

Columbus Board of Health Meeting Minutes

April 28, 2021

Presiding: Rajinder Chhokar-MD

Attending Board Members: James Lopez-DDS, Devica Alappan-MD, Yasmin Cathright, Isaiah Hugley

Not Present: Mayor's Office, Sylvester McRae-MD

Others Present: Beverley Townsend-MD, Gwen Cunningham, Tori Endres, Asante' Hilts, Jack Lockwood, Kimberly Fuller, Kristi Ludy, Brandi Nelson, Patrick Peck, Atty Gunby, Jeannie Polhamus (MCSD), Peggy Hallmark

In keeping with CDC/GDPH COVID-19 Community Mitigation Recommendations, this board of health meeting was held by conference call. All reports were emailed to all board members. Attendees verified by roll call.

Agenda Topic	Discussion	Decision	Responsibility
Call to order	Dr. Chhokar called the meeting to order at 1:05 pm.	None	None
Approval of Minutes	<p>Dr. Chhokar:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledged a quorum was present. Referred to minutes from the March meeting. With no questions or discussion from the members, Dr. Chhokar asked for a motion of approval. • Called for the Director's report. 	Motion made by Mr. Hugley, seconded by Dr. Lopez, and approved by all members present.	None
Director's Report	<p>Dr. Townsend:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are still in the midst of the COVID pandemic and vaccine efforts. We have seen a slowdown in requests for vaccinations. We continue to go to communities to reach Hispanic, black and high-risk areas. We have a Strike Team that goes out and have partnered with CORE to help with vaccine outreach. J & J vaccine was briefly paused but was approved for use yesterday and we did use it yesterday. We have a new fact sheet to which provides info on the TTS syndrome which was the reason for the pause. We expect to have vaccine approved for age 12 and older by mid-May. 	None	None

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<p>Director's Report Cont'd</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VRAS is the new registration system that allows people sign up easier for the vaccine. • GEMA Mass vaccination at the Civic Center will be closing on May 21. They are using Pfizer. We will do the 2nd doses that the mass site may not complete. • We have more providers offering vaccines, including pharmacies, which helps with the demand. • We lost another Public Health staff Member last week and that funeral is tomorrow. She was with for us almost 10 years and contributed a lot to our operations. <p>QUESTION: Dr. Lopez – Will we be resuming in person meetings?</p> <p>RESPONSE: Dr. Townsend – We will, however, with all the virus variants we would be safer to postpone that for a little while longer. I do not have a specific date. The Governor is opening everything, however, we in Public Health are trying to be mindful of the spreading variants and our low vaccination numbers. I would not want to rush that if that is okay with the board. We would not open that up unless the board says to do so.</p> <p>RESPONSE: Dr. Chhokar – Yes, I think it is wiser for us to see what infection rate will be after a time of the openings and wait and watch for the time being.</p> <p>I saw a patient today and it has become common to ask whether they have had the vaccine and which one and in so doing, the patient shared that she received her vaccine at the health department. She was most complimentary on how professional and courteous the staff were, how well they were treated and how smoothly it wen. I just want to pass that on and let you know. This was without asking anything about how she was treated. I want to thank all of</p>		

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Director's Report Cont'd	<p>you for how hard you have worked to get things organized and for doing such a good job. I would recommend to everybody to go there.</p> <p>RESPONSE: Dr. Townsend – Thank you for sharing that. We very much appreciate the positive feedback.</p>		
Financial Report	<p>Gwen Cunningham:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presented financial overview, July 2020 through the end of March 2021. Line one shows our original budget of \$5,915,206. We have had four revisions. Line two shows our current budget of \$6,252,208. Total expenses are \$4,610,594.50. We are on target for nine months of operations at 74%. Expense comparison to last year shows \$175,379.48 more spent than last year at this same time which is due Columbus processing the payroll for seven of our counties in our district. Those are pass-through funds and will come back to us. Total fee income is \$888,301.31. Lines 6 through 17 show the detail of fees collected and their comparisons to last year, with an overall decrease of \$5,401. Prior Admin Claiming Income remains down by \$13,225. The state is still in the process of paying out the amounts owed. Detail of the summary are found on pages 2 and 3. Page 4 shows our grants, which were all on target for nine months of operation. <p>RESPONSE: Dr. Townsend – We are slowly but surely getting back to providing our routine services. With the pandemic we have not been able to do that, which explains much of the decrease in fees collected.</p> <p>There were no questions.</p>	<p>The Financial Report is attached and made a part of these minutes.</p>	<p>None</p>

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Excused Absences	None	None	None
Old Business	None	None	None
New Business	None		
Program Reports	<p>Epidemiology - Brandi Nelson</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Muscogee County total confirmed cases to date as of April 26th is around 14,223. The weekly report is for the previous 14-day period. For the 4/19 week there were 126 confirmed cases per 100K and for the 4/26 week there were 146 confirmed cases per 100K. The positivity rate was 8.6% on the 4/19 report and 8.9% on 4/26 – not a significant change. Total hospitalizations are around 1,100 and there have been 393 confirmed deaths. COVID virus variants are no longer reported individually by the CDC, but instead in proportion according to region. The dominant variant in our region is the B117. <p>RESPONSE: Dr. Townsend – BiNax antigen tests are now available over the counter. For those we have no controlled reporting of results.</p> <p>QUESTION: Are they already available?</p> <p>RESPONSE: Yes, it is. It is recent but is out there.</p> <p>QUESTION: Dr. Alappan: Is the health department only giving the Moderna vaccine?</p> <p>RESPONSE: Dr. Townsend: We are giving three; Moderna, Pfizer and J & J.</p> <p>QUESTION: Dr. Chhokar: Can the patient come and request the one they want?</p>		

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<p>Program Reports</p>	<p>RESPONSE: Dr. Townsend: We have certain days we use a certain brand. When people register, they will be able to see which one is being used and they have the choice to select or wait for an appointment opportunity with the brand they want. For 18 and younger, it will always be only Pfizer.</p> <p>QUESTION: Dr. Chhokar – Are we getting very many children vaccinated?</p> <p>RESPONSE: Asante’ Hilts – From direct advertisement of offering Pfizer for the teens for the two site we’ve done so far, we had 70 of the 16-17 years old teens at Cascade Hills and 70 of them at the health department teen event.</p> <p>Public Information – Jack Lockwood</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We did advertise the teen vaccine clinic and had the radio station out for a live remote which impacted the turnout. • We will have vaccine events Saturday at River Road Elementary and MLK Elementary and have distributed flyers to parents and focused on families in those communities. • Continued weekly COVID-19 updates for press release, including number of cases, information on testing, vaccines and schedules. • Television, radio, and newspaper interviews daily with most pertaining to COVID19 and vaccines. Those include WTVM, WRBL, PMB Radio stations, Ledger-Enquirer, Washington Post and the Atlanta Journal Constitution. <p>There were no questions.</p>		

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<p>Program Reports</p>	<p>Environmental Health – Kristi Ludy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Referred to the EH report which was emailed to all board members. Pages 1 and 2 show a summary of EH activity for the month of March, which includes inspections and investigations for Food Service, Pools & Spas, Tourist Accommodations, Tattoo Studios, Vector Control, Onsite Sewage, and Well Water. There were 33 animal to human investigations. Of those there were 17 confinements and 3 tested for rabies and all were negative. Food service inspection details are listed on pages 3 through 10 of the report. We will see an increase of activity on the upcoming report. <p>There were no questions.</p> <p>Nursing Report – Kimberly Fuller</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Referred to the Nursing report emailed to board members and reported 3,081 initial visits, 851 return visits for a total of 3,932 visits from July 1 through March 31. Last year for the same time, total visits were 8,381. <p>Drive through vaccines conducted Monday, Wednesday, and Friday at the health department. We continued COVID-19 rapid testing for first responders. Our vaccine drive through clinic operation has resulted in over 15,500 vaccines administered to date.</p> <p>There were no questions.</p>	<p>Program reports are attached and made a part of these minutes.</p>	<p>None</p>

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Adjournment	Announced next meeting date is May 26 th and a quorum will be needed to vote on the FY22 budget. With no other business, the meeting was adjourned by Dr. Chhokar at 1:35 pm.		

**NEXT BOARD OF HEALTH MEETING
TO BE HELD VIA CONFERENCE CALL:
May 26, 2021 1:00 PM**

Columbus Board of Health Minutes Respectfully submitted by Secretary Peggy Hallmark