

EL PASO COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH

June 22, 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 June 22, 2022. Seven Board of Health members were physically present, one attended through Microsoft Teams, and one was absent.

Doris Ralston, Vice President, called the meeting to order at 8:33 a.m.

Board of Health Member Roll Call:

Present:

Doris Ralston, Vice President
Commissioner Cami Bremer
Ted Collas
Councilmember Dave Donelson
Commissioner Longinos Gonzalez, Jr. (*via Teams*)
Dr. Richard Vu
Trustee Ron Stephens
General Jack Briggs

Absent:

Dr. James Terbush, President

Directors Present:

Susan Wheelan, Public Health Director
DeAnn Ryberg, Public Health Deputy Director
Dr. Christopher Urbina, Interim Medical Director (*via Teams*)
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:

Sara Adams	Vicki Bennett	Lori Cleaton	Colter Dewitt
Eric Gordon	Dacia Hudson	Alicia Humlicek	Amy Kalmus
Leon Kelly	Darrel Kirby	Kelsey Leva	Janel McNair
Claudia Mercado	Samantha Montmeny	Debbie Perry	Jodi Pinell
Lisa Powell	Brittany Riffle	Mary Ritchie	Melissa Rogerson
Melissa Seidenberg	Nikki Simmons	Summer South	Kelsey Tillema
Nora Todd	Steven Walsh	Dinny Weber	Terri Weber
Ted Williamson			

Two American Sign Language Interpreters from Sign Language Network

Approval of Agenda

MOVED: by Councilmember Donelson, seconded by Commissioner Bremer to approve the agenda for the June 22, 2022 Board of Health meeting.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Board of Health Comments

Doris Ralston thanked the Public Health staff for their work and thanked Dr. Leon Kelly, El Paso County Coroner, for his attendance at the meeting.

Approval of Minutes

Doris Ralston entertained a motion to approve the May 25, 2022, Board of Health Meeting minutes.

MOVED: by General Briggs, seconded by Councilmember Donelson to ratify the minutes from the May 25, 2022, Board of Health meeting. Seven votes approved; Commissioner Bremer abstained.

MOTION CARRIED.

Public Comment on Items not Scheduled on the Agenda

None

Finance and Budget

Samantha Montmeny, Financial Services Budget Supervisor, presented the May 2022 Financial Summary. Revenues remain low on *Program Specific Grants* and *Licenses and Fees* line items. Position vacancies prevent the billing of personnel costs to appropriate grants, reducing the *Program Specific Grants* revenue. A previously existing system issue delayed receipt of *Licenses and Fees* revenue and the issue correction should reflect in June's financial report. Overall, Finance has no concerns.

Ron Stephens asked why there are excessive personnel funds. Samantha explained this is due to recruitment and staffing challenges. Director Wheelan added there has been a reduction in force of 13 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) employees due to ramping down of contact tracing efforts; however, staffing challenges exist for filling other open positions. She stated an employee engagement survey was recently deployed by county leadership to obtain feedback on employee satisfaction, recruitment, and retention, and Public Health Leadership is developing action plans based on survey results.

Director Wheelan introduced the agenda topic of contract renewals and approvals stating most El Paso County Public Health (EPCPH) funding comes from grants and contracts, some of which have intensive, highly competitive application processes. Public Health has a statutorily required framework of essential services supported through contracts adhering to the state fiscal year calendar ending June 30 and beginning July 1. EPCPH was the first accredited Public Health Department in Colorado in 2013, with reaccreditation occurring in 2020. This accreditation indicates an adherence to rigorous standards demonstrated by outcomes of funded service programs. She commended the staff for their work, specifically as the department performs its duties with 158 FTE, a number much lower than the average FTE for a community the size of El Paso County (269 FTE).

Previously approved contracts were individually presented for renewal:

Child Fatality Review/Prevention System Contract:

Heather Graves, Community Health Promotion Division Director, was introduced to review the Child Fatality Review/Prevention System contract. The Child Fatality Review Team (CFRT) is a multidisciplinary team assigned cases by the state to review child fatalities in the categories of accident, youth suicide, undetermined, and homicide. The team reviews cases for trends in outcomes and makes prevention recommendations. These data driven recommendations inform strategies of existing collaboratives and programs to impact future outcomes.

Councilmember Donelson asked for further understanding of the indirect percentage rate within the contract (27%). Director Wheelan stated that every year there is a state agreed upon indirect rate and the Public Health process charges the full amount. Where direct costs would cover expenses like staffing, indirect costs would cover items such as administration and HR, IT and Finance support.. Kelsey Leva, Youth Health & Development Planner, stated that direct funding is allocated towards an administrative position and an epidemiologist. Director Wheelan stated the grant does not fully cover the cost of the program but given its critical nature, the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) has taken efforts to support the initiative by bolstering funding to allow for effective work.

Commissioner Bremer added that the contract speaks greatly of links with policy makers and on the BOCC she receives full reports on county fatalities so the BOCC can, from a policy perspective, identify any systemic breakdowns or failures. The contract presented is one piece of a much larger interactive system to take care of the children in our community.

General Briggs asked if there was data available on youth accidental opioid deaths. Kelsey confirmed this is captured in the accidental death category.

Dr. Leon Kelly, El Paso County Coroner, discussed how the legislative move of the CFRT from state to local levels evolved to create programs such as the Teen Suicide Prevention Working Group, resulting in robust data collection and community centered prevention strategies. He stated that his office projected this proof-of-concept model to the broader community. Last year 30% of deaths by suicide were veteran military or active-duty service members. Due to this data collection and proof of community wide collaboration success, UHealth has applied for and received a significant behavioral health grant from the State Office of Behavioral Health to address veteran suicide prevention and has formed a coalition to deploy one of the largest community-based behavioral suicide prevention efforts for veterans and their families. A direct line can be drawn from CFRT to the Teen Suicide Prevention Workgroup to veteran suicide prevention, exemplifying the positive impacts of this group.

Director Wheelan highlighted the initiation of the Behavioral Health Connect (BHCON) unit, pairing a behavioral health expert with a Sheriff's deputy for response to emergency calls involving mental health crises, as another example of how this collaborative has had a direct positive effect on the community.

MOVED: by Commissioner Bremer, seconded by Ron Stephens to approve the Child Fatality Review/Prevention System contract.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Tobacco Education and Prevention Partnership Contract:

Dacia Hudson, Tobacco Education and Prevention Partnership (TEPP) Program Manager, was introduced to present the Tobacco Education and Prevention System contract which is funded by Amendment 35 tobacco tax dollars. A formula based on population size and risk is used to determine funding amount provided at the

community level. Dacia shared that the 2017 Healthy Kids Colorado Survey data indicated only 46.5% of youth in the community thought vaping was unsafe. Outreach was launched to provide education to almost 4,000 people in the community inclusive of 3,300 students, staff, parents, and school community members. Additionally, mini grants were offered to schools to convene youth as stakeholders in the conversation of how to prevent vape use and perception. In 2020, 70.5% of youth polled felt that vaping was a risk, indicating a significant change in perception based on outreach.

Dr. Vu asked if Dacia could discuss how El Paso County risk compares to other counties. Dacia explained that high initiation in 13- to 24-year-olds, county poverty levels, and tobacco prevalence are the three categories of risk observed when determining funding. El Paso County is high in two of the three risk areas (high initiation for 13- to 24-year-olds and prevalence). Dr. Vu assumes poverty is a high risk in our area and asked how it compared to Denver. Dacia stated Denver had three out of three risk factors and she would follow up with specific numbers.

General Briggs asked if funding provided to schools goes to any best practices such as peer-to-peer counseling or addiction recovery counseling. Dacia stated all programs implemented are evidence-based best practices. Schools designate facilitators who convene students to work on strengthening tobacco free school policies based on identified risks at each school.

Dr. Vu asked if we have a higher focus in zip codes that are at higher risk. Dacia confirmed that the group does focus on higher risk areas, increasing partnerships in those regions.

MOVED: by Ted Collas, seconded by Councilmember Donelson to approve the contract for Tobacco Education and Prevention Partnership.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Tuberculosis Prevention and Control Contract:

DeAnn Ryberg stated the Public Health Tuberculosis (TB) clinic is the only dedicated TB clinic in El Paso County and funding comes from the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) to support activities in three primary areas: evaluation, testing, and treatment of class A and B immigrants and refugees; evaluation, testing, and treatment of local cases; and performing contact investigations. Activities over the last 12 months include a requirement to physically view, in person or through video, every active TB patient administering their medication five days per week to ensure treatment. TB requires a long course of treatment ranging from 6-24 months and adherence to the regimen is critical. In 2016 and 2017 the TB Team led the way in video observed therapy, refining the process and receiving a county innovation award for this work that has been used as a model practice in the state. As a result of this innovation, the agency was well poised to continue service at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Councilmember Donelson asked if there were two active TB cases at this time. DeAnn confirmed there have been two active cases in the last 12 months.

Dr. Vu asked if the TB screening process was a skin test or blood test. Eric Gordon, lead disease prevention nurse, stated that the blood test is used as it is superior to the skin test for certain populations. Dr. Vu asked if we keep 100% of the funds from the contract. Eric confirmed that as his understanding and added that the funding generally covers cost of medication and screening practices as well.

MOVED: by General Briggs, seconded by Councilmember Donelson to approve the contract for Tuberculosis Prevention and Control.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Clinical Services – Reproductive Health Contract:

Brenda Heimbach, Health Services Division Director, stated that the reproductive health services clinic has been serving El Paso County since 1973. The clinic primarily serves people who are uninsured or underinsured and accepts Medicaid. In 2016 the clinic began accepting private insurance. The goals of the clinic include reduced unintended pregnancies for the health of the mom and babies, increased access to cancer screening and referrals to care when indicated, and the prevention and treatment of sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Healthy moms and babies are a priority to all the Health Services Programs, including the Nurse-Family Partnership Program (NFP), the Women, Infants and Children Program (WIC), and the Immunizations Clinic. One of the ways the clinical reproductive health clinic accomplishes these goals is to test for STIs at the time of pregnancy testing. This is not required but is a best practice as STIs can cause death or lifelong chronic health issues for children. We thought congenital syphilis had been essentially eliminated in the early 2000s, however El Paso County, Colorado, and the nation have seen increases in cases since 2017. The team processes recently resulted in healthy outcomes for a mom and her baby when the mom was tested for pregnancy and also tested positive for chlamydia. She was treated immediately with medications appropriate for someone who is pregnant, and the mom and baby are now healthy and can avoid consequences of untreated congenital chlamydia.

Councilmember Donelson stated for awareness that one of the items on the contract states that by law the funds cannot be used for abortions.

MOVED: by Dr. Vu, seconded by Ted Collas to approve the contract for Clinical Services - Reproductive Health.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Emergency Preparedness and Response (EPR) Core Contract:

Lisa Powell, Emergency Preparedness, and Response Manager, stated EPR is a regional program responsible for Park, Lake, Chaffee, Teller and El Paso counties. The team works with the Public Health agencies in those counties to ensure they can respond to emergencies as they relate to Public Health. The program was originally the bioterrorism program working on smallpox vaccine campaigns targeted towards military and healthcare workers when intelligence information indicated a smallpox attack might be planned. Additional response activities have included West Nile virus, numerous hepatitis A outbreaks, outbreaks in meningitis at universities which required vaccine campaigns, and Waldo Canyon and Black Forest Fires and subsequent floods. The group is heavily integrated into the Pikes Peak Regional Office of Emergency Management (PPROEM) and has worked with incident command centers during events to ensure we can respond to requests for health and medical assistance and has played a significant role in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The EPR Program is currently engaged in the application process for Project Public Health Ready, a rigorous 18-month recognition program through the National Association of City and County Health Officials, which recognizes standards of clear and concise planning, training, and demonstration of tools and capabilities.

MOVED: by Ted Collas, seconded by Commissioner Bremer to approve the contract for EPR Core Funding.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

EPR Cities Readiness Initiative Contract:

Lisa Powell presented that The Cities Readiness Initiatives contract deals with funding for potential anthrax attacks whereby large cities would have the ability to access the national stockpile of medication and supplies.

The standard goal for this initiative is that the first pill would be administered to last person infected within 48 hours of a known attack. Focus has been placed on practicing setting up medication points of dispensing throughout the community.

Director Wheelan added when the September 11 attack occurred, Public Health was recognized as a first responder and employees are required to receive Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Incident Command System (ICS) training. During the COVID-19 response, two-thirds of Public Health employees were reassigned to emergency response roles as it is Public Health statutory responsibility to lead the response. The resiliency of this team is critically important.

Ted Collas asked if this contract is specifically targeted towards anthrax. Lisa stated while the program was designed specifically for anthrax, this is the first year funding can be expanded for use under other emerging or infectious circumstances.

MOVED: by Ted Collas, seconded by Ron Stephens to approve the contract for EPR Cities Readiness Initiative.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Environmental Health – Waste Tire Inspection Contract:

DeAnn Ryberg stated that the Environmental Health - Waste Tire Inspection contract supports Public Health's required activities as a delegated authority to ensure compliance with solid waste regulations. Public Health team members work with the industry to educate, provide technical assistance, and assure proper disposal of waste tires with the goal of protecting environmental health and quality. There are approximately 350 regulated facilities in El Paso County which are inspected every two years under this program. In 2021, a large, unregistered waste tire facility was identified by the state and EPCPH worked collaboratively with the state to educate the facility owners and operators on solid waste requirements. The facility became registered and reduced the number of tires on site. This facility was also near surface water, so EPCPH was able to intervene to protect surface water and now continues to work with this partner.

MOVED: by Ron Stephens seconded by Ted Collas to approve the Environmental Health -Waste Tire Inspection contract.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

One new contract was presented for approval:

Public Health Workforce Funding Contract:

The Public Health Workforce Funding contract was presented by Carolyn Gery, Development Officer. This is a new, short-term contract through CDPHE timed to end June 30, 2023. The contract is designed to strengthen the EPCPH workforce to perform in the highest capacity it can. A portion of the funding is dedicated to conducting a workforce and gap analysis. Training is also included, focusing on leadership and skills related to specific positions. The workforce is returning to regular duties after two-thirds of workforce efforts were redirected to pandemic funding and many new personnel will be receiving needed training.

General Briggs asked if the funding brought on new employees or trained existing staff. Carolyn confirmed it is training to understand what it will take to recruit, retain, and sustain our workforce.

Dr. Vu asked if we anticipate billing for 100% of the contract. Carolyn stated 27.1% will cover indirect costs.

Commissioner Bremer asked if this was a study or ongoing based on results. Carolyn stated it is one time funding. Commissioner Bremer also asked if funds could be used for specific recruitment and retention strategies. Carolyn stated the study would highlight and provide recommendations on how to best recruit and retain and will provide national comparative analysis information that can be leveraged.

Director Wheelan stated there are currently 158 steady FTE and some grants have allowed us to have a number closer to our actual need. For a county our size, the National Association of City and County Health Officials assesses the need to be 269 FTE. This funding opportunity will help us evaluate future workforce goals.

Councilmember Donelson asked how many people are presently employed by Public Health. Director Wheelan stated the steady state FTE count before COVID-19 was 158, and thanks to time-limited COVID-19 grants and funding, the FTE count is now 229. Currently there are 187 positions filled, not considering the reduction in force. Director Wheelan will follow-up on how many of the 158 steady state positions are presently vacant. She stated every one of the employees presently in place is needed and filling vacancies is needed. She also stated the need for a more proactive increase in staffing for the agency as we move to future population growth and she looks forward to the study results.

Ted Collas suggested proactive work that potentially could be completed if Public Health had additional staff and could be useful to the Board of County Commissioners in planning for the future.

MOVED: by Commissioner Bremer seconded by Ted Collas to approve the Public Health Workforce Funding contract.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Doris Ralston read into record [The Resolution to Recognize Revenue and Appropriate Expenditures for Contract Funding](#).

MOVED: by Ted Collas, seconded by General Briggs to approve the Resolution to Recognize Revenue and Appropriate Expenditures for Contract Funding.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Director's Report

Director Wheelan asked Nikki Simmons, El Paso County Chief Financial Officer, and Ted Williamson, a partner at Rubin Brown Accounting Firm, to present regarding the 2021 audit. Nikki stated it has been an extraordinary couple of years working with Public Health., navigating the various challenges. Many grants were received from federal sources, but with that comes myriad grant requirements and restrictions. All Public Health and County Finance team members ensured we were in compliance with all grants. There are also ever-changing financial procedures. The Annual Comprehensive Financial Report was handed out to Board members.

Ted Williamson from Rubin Brown stated that the audit went very well. The audit was given an unmodified or clean opinion. Most of the test work takes place in April and the final reports were issued one week ago. The audit has two objectives: to issue an opinion on the financial statements and a "single" audit, looking at grant compliance. A formula the federal government has developed determines which grant programs must be reviewed each year and this year there were three grants that were reviewed. These were the Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Relief Funds, the Immunization Program, and the Epidemiology and Laboratory Capacity Grant. Review of these grants did not report any compliance issues. He stated that the organization's internal control is reviewed and there are no concerns by the audit agency. Ted stated that many agencies often need assistance in compiling reports, but the county staff manages its own reporting which is a particular point of

pride. Each year new accounting regulations are generally passed, but in 2021 there were no new regulations. There were no complicated issues identified and no disagreements were found. It is not unusual for some corrections to be made, but there were none needed as a part of this audit.

Commissioner Bremer thanked Ted Williamson for the thorough report. Ted thanked Samantha Montmeny for her leadership of the excellent work.

Director Wheelan thanked the Budget and Finance office, Debbie Perry, Finance Manager, and Jodi Pinell, Accounting Supervisor, for their work as well as Rubin Brown. She also stated we have received a Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting from The Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) for annual comprehensive financial reports for 2018, 2019, 2020. We achieved Distinguished Budget Presentation Award for 2020 and 2021. The 2022 Budget Book is currently under review, and we are also working with Finance and Budget on a Popular Annual Financial Report for 2021. She thanked the entire team for their continued outstanding work.

She stated it is rare that a Public Health Department submits reports, as it is not required, but the county goes above and beyond to ensure transparency. This audit will be submitted to the GFOA. Considering there was \$26,000,000 of funding coming through Public Health, having no findings in an audit is exceptional.

Dr. Vu asked for an explanation of the capital assets that depreciate versus those that do not depreciate. Nikki stated examples of some assets that depreciate are buildings and vehicles. Some that do not are items such as waterways. Dr. Vu asked if we pay property tax and asked what the risks are for properties. Nikki stated we do not pay property tax and she does not know of any risks. The purpose of depreciation information is to show an accounting estimate of current asset values.

Colter Dewitt, Epidemiologist, presented COVID-19 data and stated the FDA approved the Moderna and Pfizer vaccines for Emergency Use Authorization for children 6 months of age and up on June 17. On June 18, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention endorsed the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices' recommendation to authorize the COVID-19 vaccines for that age group. El Paso County Public Health and community providers will make the vaccines available to parents who choose to get their children vaccinated.

Dr. Urbina, Medical Director, stated that the vaccine is recommended for approval but it is still up to parents to decide, as parents are responsible for the health of their children. Dr. Urbina encourages parents to discuss this topic with their healthcare providers.

Colter shared national infection trends indicating most of the nation presently has low COVID-19 transmission levels. El Paso County has changed from low to medium rates. The last seven days has seen a decrease in numbers, but we will continue to watch trends. Rates in June are increased, but still much lower than January and February. Hospitalizations and deaths have decreased in the last 14 days.

Councilmember Donelson asked what hospitalizations and deaths have been for influenza in June. Influenza hospitalizations to date for June were 58 and 55 for May. Councilmember Donelson stated he would appreciate influenza hospitalizations reported monthly and Director Wheelan confirmed this can be done.

Dr. Vu stated it is a late flu season and will likely remain steady until the onset of the next season.

Dr. Urbina indicated that the recommendations to prevent respiratory infections are the same protective measures that would impact all respiratory infections. He thinks what is being seen is a rebound where transmissions of all illnesses that were limited by earlier protections will be somewhat increased including influenza and COVID-19. Appropriate vaccinations in addition to protective measures will continue to be

encouraged. As people are indoors more with the changes of season, we will see an increase in many types of infections.

Doris Ralston thanked the Board for their positive engagement and asked for a motion to adjourn.

MOVED: by Commissioner Bremer, seconded by General Briggs to adjourn.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Adjournment at 10:34 am.

Next Board of Health meeting

The next Board of Health meeting will be:

Wednesday, August 24, 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.

22 June 2022- BOH/MSeidenberg