

MINUTES AND MEMORANDA
ST. JOSEPH COUNTY BOARD OF HEALTH

November 18, 2020
Regular Meeting

Present at the Meeting:

Heidi Beidinger-Burnett, PhD, MPH	President - Zoom
Jason Marker, MD.	Vice President - Zoom
Emily Dean	Member - Zoom
Ilana T. Kirsch, M.D., FACOG	Member - Zoom
John Linn	Member - Zoom

Also Present at the Meeting:

Robert M. Einterz, M.D.	Health Officer - Zoom
Mark Fox, M.D., Ph.D., MPH	Deputy Health Officer-Zoom
Jennifer S. Parcell	Executive Administrative Asst - Zoom
Amy Ruppe	Finance Manager
Mark Espich	Director, Environmental Health-Zoom
Robin Vida	Director, 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
Neiko Rust	Director, Immunization Clinic – Zoom
Frank Spesia	ND Fellow – HEED
Mary Mumbi Wachira	ND Fellow – HEED
Juan Esteban Baus	ND Fellow - HEED
J. David Keckley	Attorney for Board of Health

I. CALL TO ORDER

Board President, Dr. Beidinger-Burnett, called the November 18, 2020 Regular Board of Health Meeting to Order at 4:31 p.m. All board members, members of the public, and press, participated via audio/visual Zoom.

II. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

Dr. Beidinger-Burnett indicated that an additional item would be added to the proposed agenda under New Business as item 20-52, Community Perspective, Dr. Genevieve Lankowicz.

On motion made by Dr. Marker, seconded by John Linn, and unanimously approved, the agenda for the November 18, 2020 regular meeting of the Board of Health as amended was adopted.

III. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

On motion made by Dr. Marker, seconded by Emily Dean, and unanimously approved, the minutes of the October 21, 2020 Regular Meeting of the Board of Health were approved as presented.

IV. BOARD PRESIDENT ANNOUNCEMENTS

1. Dr. Beidinger-Burnett encouraged everyone in our community to follow the recommendations of the Health Officers to take steps to protect yourself and your loved ones in light of the spike in the numbers dealing with COVID-19. Community transmission of this virus is at the highest level and it will take the efforts of everyone to follow the recommendations to help slow the surge.

2. Dr. Beidinger-Burnett referenced the comprehensive Report of the Indiana Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights entitled: "Environmental Injustice: Lead Poisoning in Indiana". This 71-page report will be provided to all board members for their review and will be included in next month's agenda. The Indiana Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights submitted the report regarding civil rights concerns regarding lead poisoning and environmental justice in Indiana, with a focus on lead exposure and lead poisoning impacting Indiana's children of color. The report acknowledges that the continued refusal to amend the blood level contamination level from 10 ug/dL to the nationally recommended 5 ug/dL in order to receive critical resources speaks to ongoing government and regulatory neglect of Indiana's citizens of color.

The Board will continue to focus reducing the lead poisoning of the children in our community.

V. HEALTH OFFICER PRESENTATION AND REPORT

20-49 Discussion and Vote on October 2020 Health Officer's Report

Dr. Einterz reported that responding to the COVID-19 pandemic continued to dominate the work of most of the units within the Department.

Assistant Environmental Director Brett Davis reminded Dr. Einterz that the tick season has begun and that everyone should be cautious.

Dr. Einterz briefly reviewed the various department's activities and noted that nursing was busy with immunizations in October. The clinic remained open as did the Department of Health notwithstanding many offices being closed to the public in the county-city building due to the coronavirus.

Dr. Kirsch noted that the Food Services Unit is down an inspector, and whether that impacted the number of inspections being conducted. Food Services Director Carolyn Smith responded and indicated that the unit was maintaining a high number of inspections and that there have been several applications for the open spot. Interviews are being conducted and it is expected that a new hire will be on board in a relatively short time.

Emily Dean requested an update regarding the restaurant/bar owners' meetings with the Department of Health. Environmental Health Director Mark Espich responded that the meetings went well, that all in attendance agreed to implement the recommendations at their particular establishment, and that many of the owners provided information to all in attendance as to how to implement the restrictions and work together to provide a safe place for people to gather.

Dr. Einterz emphasized that the measures put in place were designed to protect everyone, to include the workers and guests, rather than to consider an order to close businesses that may be contributing to the spread of the coronavirus. There appears to be support for the Ordinance requiring employees to wear masks, as well as the ongoing recommendations by the health officer that businesses require their guests to wear masks, social distance and use hand sanitizer.

Board members approved Dr. Einterz's October 2020 Health Officer's Report.

VI. DEPUTY HEALTH OFFICER PRESENTATION

20-50 COVID-19 Update

Dr. Fox noted that during the month of October every unit within the Department of Health was involved in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic.

He also noted that health system partners continued to participate in the Unified Command process and met regularly to share information and to determine the best protocols available to meet the demands of this virus.

Those demands included addressing the continued need for testing sites; timely processing of test results; the significant surge in COVID-19 positive cases in the long-term care facilities and managing the data from those facilities; contact tracing and quarantine protocols; vaccine distribution planning; enforcement of the new ordinance requiring employees of a business to wear a mask and the imposition of a fine if there is a violation; the recommendation that high schools proceed to virtual learning through the winter break into January, elementary schools to continue in-person learning, and middle schools to decide on a school-to-school basis; to avoid gatherings outside your immediate household and avoid large gatherings; to support carry-out dining in lieu of in-restaurant dining and to recommend businesses permit employees to work remotely when possible.

Twenty-five (25%) percent of all COVID-19 cases have occurred in our county in the past two weeks, with fifteen (15%) percent occurring last week. The hospitals ICU wards are at capacity and the use of ventilators are nearing full capacity. Twelve hundred cases were reported in a 3-day stretch. These numbers present serious concerns as December and the winter months approach.

Emily Dean questioned whether plans were in place to address the homeless population through the winter months. Dr. Fox responded that he has been in contact with the various residential facilities providing services to the homeless and all have a specific area in their facility to isolate anyone positive for COVID-19. Also, a "motels for now program" is available for housing if necessary. The State has put in place a facility to serve the District of which St. Joseph County is included. It is a quarantine facility located in Valparaiso.

The weather amnesty facilities have put in place COVID testing and antibody testing in an effort to maintain a safe environment for those in need of temporary shelter.

Dr. Kirsch noted that the number of children being tested for lead poisoning is down and that children are spending more time at home which could impact the number of children being infected with lead poisoning. Dr. Fox acknowledged that the testing is down as well as the well child visits. This also has an impact on immunizations and other protective services.

Dr. Fox will continue to monitor the lead poisoning testing in children and will continue to interact with LabCorp, the successor to the South Bend Medical Foundation, to facilitate and simplify the process for referral from the Department of Health of children in need of lead poisoning testing with no cost to the family.

Dr. Beidinger-Burnett questioned the extent of the positive COVID-19 cases at the county jail and Dr. Fox responded that the Department of Health is not receiving updated communication from the jail. He is working to improve the situation and have the results placed in the Department of Health's database for COVID-19 testing.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

20-52 Community Perspective – Dr. Genevieve Lankowicz

Dr. Genevieve Lankowicz, Chief Medical Officer, St. Joseph Medical Center, St. Joseph Health System, appeared to express her gratitude to the Department of Health and the efforts being made to mitigate the surge in the COVID-19 pandemic.

She took this opportunity to describe some statistics occurring at the hospital; challenges of the staff; and optimism with regards to new medication from Lilly to treat the virus and the vaccines that will be available in the near future.

She explains there are approximately 30 patients currently at the hospital in serious condition with COVID-19, and there have been several recent deaths. Units have been expanded to treat all patients positive with COVID-19, and there are 35 travel nurses assisting the staff with these patients. The COVID-19 testing site on Elm Road is not able to handle the numbers asking for the test. There are currently 85 total patients with COVID-19 at the hospital and there are three expert disease specialists treating these patients. Additional doctors have been recruited.

She related a story of a nurse who had stayed with a patient who passed away with COVID-19. At the end of her shift she stopped to get milk at a convenience store on her way home and was ridiculed by others in the store for wearing a mask. This episode was very upsetting and adds to the strain in dealing with this pandemic.

On a more optimistic note, she noted that vaccines from two different companies were expected to be approved within the next two weeks. These vaccines are expected to be made available to the healthcare workers at the hospital. Also, a new medication nicknamed "SAM" has been received from Lilly and has been provided to a patient at the hospital that improved significantly with this medication.

Board members thanked Dr. Lankowicz for her presentation and information communicated at this meeting.

20-51 Unit Spotlight – Health Equity, Epidemiology & Data (HEED)

Cassy White, Director, explained that she has been in this position since July 2020. The Department includes two community health workers, one social worker, and three public health fellows.

A power point presentation was included in her remarks and will be included and will be attached and made part of the minutes.

The department activities include disease surveyance; addressing health disparities (insurance, lead, social needs and adverse child experiences); and implicit bias training.

She introduced the three public health Fellows being funded by Notre Dame. There are Mary Wachira, Frank Spesia and Juan Esteban Baus. Each gave a presentation with regards to the data being collected and analyzed, as well as the response provided from various community agencies.

Mary explained that her focus is Health Equity Research. This involves documenting and visualizing the burden of disease, health outcomes and disparities by race, gender, age, education and income in St. Joseph County.

Frank is focusing on Adverse Child Experience and Response. The power point presentation included the research being conducted; potential-dashboard indicators; and the goal of creating an operational plan for community outreach and data sharing.

Juan is focusing on lead research and analyzing health disparities among races and ethnicities in our county as manifested by elevated blood lead levels.

VIII. OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business conducted at this meeting.

IX. BOARD NOTIFICATIONS

The Board noted the hiring of Allison Zandarski, Environmental Health Specialist and the resignation of Emma Smith, Social Worker.

X. PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were 3 residents utilizing their 3-minute opportunity to provide public comment to board members.

1. Latorya Greene of South Bend.

Miss Greene explained that she was a policy coordinator for Smoke Free Coalition and wanted to notify board members that the South Bend Common Council is considering an amendment to the 2016 Smoke Free Ordinance. The request was made by a business owner wanting to open a cigar smoking establishment, but the exception under consideration would seriously undermine the restrictions currently in effect.

She asked for the support of the Board of Health in opposing the amendment. The South Bend Common Council is considering public comment at their next meeting scheduled for November 23, 2020, and she requested that the Board prepare a statement to be presented at that time.

Board members discussed and acknowledged the importance of providing a statement in opposition to the proposed amendment and unanimously approved that Dr. Beidinger-Burnett would prepare this statement for presentation November 23rd.

2. Barbara White of South Bend.

Miss White indicated that she was the Assistant Dean of Nursing at IUSB. She thanked the Board for its support for mask wearing as well as the Board's recognition that racism is a public health issue.

She offered an opportunity for the College of Health Sciences at IUSB to collaborate with the Board on public health matters.

3. Amy Drake of Granger.

Miss Drake reminded board members that the science behind mask wearing is not convincing. She believes that the mandates to wear masks have not had an effect on the spread of the COVID-19 virus.

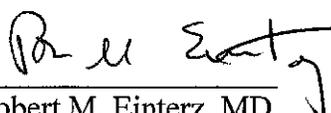
XI. TIME AND PLACE OF NEXT REGULAR MEETING

The next regular meeting of the St. Joseph County Board of Health is scheduled for Wednesday, December 16, 2020, at 4:30 p.m., at the St. Joseph County Department of Health, 8th Floor Board Room.

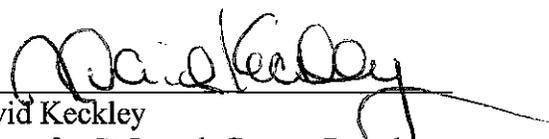
XII. ADJOURMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 5:55 p.m.

ATTEST:


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

Respectfully submitted,


J. David Keckley
Attorney for St Joseph County Board
of Health