tomorrow. On May 29, the state will receive the necessary data to know if they can replace the Safer At Home order and will provide guidance on pools, gyms, and recreation centers.

Ms. Wheelan expressed she is truly grateful for all volunteers helping out with response and for Dr. Leon Kelly, El Paso County Coroner who is serving as EPCPH’s Deputy Medical Director, and all he is doing toward the response. Without our partnerships, there is no way that we could have mounted the response we did and move
toward recovery. EPCPH initiated continuity of business plans early on and went to remote work for most programs. Many of our programs are still suspended because we’ve had to reorganize staff to create capacity for the COVID-19 response. We are thinking of how we can move forward together and overcome challenges. Ms. Wheelan also thanked the El Paso County Attorney Office for their help for the interpretation of public health orders and how it impacts our community.

Public Comments
Public comments were provided in person by Nancy Giovanni, Mark Giovanni, and Ann Greenwise.

Next Board of Health meeting
June 24, 2020, 8:30 a.m. - 10:30 a.m., located in the Centennial Hall auditorium – 200 S. Cascade Ave.

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