

TETON COUNTY BOARD OF HEALTH MEETING MINUTES

December 16, 2022

Present: Melissa Moyer, Austin Moyer, Tim Sinton, Lin Wright, Randy Morris, Sam Carlson, Elaine Sedlack and via remote Barb Shaffer and Ken Bassmann.

Guests: Marcia Quillan (TCHD) and Melody Martinson (Choteau Acantha).

The meeting was called to order by Melissa Moyer at 8:05 am in the Teton County Courthouse Annex Conference Room.

Public Comment: No members of the public were present.

Approval of Minutes: The minutes of the June 15, 2022 meeting were reviewed as a quorum was not present at the September 14, 2022 meeting. Tim moved the minutes be approved as written. The motion was seconded by Lin and approved unanimously. The minutes of the September 14, 2022 meeting were reviewed. Elaine requested the minutes be signed by Melissa Moyer as acting secretary. Tim moved the minutes be approved as amended. The motion was seconded by Sam and approved unanimously.

New Business:

Health Department Updates:

Influenza and COVID Immunizations: Melissa reported they have been very busy giving immunizations including 600 Bivalent Covid shots and 850 flu shots.

Electronic Health Records (EHR): Melissa reported Teton County Health Department (TCHD) has purchased an EHR program and the staff has been trained in its use. The program can document services given and will reduce paper work and duplication of services. They will be able to enter immunizations in the new EHR program which will interface with state health department immunization records.

Communicable Disease:

COVID: Melissa reported there has been a recent rise in COVID cases again with Teton County considered an area of high community transmission. The state is counting both positive and negative PCR tests but only positive antigen tests which may skew statistics on the percent of positive COVID cases. Beginning in January, 2023 the state will no longer count in home tests in their statistics. The in home tests previously given out by TCH and the state are outdated and no longer good and the state will not be giving out any more. TCHD can do PCR tests for \$35. When they run out of the testing materials and must purchase them the price will increase to \$70. Barb reported COVID in home tests are available

for free through the federal government. There is an on-line form to fill out and submit to receive 4 in home tests.

Influenza: Melissa reported there have been 11 laboratory confirmed cases of influenza in Teton County, all of them Influenza A. Both Teton County and the state of Montana are reporting influenza which is earlier than usual for our area. Teton County typically sees influenza in late January through March.

Syphilis: Melissa reported both Teton County and the state of Montana are seeing an increase in the number of syphilis cases. There have been 5 cases in Teton County in 2022 compared to none in the previous few years. Statewide there were two stillbirths due to congenital syphilis. Melissa said it has been very difficult to do contact tracing because people either don't answer their phones or don't call back. There has been a call to action by the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS) to encourage providers to be alert to syphilis and if diagnosed, to obtain as much information as possible from the patient about contacts. Teton County or DPHHS may also do public outreach.

RSV (Respiratory Syncytial Virus): In response to a question from Melody, Melissa said while RSV is not a reportable disease it appears to be circulating. Medical providers are seeing people with respiratory infections which test negative for both influenza and COVID. Tim said there are 7 or 8 different types of respiratory illnesses circulating in the area currently. Dutton Schools stopped athletic team practices due to the number of students reporting illness.

PHEP (Public Health Emergency Preparedness) Plans:

HAN (Health Alert Network): Marcia said the medical provider contact part of the plan is changing. With the new system providers will be able to access HAN messages directly from the state. Ken asked about using the local CODE RED system to send HAN alerts but Melissa pointed out the alerts go to particular groups such as medical providers, veterinarians, or pharmacists, etc depending on the alert, and not the general public. It did not need approval by the board of health.

Sample Transport Plan: Reviewed by board of health members but did not need approval.

Sanitarian Updates: Austin reported he will be done with his inspections for 2022 by next week. There are a few people who need to update their licenses for the new year. He continues to inspect vacation home rentals. The city of Choteau has been helpful in identifying them for him. He is working on identifying and contacting those spread around the county outside Choteau.

Old Business:

Health Officer: Melissa reported Tim Sinton, who has been the Teton County Health Officer since 2008, has resigned effective the end of this year. He was also the medical advisor. She said most counties have a medical advisor and a medical officer. The medical officer is often the head of the health department. The position of medical advisor does not need to be posted as the position can be appointed by the county commissioners. The medical advisor orders vaccines and immunizations, etc. The commissioners appointed Gary Dale, MD, to the position. The health officer position has specific requirements and has been advertised. The board of health recommends the person for the position but the county commissioners must make the appointment. Melissa said we will have to meet again soon to make a recommendation. Gary Dale has expressed interest in the position but has not yet submitted a letter of interest. Ken asked if we could recommend Gary Dale pending submittal of his letter of interest, thereby possibly avoiding another meeting. Tim made a motion the board of health recommend the commissioners appoint Gary Dale, MD, as Health Officer pending receipt of his letter of interest. Randy seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously.

Sam commended Tim on his years of service to the board of health.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:49 am by Melissa. The next regularly scheduled meeting will be Wednesday, March 15, 2023 in the Teton County Courthouse Annex Conference Room in Choteau at 8:00 am or via ZOOM depending on the COVID-19 Pandemic situation.

Tim Sinton, P.A., Health Officer

Elaine Sedlack, Secretary