

**EL PASO COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH**

**August 24, 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 August 24, 2022. Seven Board of Health members were physically present, one attended through Microsoft Teams, and one was absent.

Dr. Terbush, Board of Health President, called the meeting to order at 8:32 a.m.

**Board of Health Member Roll Call:**

*Present:*

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

*Absent:* General Jack Briggs

**Directors Present:**

Susan Wheelan, Public Health Director  
DeAnn Ryberg, Public Health Deputy Director  
Dr. Bernadette Albanese, Co-Medical Director (*via Teams*)  
Dr. Paul Mayer, Co-Medical Director  
Heather Graves, Community Health Promotion Division Director  
Michelle Beyrle, Public Health Information Officer  
Jared Verner, Deputy Public Health Information Officer  
Roy Kroeger, Environmental Health Director

**Others Present at Regular Session:**

Sara Adams	James Baumgartner	Vicki Bennett	Lori Cleaton
Colter Dewitt	Christopher Heberer	Stella Hodgkins	Brittaney Hubler
Alicia Humlicek	Amy Kalmus	Darrel Kirby	Marigny Klaber
Dee Lambert	Sammi Jo Lawson	Kelsey Leva	Janel McNair
George Powell	Lisa Powell	Brittany Riffle	Cara Rodriguez
Melissa Rogerson	Lori Seago	Melissa Seidenberg	Summer South
Tom Strand	Erin Thompson	Kelsey Tillema	Nora Todd
Steven Walsh	Cass Walton	Kirk Woundy	Fadi Youkhana
Haley Zachary			

Two American Sign Language Interpreters from Sign Language Network

## **Approval of Agenda**

**MOVED:** by Doris Ralston, seconded by Commissioner Bremer to approve the agenda for the August 24, 2022 Board of Health meeting.

**MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

## **Board of Health Comments**

Director Wheelan introduced Dr. Paul Mayer as one of El Paso County Public Health (EPCPH)'s two new co-Medical Directors. Dr. Mayer has 30 years of experience in family medicine, obstetrics, and community health. For the past year and a half, he has served as Medical Officer for the Larimer County Department of Public Health and he looks forward to working with the EPCPH team.

Dr. Bernadette Albanese also joins EPCPH as co-Medical Director. She reports on the monkeypox virus later in the meeting.

Director Wheelan introduced, Roy Kroeger, EPCPH's new Environmental Health (EH) Division Director and welcomed him to the team. Roy Kroeger is a graduate of Colorado State University with a degree in Environmental Health and has worked in Environmental Health for 29 years in Cheyenne, Wyoming. He looks forward to working with the EPCPH team.

Ted Collas thanked Dr. Christopher Urbina for his work as interim Medical Director for Public Health. He also expressed his condolences for fallen El Paso County Sheriff's Deputy Andrew Peery and shares his prayers for the Deputy's family.

Dr. Terbush commented on a Gazette article detailing the concept of 'One Health' which recognizes the interconnection between animal health, human health, and their shared environment. He stated that historically several catastrophic illnesses originated in the animal kingdom. Presently, avian flu has claimed about 20% of the chicken population in Colorado. He believes 'One Health' will likely be an ongoing topic of interest in health and medicine.

## **Approval of Minutes**

Dr. Terbush entertained a motion to approve the June 22, 2022, Board of Health Meeting minutes.

**MOVED:** by Commissioner Bremer, seconded by Ted Collas to ratify the minutes from the June 22, 2022, Board of Health meeting.

**MOTION CARRIED.**

## **Public Comment on Items not Scheduled on the Agenda**

El Paso County resident, Steven Walsh, shared comments regarding monkeypox infections and removing mask requirements for healthcare facilities.

## **Public Health Champions**

Director Wheelan introduced Stella Hodgkins, Senior Vice President of Opportunity and Outreach at El Pomar Foundation, and recognized her as a Public Health Champion. Stella convened leaders in El Paso County's communities of color to facilitate the direct sharing of accurate and credible information during the COVID-19 response. Her leadership has been instrumental in advancing the health and well-being of El Paso County and enabling Public Health to forge partnerships to build community trust.

Stella thanked the Board of Health and shared how partnering with leaders of communities of color enabled Public Health to provide culturally resonant marketing and communication materials to address specific community concerns. These materials were produced in Spanish and six Asian languages for distribution throughout the community.

Commissioner Bremer thanked Stella for her leadership and dedication to El Paso County residents.

### **Finance and Budget**

Lori Cleaton, El Paso County Budget Manager, presented the July 2022 Financial Summary. Program-specific grant revenue continues to come in below budget, primarily due to personnel vacancies which prevent the billing of personnel costs to grants. Licenses, fees and permits are now coming in close to budget. In previous months there had been an issue with the new HealthSpace system which had delayed billing and receipt of payment. This issue has been resolved. Expenditures indicate significant underspending in personnel costs due to continued staffing challenges. Overall, Public Health is in a good financial position and there are no budgetary concerns. Lori shared copies of the 2022 Budget Book with Board of Health members.

Dr. Vu asked if there was work not being accomplished due to staffing issues. Director Wheelan stated that the Public Health team is small for our community population but highly productive and continually prioritizes efforts for emergent issues. Dr. Vu asked what options there are in the long run to support additional staffing. Director Wheelan stated that in 2019 the Board of County Commissioners provided funding for critical needs which supports ten additional positions in Public Health over a five-year period. She stated there could be continued advocacy with the county for funding as well as work with the state on funding on a per capita basis. Applications have also been made for multiple grants to support Public Health infrastructure.

Roy Kroeger presented the Environmental Health Core Funding contract with the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) for contract renewal. The contract provides \$45,000 primarily to support staffing for the fulfillment of Environmental Health program requirements. Community benefits include prevention of foodborne illness through education, infectious disease prevention in childcare facilities, and school education on the proper storage of chemicals to promote safer environments.

Doris Ralston stated the contract details much work with not a significant amount of funding. Roy indicated that staffing is funded by fees received and general county funding, in addition to the contract presented.

Dr. Vu asked if the contract is negotiable. Director Wheelan stated it is not. Many of the grants remain flat even as costs increase. Services are additionally funded through county and state per capita funding.

Councilmember Donelson asked how many Public Health inspectors support Environmental Health work. With regard to retail food establishment inspections, Sammi Jo Lawson, Retail Food Program Manager, stated there are just over 18 full time equivalent (FTE) employees that work in the Retail Food Program. She stated the team focuses largely on high-risk areas for foodborne illness, training within establishments, and licensing for new businesses as the county continues to grow. Councilmember Donelson asked how frequently food trucks are inspected. Sammi Jo stated the goal is to inspect them at least once annually.

Ron Stevens asked how many restaurants exist within the county. Sammi Jo stated the county has just over 2800 licensed retail food establishments inclusive of restaurants, grocery and convenience stores, school and healthcare cafeterias, food trucks and special event vendors.

Director Wheelan reiterated that despite some business closures due to the pandemic, the number of retail food establishment in the county continues to grow. In addition, the Environmental Health Division handles responsibilities outside of the noted contract including work with collaboratives and onsite wastewater treatment systems which also are increasing due to county growth.

**MOVED:** by Doris Ralston, seconded by Ron Stevens to approve the Environmental Health core funding contract.

**MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

### **New Business**

Director Wheelan introduced Tom Strand, Colorado Springs City Council President; Chris Heberer, Chief of Police, Fountain Police Department; Kirk Woundy, National Alliance on Mental Illness Director of Strategy and Operations; and Cass Walton, Executive Director of the Pikes Peak Suicide Prevention Partnership. These individuals have been integral to the county suicide prevention efforts in collaboration with Public Health staff members Kelsey Leva, Youth Health and Development Planner, and Brittany Riffle, Youth Resilience and Suicide Prevention Planner. In 2014, Colorado Springs was publicized for its high teen suicide rate. Since that time, Public Health has worked with multiple community partners including those in public safety, healthcare, the Coroner's Office, and community leadership to address suicide prevention. Director Wheelan expressed her appreciation and recognition to all those who have partnered in support of the health and well-being of El Paso County's youth emphasizing the continued importance of prevention.

Members of the Board commended the team for their data-driven focus and perseverance through difficult work noting that one single case of prevention is an enormous service for the community.

Cass Walton thanked the county characterizing the community as one that shows up in a time of crisis. She stated importance in finding voices that can be heard and is proud of the collaboration.

Chief Heberer stated there are many talented people in the county working on suicide prevention initiatives and he thanked the Board for the support.

Kirk Woundy commented that on an individual level we all have significant power to prevent suicide. He thanked the team and the Board for recognition of Suicide Prevention Awareness Month.

Tom Strand stated he was elected to City Council in 2015 and recognized Dr. Leon Kelly, County Coroner, for his work in suicide prevention. Dr. Kelly provided details on efforts that have made a significant impact in a short period of time. Mr. Strand expressed his gratitude for the work done by Dr. Kelly and Director Wheelan to address youth suicide in our community.

Director Wheelan highlighted that sustained efforts on many levels are needed to make a difference. She thanked Kelsey Leva and Brittany Riffle for the work they are doing in suicide prevention in El Paso County Public Health.

Dr. Terbush read the [Proclamation Recognizing National Suicide Prevention Awareness Month](#) into the record.

**MOVED:** by Commissioner Bremer, seconded by Ted Collas to approve the Proclamation Recognizing National Suicide Prevention Awareness Month 2022.

**MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Dr. Terbush stated Lisa Powell has served El Paso County for 32 years and the Board is now entertaining a resolution for her retirement from El Paso County Public Health.

Commissioner Bremer commended Lisa on her dedication to service and Councilmember Donelson commented that the institutional knowledge Lisa has cultivated in the organization is an important part of the value she has added to her work.

Dr. Terbush read the [Resolution to Recognize the Retirement of Lisa Powell](#) into the record.

Lisa thanked the Board for the kind words. She has loved the work she has done and will continue to be of service to the county.

**MOVED:** by Commissioner Bremer, seconded by Ted Collas to approve the Resolution to Recognize the Retirement of Lisa Powell.

**MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

### **Director's Report**

Director Wheelan shared a video created to acknowledge the receipt of the Bronze Innovation Practice Award from the National Association of City and County Health Officials (NACCHO) and the 2022 Achievement Award from the National Association of Counties (NACo). Both awards recognize El Paso County's Vaccine Consortium. She stated the consortium was a perfect example of Public Health 3.0 where partnerships mobilize for action. She discussed how the Vaccine Consortium members collaborated to navigate COVID-19 vaccine distribution.

Dr. Bernadette Albanese, co-Medical Director, shared that Colorado has recorded 197 cases of monkeypox. There have been six hospitalizations and no deaths to date and El Paso County has had 11 cases among residents. CDPHE is now posting aggregate data broken down by county populations, specifying age groups, race, ethnicity, gender identity, and sexual orientation. The highest risk of infections remains among adult men in the Denver metro area who report sexual contact with other men. In Colorado there have been cases among people who experience homelessness or those institutionalized or detained in correctional facilities, but there has not been transmission widely noted occurring within institutions. Dr. Albanese shared most cases experience a rash with the infection and these lesions contain the virus which can confirm the infection when tested by swabbing. Most transmission is occurring with close skin to skin contact with the rash. Transmission can occur until complete healing of the rash which can take several weeks. It is possible that touching fabrics used by an infected individual could transmit infection, but most infections are occurring with skin-to-skin contact.

Testing is now available at CDPHE labs as well as through primary care physicians and commercial labs including LabCorp, Mayo Clinic, Quest, Aegis Science, Sonic Healthcare, and ARUP. El Paso County Public Health has limited capacity to conduct testing for individuals who don't have a primary care physician.

The vaccine JYNNEOS was developed for smallpox and may provide protection against monkeypox infections. Based on laboratory studies this was expected and testing is now being completed to verify the efficacy of the vaccine. Presently the vaccine is being used as Post Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP), within the first 4-14 days of exposure, to limit the risk for serious symptoms. Those who are eligible for the vaccine meet criteria of being 18 years of age or older who have come in contact with someone who has monkeypox in the last 14 days, or individuals identified with certain risk factors who are more likely to have been exposed.

Doris Ralston asked what testing is being done at EPCPH. Dr. Albanese states that any provider can test lesions and sexual health clinics should be providing testing where appropriate. In EPCPH clinics, staff are trained on testing procedures and of the 14 individuals tested to date there have been 2 positive cases. DeAnn Ryberg stated testing is provided in the clinical services division and as a relatively small clinic, EPCPH is one piece of the larger community framework for monkeypox testing. Dr. Albanese stated that there is a learning curve for providers to be familiar with diagnosing and testing.

Dr. Vu asked if the vaccine is a live vaccine and if those who are immunosuppressed can receive it. Dr. Albanese stated JYNNEOS is a live attenuated vaccine meaning it is live, but it is not capable of reproducing. She stated patients should consult with their healthcare provider if concerned. Dr. Vu asked if there are medications available to treat monkeypox. Dr. Albanese stated there is a treatment medication, TPOXX, approved by the FDA to be used for monkeypox infection. Dr. Vu asked what the causes of hospitalization were for the six hospitalizations within the state. Dr. Albanese stated that overall, pain has been a large reason for hospitalization. Also, ocular infection can cause complication and scarring.

Councilmember Donelson asked if there have been any confirmed cases with transmission through contact with fabrics used by an infected individual. Dr. Albanese stated this information regarding method of transmission comes from sporadic cases where a healthcare provider became ill. Follow-up investigations indicated acquisition of the illness through contact with linens. This present outbreak seems to most largely be associated with physical contact. Councilmember Donelson asked if the vaccine is demonstrating effectiveness. Dr. Albanese stated laboratory data has suggested effectiveness and vaccine effectiveness is presently being assessed.

Dr. Vu stated that he would categorize this as an illness transmitted through skin-to-skin contact and certain behaviors might increase the risk of infection.

Ted Collas asked if those who received the replicating orthopoxviral vaccine in the past would have protection from the monkeypox virus. Dr. Albanese stated those who received that vaccine likely received it too long ago to see much protection. If an individual has been vaccinated in the past but meets vaccination criteria, they may still be vaccinated.

Commissioner Gonzalez asked how many of the Colorado cases have been through casual touching vs. sexual activity. Dr. Albanese stated that CDPHE has been managing contact tracing and we do not have access to contact investigation information.

Director Wheelan shared that monkeypox is not considered a sexually transmitted infection but can be transmitted through skin-to-skin contact. She added it is a disease we continue to learn about, but infection is not limited only to sexual partners.

Director Wheelan stated COVID-19 data is available in meeting packets and can be shared online for those interested.

Ron Stevens asked if there was data indicating any one COVID-19 vaccine to be more effective than others, or if some have more specific side effects. Dr. Mayer stated that, overall, mRNA (Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna) vaccines are more effective. There is not much information available yet on the bivalent vaccines coming in the fall. Dr. Albanese stated that vaccine for the BA.4 and BA.5 variant is expected and the process for approval will be the same as previous vaccine approval processes. More information should be available in September.

Director Wheelan stated Colorado has formed an Opioid Abatement Council in which El Paso and Teller Counties are identified as Region 16. Public Health holds a seat on the Advisory Committee to this council. The funds distributed to Region 16 over the next 18 years will be just over \$28,000,000. These funds will be utilized to support treatment of opioid use disorder and its effects, intervention, criminal justice-involved individuals, women who are pregnant or may become pregnant, people in treatment and recovery, and prevention which includes prescribing practices and collaborative primary prevention efforts. Director Wheelan indicated that applications could be made for involvement on the Council and encouraged participation in this essential effort.

Dr. Terbush entertained a motion to adjourn the meeting.

**MOVED:** by Ted Collas, seconded by Councilmember Donelson to adjourn.

**MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Adjournment at 10:34 am.

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

The next Board of Health meeting will be:

**Wednesday, September 28, 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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