

MINUTES AND MEMORANDA
ST. JOSEPH COUNTY BOARD OF HEALTH

February 17, 2021
Regular Meeting
ALL-VIRTUAL MEETING

Present at the Meeting:

St. Joseph County Board of Health Members:

Heidi Beidinger-Burnett, Ph.D., MPH	President - Zoom
Jason Marker, MD	Vice President - Zoom
Emily Dean	Member - Zoom
Ilana T. Kirsch, M.D., FACOG	Member - Zoom
Michelle Migliore, D.O.	Member - Zoom
John Linn	Member - Zoom
James Shoemaker, Jr., MD	Member - Zoom

Also Present at the Meeting:

Robert M. Einterz, M.D.	Health Officer - Zoom
Mark D. Fox, M.D., Ph.D., MPH	Deputy Health Officer - Zoom
Jennifer S. Parcell	Executive Administrative Asst.
Amy Ruppe	Administrator - Zoom
Mark Espich	Director, Environmental Health - Zoom
Robin Vida	Health Outreach, Promotion and Education (HOPE) - Zoom
Brett Davis	Asst. Dir Environmental Services-Zoom
Carolyn Smith	Director, Food Services - Zoom
Cassy White	Director, Health Equity, Epidemiology and Data (HEED) - Zoom
Ericka Tijerina	Director, Vital Records - Zoom
Jamie Woods	Attorney for Board of Health - Zoom

I. CALL TO ORDER & ROLL CALL

Board President, Dr. Beidinger-Burnett, called the February 17, 2021 regular Board of Health meeting to order at 4:30 p.m. All board members and members of the public participated via audio/visual Zoom.

II. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

On motion made by Michelle Migliore, seconded by Emily Dean, and unanimously approved, the agenda for the February 17, 2021 regular meeting of the Board of Health was adopted.

III. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

On motion made by Michelle Migliore, seconded by John Linn, and unanimously approved, the minutes of the January 20, 2021 regular meeting of the Board of Health were approved with the single change that a meeting participant's medical degree was left off and needed to be added.

IV. BOARD PRESIDENT ANNOUNCEMENTS

1. Dr. Beidinger-Burnett remarked on the vaccination clinic located at Hedwig Memorial Center, stating that it has been a great experience. She noted that Voice of the People commented positively about the work at Hedwig Memorial Center.

V. HEALTH OFFICER PRESENTATION AND REPORT

21-06 Discussion and Vote on January 2021 Health Officer's Report

The Board received reports from various units. Nothing out of normal routine was noted in the community except for the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. It was noted for the Board that the financial report was formatted differently this month; Amy Ruppe addressed for the Board the new format of Health Department funds. Amy Ruppe asked if the Board liked the new format. Dr. Beidinger-Burnett expressed that she liked the new condensed version. Dr. Marker agreed with Dr. Beidinger-Burnett and requested that if there are any variances from normal expenses that they be flagged and noted in the report. Dr. Beidinger-Burnett added that she would like to receive a full report quarterly in addition to the monthly condensed format. Amy Ruppe noted that in the month of January 2021 nothing stands out from normal expenditures.

Dr. Einterz amplified Dr. Beidinger-Burnett's comments and stated that he is proud of the Department of Health's performance in COVID-19 vaccinations. He stated that Dr. Fox would review the vaccination data later in the meeting.

Dr. Einterz responded to a question about there being fewer restaurant inspections from last year. He stated the Unit is down an individual and they are looking for the right person to fill the job of Food Safety Inspection Officer. Additionally, a staff member was out assisting a sick family member, and many staff are serving in the vaccination clinic.

Dr. Einterz was asked about whether more problems were occurring in the "healthy homes program". Mark Espich responded and stated there are not more problems but there are more citizen complaints.

VI. DEPUTY HEALTH OFFICER PRESENTATION

21-07 COVID-19 Update

Dr. Fox echoed the previous comments about the work that has gone into launching and staffing the vaccination clinic. Feedback has been great and there has been an outpouring of volunteers.

Data shows improvement in number of cases from the middle of November 2020 to January 2021. Things have plateaued or increased a little in the last two weeks. This is probably due to students returning and associated increase in number of tests at local universities. The

County's positivity rate has dropped due to University surveillance testing. There has been no evidence of a ripple effect of transmission from the University into community. Enforcement and compliance of restaurant and bars has been challenging due to gray areas in the Governor's Executive Order.

The Department is focusing on K-12 schools. The CDC came out with new guidance for schools last week, which did not change dramatically from previous. Where school can implement mitigation strategies, they can safely re-open. So far, vaccination prioritization for teachers has not been a priority of the state. The Department is working to develop data for each school and district so we can effectively monitor data.

The state added 1,500 deaths to last years numbers due to review of death certificates. Specifically, there was an increase of 25-30 deaths for St. Joseph County.

The Department is continuing surveillance for more virulent strains of COVID-19. The state is looking for these strains and are looking for partners to assist with testing of samples. There have been none identified yet in St. Joseph County, Indiana.

Dr. Marker asked if data in pie charts could also put fatalities in a similar format. He stated that fatalities among the Hispanic population are ½. Vaccination of minorities is lagging. Vaccination rates among people of color is lagging due to vaccination hesitancy. The Department is working on that. Dr. Einterz stated that Robin Vida is working with health systems and others to work with Latinx and black community leaders to organize vaccination efforts in these communities. Robin Vida has reached out to faith communities, and placed posters in Spanish markets and online in Spanish. There is hesitancy, not just physical barriers. Hedwig Memorial Center was chosen because it straddles a few communities of color in the area. Dr. Einterz stated the Department is working with leaders in communities of color.

Dr. Shoemaker stated he is seeing exponential decrease in COVID-19 patients in the ER. Dr. Shoemaker asked Dr. Fox why we are not testing in the high schools that are not returning?

Dr. Fox responded that this is a resource issue. Ongoing surveillance testing in schools would be the ideal, but this is just a resource issue. Surveillance of students and vaccination of staff would be the best-case scenario for schools.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

21-08 Board of Health Committee Appointments

Dr. Marker notes members of the Board stayed on the committees they were previously on. Dr. Shoemaker was added to the Finance Committee.

These committee assignments for 2021 were approved unanimously on motion of John Linn, seconded by Emily Dean.

21-09 Unit Spotlight – Ericka Tijerina, Director of Vital Records

Ms. Tijerina noted this unit was spotlighted a few meetings ago and not much has changed in that time. Vital Records still has a staff of five (5) people. She noted that

modernization of records online would be beneficial, especially right now. Having more records and documents online would be user friendly. For example, paternity cannot be established online. Moving away from the requirements of original signatures and accepting copies would be useful.

Vital Records is in need of an IT upgrade. The unit still does not have upgraded equipment, and this limits what Vital Records is able to do and support. Thus far Vital Records has been unable to get a grant for this upgrade.

DRIVE

The State implemented a new electronic vital records system in January. This new tool, called DRIVE (Database for Registering Indiana's Vital Events), will eventually help expedite processing of birth and death records. Unfortunately, when DRIVE was initiated by the State, there were still many "bugs" in the system that disrupted reporting of birth and death records across the State, including in SJC. For example, some birth and death records from 2020 have not yet migrated to DRIVE. The SJC Vital Records unit has been helping State find workarounds and solutions to the glitches in DRIVE, but the system is still not functioning optimally. We believe the system will eventually be better than the system it replaced; but, until State fixes all DRIVE, we expect some delay in processing records and reporting data.

Projects Started in Mid-2020

The digitalization of records (scanning) is complete. Indexing of these records is ongoing. Online services have increased and will likely increase further in 2021.

Dr. Marker asked if Vital Records just could not find grants to apply for, or if Vital Records had applied but just couldn't use them. Ms. Tijerina answered that Vital Records can use grants, but there are just none available for Vital Records specifically.

Dr. Shoemaker asked Ms. Tijerina to make a wish list of what Vital Records needs. The Department needs to let the Board of Commissioners know that Vital Records has deficiencies in obtaining death records.

He also asked if Ms. Tijerina had any idea of how much money Vital Records would need to implement the necessary changes. She stated Amy Ruppe likely has that information.

Ms. Tijerina stated that there is nothing the Department of Health has done wrong to keep death records from going through; there is a state migration issue due to the implementation of DRIVE. Local IT cannot fix that issue.

Unrelated to the problems with DRIVE, to accomplish the objective outlined in the strategic plan pertinent to providing birth records in the field at community events (e.g. Little League registration), there is need for additional mobile equipment, perhaps \$15-20,000 in mobile equipment.

Dr. Beidinger-Burnett stated that Ms. Tijerina and Amy Ruppe should work together to rough out a budget for this need.

21-10 Legislative Issues

There are pieces of legislation moving through the Indiana General Assembly of interest to the Board. Dr. Beidinger-Burnett noted she is watching this.

Since the Board of Health has gone to Zoom meetings the attendance has increased from 10 to sometimes 25 participants.

There is a bill relating to maternal/child health, safety and health, in the House, and several other health bills (syringe exchange, cigarette tax, and maternal health) as well.

Senate Bill 148 is a mental health bill in regard to safe and healthy houses. Governor Holcomb vetoed it last year. The bill deals with tenant rights.

Dr. Marker noted that the Board of Health is not an advocacy organization but stated that it should monitor legislation and determine if the Board should weigh in on it or not. Specifically, he noted several items up for discussion in the legislation, including the authority of various individuals to select the health officer, the ability of the Governor to enforce public health issues; maternal and child health (Dr. Kirsch suggested that the Board avoid weighing on bills about abortion).

Last session there was a pregnancy accommodation bill, where there would be no requirement for an employer to provide reasonable accommodations. Additionally, there is a new bill that would allow pregnant women down to the age of a minor to take charge of their own health care without parental consent but only down to the age of 16. So, if a 15 ½ year old was pregnant she would not be able to consent to her own epidural or her own prenatal care.

Dr. Beidinger-Burnett stated that Indiana rates of infant and maternal mortality are improving but Indiana lags other states in improvement and it is important to catch up.

VIII. OLD BUSINESS

21-04 COVID-19 Vaccination Clinic Update

Dr. Einterz stated the Board discussed increase of capacity for vaccination. The state's vaccination supply deliveries are unreliable due to weather and because the State's supply is dependent on the federal government. The Department was supposed to receive 2,500 last Friday and we did not receive them. St. Joseph Regional Medical Center gave the Department more vaccines; Healthline eventually transferred some to the Department as well. Weather has caused disruption.

The Department received a file from the State on individuals who received vaccines in St. Joseph County. The Department can now track those we have vaccinated. The Department has supplies to be able to vaccinate 500 people on Thursday, February 18, 2021.

IX. BOARD NOTIFICATIONS

1. Hirings: Hired 3 Registrars and 3 Vaccinators using CARES Act monies.

Shayla Kimbrough – COVID-19 Registrar 01/25/21
Mary Pickens – COVID-19 Vaccinator 01/25/21
Sarah DeFreeuw – COVID-19 Registrar 02/01/21
Savannah Hardy – COVID-19 Registrar 02/01/21
Lauri Miro – COVID-19 Vaccinator 02/01/21
Rachel Ransom – COVID-19 Vaccinator 02/08/21

2. Resignations: None
3. Retirements: None
4. Terminations: None

X. PUBLIC COMMENT

Brian Jones: Mr. Jones is the chair of PHM Return to Learn. He stated he is ecstatic and grateful that students are returning for in-person learning at PHM. He stated PHM has a good grasp of the safety issues and has put out new FAQs for parents. He stated that he believes schools are safe and possibly the safest place for children.

Christi Risk: Ms. Risk is an advocate for children to return to school and part of PHM Return to Learn. She stated that it is important to obtain accurate county and K-12 school COVID-19 infection numbers as the return of students to local universities will skew the COVID-19 data for the County, and possibly make it so students are not able to stay in-person at school.

There was no further public comment

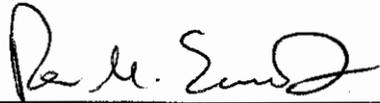
XI. TIME AND PLACE OF NEXT REGULAR MEETING

The next regular meeting of the St. Joseph County Board of Health is scheduled for Wednesday, March 17, 2021 at 4:30 p.m., at the St. Joseph County Department of Health, 8th Floor Board Room.

XII. ADJOURNMENT

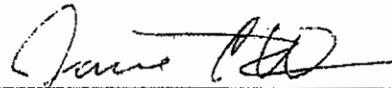
The meeting was adjourned at 5:51 p.m.

ATTEST:



Robert M. Einterz, M.D.
St. Joseph County Health Officer

Respectfully submitted,



Jamie C. Woods
St. Joseph County Attorney