

TETON COUNTY BOARD OF HEALTH MEETING MINUTES

March 17, 2021

Present (Via Remote): Melissa Moyer, Austin Moyer, Lin Wright, Ken Bassmann, Tim Sinton, Barb Shaffer, Randy Morris, and Elaine Sedlack.

Absent: Sam Carlson.

Guests: Melody Martinson (Choteau Acantha) and Breanna Thomason (TCHD Chronic Disease Prevention).

The meeting was called to order by Melissa Moyer at 8:05 am via remote due to the on-going COVID-19 Pandemic.

Public Comment: No members of the public were present via remote.

Approval of Minutes: The minutes of the December 16, 2020 meeting were reviewed. Tim moved the minutes be approved as written. The motion was seconded by Ken and passed unanimously.

Old Business:

Community Health Needs Assessment: Melissa reported the assessment is going great with the help of the Yarrow Group. She said they have been very professional and easy to work with. They have organized the data and conducted 5 online meetings. Three priorities have been identified. They are:

1. Mental Health (same as previous community health needs assessment)
2. Thriving Families (building resiliency)
3. Health Communications (with county residents)

Melissa said there is one more meeting scheduled to align our strategies with state and national strategies.

New Business:

Health Department Updates:

COVID Cases: Melissa displayed a series of charts to review the COVID situation within the county. To date Teton County has had 436 cases which is a rate of 7,164 cases/100,000 population which is lower than the state rate. There have been 5 deaths. The first cases were reported in mid-June 2020, but the summer was relatively quiet. In September 2020, the number of cases began increasing and continued climbing monthly through January 2021. Cases have now settled back to one or two per week. Females make up 52% of the cases and males 48%. Most cases have been in people in their 40s, 50s, and 60s. She said young people are less likely to be tested because they often have no, or minor symptoms compared to older people. Bynum School is the only school in the county to have no cases. Choteau and Fairfield Schools had outbreaks. Fairfield School's 40 cases occurred within 3 to 4 weeks while Choteau

School's 46 cases were more spread out. Test results are usually returned within 1 to 2 days except for tests done outside the county which are sent to the county where the test was done before being forwarded to Teton County. Rapid tests are available at TCHD, BTMC (Benefis Teton Medical Center), and Fairfield Schools but are best used for people with COVID symptoms as they are not as accurate. BTMC used them on their staff and patients/residents. Fairfield Schools used them during their outbreak.

COVID Vaccination Clinics: Melissa reported that in addition to health department clinics in Choteau BTMC has immunized their staff and nursing home residents. Frontier Family Practice in Fairfield is immunizing people in Fairfield. Barb Shaffer is doing outreach to homebound residents with the Johnson and Johnson 1 dose vaccine. To date 1,809 county residents have received their first dose and 645 have received their second doses. Melissa said they gave 200 doses last week. Ken asked about people coming back for their second dose. Melissa responded most were except a few who were worried about possible reactions. She also said a few residents who are eligible have gotten COVID and must wait before they can receive the vaccine. Lin asked about recommendations after being vaccinated. Melissa said about 2 weeks after the second dose people are considered protected and would not have to quarantine if exposed. Fully immunized people can gather with small groups of other vaccinated people or can spend small amounts of time with low-risk unvaccinated people. On April 1st, the governor is opening vaccination to everyone 16 and over. Great Falls hospitals and other large hospitals in the state have the Pfizer vaccine for use on youth 16 to 18 years old. The other vaccines are only for people over age 18. To find a clinic for 16- to 18-year-olds go to [mtreadyclinic.org/clinic search](https://mtreadyclinic.org/clinic-search).

American Legion Memorial Day/Rodeo Updates: Ken reported the American Legion is going ahead with its Memorial Day ceremony which is outdoors at the cemetery and usually attracts only 30-40 people. They did it last year. He also wanted to get the sense of the board concerning the 4th of July Rodeo. Tim said things are looking better but Melissa said they are worse now than last summer. There will probably not be any directives from the state for the 4th of July activities. Ken said the high school rodeo has requested the Legion rodeo grounds for May 8th and 9th. Melissa said they have not reached out to the health department. She said other events are being planned including a 200-person funeral this week but no one is reaching out for advice. She said masks and precautions are still recommended. Tim suggested the rodeos should follow the same recommendations and precautions as last year with hand washing stations and hand sanitizer. Melissa asked how she should handle it. Should she contact people or wait for people to contact her? Melody asked that with no state restrictions and currently no county restrictions can the board require anyone to do anything? The idea of a mask mandate was discussed. Elaine asked if we could reasonably expect essential workers to be vaccinated by July 4th and Melissa replied yes. She said there is room in the clinics now for people who want to be immunized. Barb pointed out that with the high-risk people immunized it reduces the community risk. Tim asked if the Legion could do some vaccine promotion and encourage people to get immunized. Ken

suggested additional health department outreach to encourage people to contact the health department for advice when planning activities.

Chronic Disease Prevention Programs: Melissa said she has hired Breanna Thomason to oversee the Tobacco Prevention Program, Diabetes Prevention Program and the Walk with Ease Program. Breanna said 15 people had signed up for the Diabetes Prevention Program in person and 8 more are participating on-line. Quite a few are new to the program. She will be restarting the Walk with Ease Program on April 17th. Fifty-two participants enrolled in the program but just 20 completed the 6-week program. This program is designed for older folks or people with limited mobility due to arthritis and includes gentle exercise, walking and stretching.

Staff Changes: Melissa reported that Erin Jones, RN quit the end of February and Dustin Lobdell also left. Breanna moved to full time as did Dawn Baker. She said Dawn and Sue Schilling will be retiring in June. She has hired a new public health nurse who will begin April 1st.

AmeriCorps Volunteers: Melissa reported AmeriCorps Volunteers are recent college grads who do 1 year of work in their host community with the community paying part of the salary and the AmeriCorps program paying the rest. Roosevelt County has had AmeriCorps volunteers for the past 5 years. They are trying to expand this program across Montana in public health. Funding is available for Teton County to have 1 or 2 AmeriCorps volunteers for 6 months. The problem is finding affordable housing. They also need office space and computers. They could help with vaccination clinics and coordination and outreach. I volunteer, a male, is currently interested in coming. It was suggested to check into VRBOs that are not currently being rented due to COVID for possible housing.

Public Health Emergency Preparedness: The Specimen Transport Plan and the Communicable Disease Plan were reviewed, and the only change recommended concerned the transport of the CBAT (Chemical/Biological Agent) kit to the Montana State Laboratory Services Bureau. Can the state courier also be requested to transport it if the sheriff's office is not available as is the case with the DWES (Drinking Water Emergency) kit?

Sanitarian Updates: Austin reported he has been watching a subdivision (Golden Pond) being constructed between Vaughn and Fairfield. He is reaching out to unlicensed Air BnBs for inspections. He also hopes to do more schools. He said HB 269 would require septic systems be approved by county commissioners. Elaine pointed out HB 121 would limit the power of boards of health and subject them to review by county commissioners. Melissa said she did not think this would have much effect in Teton County.

Melissa said she is hoping to do COVID vaccine clinics in every community as more vaccine becomes available.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:25 am. The next regularly scheduled meeting will be Wednesday, June 16, 2021 in the Teton County Courthouse Annex at 8:00 am or via ZOOM depending on the COVID situation.

Tim Sinton, P.A., Chairman

Elaine Sedlack, Secretary