

TETON COUNTY BOARD OF HEALTH MEETING MINUTES

December 16, 2020

Present (via Remote): Melissa Moyer, Austin Moyer, Ken Bassmann, Barb Shaffer, Tim Sinton, Jim Hodgskiss, and Elaine Sedlack.

Absent: Randy Morris and Lin Wright.

Guests: Melody Martinson, Lora Wier, and Dustin Lobdell.

The meeting was called to order by Melissa Moyer at 8:00 am via remote due to the COVID-19 Pandemic.

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

Approval of Minutes: The minutes of the September 23, 2020 meeting were reviewed. Tim moved the minutes be approved as written. The motion was seconded by Barb and passed unanimously.

Old Business:

Community Health Needs Assessment: Melissa reported the Yarrow Group is continuing work on it and should have a draft report completed by the end of the week. They are working with Annie Olson from Benefis Teton Medical Center (BTMC). A survey was sent out to key stake holders and responses were collected and analyzed along with information from pre-pandemic surveys. Next year (2021) the Community Health Improvement Plan will be prepared.

Hospital District: Jim reported on the discussions and input from community members on the best use of the money from the hospital district. Most people want the money to go to health care. Other requests were for the money to go to the Fairfield Community Hall remodel or childcare. Jim said the Fairfield Community Hall is a 501c3 organization and the money cannot be given to a 501c3 organization. It has to be used for health care which eliminates childcare although the commissioners would still like to see that community problem resolved. It was also suggested the money be given back to the taxpayers, but Jim said that would be a bookkeeping nightmare.

Jim said the health department needs more room and the commissioners are talking with BTMC administrator Louie King to try to find more room. BTMC wants the health department to remain in the building, but the hospital district money cannot be used to remodel space in the hospital. In the meantime, the commissioners have given the health department a room in the courthouse for the chronic disease coordinator. Melissa said Breanna May Thomasson has been hired for that part time job to replace Carli Neal. The office is on the main floor across from the conference room. Jim also said the commissioners want to support the health department and appreciate all the work they have been doing through the current pandemic.

New Business:

Health Department Update:

New Employee: Melissa introduced Dustin Lobell who will work as a disease intervention specialist working full time on COVID issues including contact tracing. He was hired through a Public Health Emergency Preparedness Grant which runs for 2 years through October of 2022. He was most recently working as a behavior intervention specialist at the school. He moved here 2 ½ years ago as his wife is from here.

COVID Cases: Melissa reported that to date there have been 286 cases reported in Teton County and 3 deaths. There was a rapid climb in the number of cases over the last 2 months, but it appears to have spiked and is now dropping. There was a spike after Thanksgiving including in the schools with Choteau Schools seeing 20 cases and Fairfield 34 last week and up to 40 now. Teton County's average number of cases per 100,000 people remains below the state average. Most of the county's cases are in the 10-19, 40-49, 50-59, and 60-69 age groups with 51% being females. She reported many of the cases have mild or no symptoms and there are probably many more asymptomatic cases. In response to a question from Elaine about the sewage viral load Melissa said the sewage did show an increase in the COVID viral load during the peak and has since dropped. Elaine asked Ken how EMS was responding and whether they were using universal precautions on all their calls. Ken replied on all calls they were wearing gloves and masks and sometimes also shields, and goggles and they disinfect the ambulance after each run. They also have a UV device to disinfect stethoscopes and similar small equipment.

COVID Testing: Melissa reported most test results are returned in 1-2 or 3 days. Some take 6-7 days which makes public health intervention very difficult. Frontier Family Practice in Fairfield has been doing many tests. BTMC is limiting testing to 10 per day. TCHD is doing some drive up testing and using the hospital courier to deliver them to the state lab. Melissa said BTMC is not interested in doing rapid testing except on some staff as supplies are limited. Tim said Great Falls Clinic is doing rapid testing only for staff or patients being admitted to the hospital. Melissa reported there is a nurse practitioner in Heart Butte doing rapid testing on anyone with a prescription. She also said Alluvion Health out of Great Falls did testing in Fairfield on Monday, December 7th and Choteau on Monday, December 14th and will return to Choteau on Monday, December 21st. They are testing people with symptoms or who are contacts of known cases. She said it is hard to track results of tests done by Alluvion Health because the results go to Cascade County Health Department first and they must then send the results to Teton County either directly or through the state. It helps if people let her know they have been tested. Jim asked if it was possible for the county commissioners to know when a county employee tests positive so appropriate deep cleaning can be

done in county buildings. Melissa said HIPPA rules prohibit that. It is up to the employee to inform their employer.

Quarantine Rule Changes: Melissa reported CDC updated their quarantine rules 2 weeks ago. If a person tested negative after their last exposure, they can be released from quarantine 10 days after that exposure. If a person tests negative 5 days after their last exposure, they can be released from quarantine in 7 days but must do symptom checks every day. There is a program called SARA which is an alert that exposed people can enroll in to get a call or text with a list of symptoms to check and report on daily. People in assisted living and nursing homes must still be quarantined for a full 14 days. She said incubation remains 14 days for COVID but only about 10% of cases occur more than 7 days after exposure. People must still test negative before release from quarantine. Melissa said it is nice to give people options because the prospect of a 14-day quarantine really scares people and reduces their compliance.

COVID Vaccine: Melissa said Montana is getting 10,000 doses of the Pfizer vaccine initially. CVS and Walgreens are supposed to be administering vaccine in rural areas and long-term facilities. BTMC has queried their staff about who wants to receive the vaccine. Deb Coverdell has queried the county's EMS responders to find out who wants to receive the vaccine and plans to prioritize those who do most of the calls. The state should also be getting the Moderna vaccine later. Tim said they are giving the vaccine today at Great Falls Clinic to the staff. Lora Wier said she was on the state team managing the roll-out of the vaccine and they meet weekly. There are about 90 people on the team.

Pondera County Health Department: Melissa reported the entire staff of 4 at the Pondera County Health Department resigned due to lack of support from their county commissioners and board of health. They have since hired a part time contact tracer from Big Sandy. They are hiring an LPN and maybe another part time person which is not good enough. Elaine pointed out they can't just hire people without public health experience and expect them to do the job. They need training and supervision. Melissa said Teton County Health Department has a regional obligation for mutual aid, but they are so busy they are unable to help. She said the state has been lenient except for WIC clients. There are over 100 WIC clients. Dawn and Sue are trying to keep in contact with them. She said Hill County is helping some. She also said Marias Medical Center has signed up to help but they don't want a temporary arrangement if Pondera County wants it back. They have requested the Pondera County Board of Health meet and make a decision. Jim said wages are part of the issue. There is funding available to hire help, but it is for 2 years only and some counties are reluctant to hire someone for only 2 years and people are also reluctant to apply for a 2-year job.

Winter Sports: Melissa said the Montana High School Sports Association is setting the rules for winter sports. Basketball will begin in January. Melody Martinson said for wrestling there is a limit on the number of kids allowed in the building and in matches

and the number of matches in a day. Jim said wrestlers can't shake hands before a meet.

Environmental Health and Sanitation Updates:

COVID Non-Compliance Complaints: Austin said the state has an online form people can fill out to make complaints about non-compliance. The form is then sent down to county sanitarians to deal with. Ninety percent of the complaints are about bar and restaurant employees not wearing masks and not requiring masks be worn by patrons. use masks. He has received a couple of complaints on health care providers and massage parlors. He follows up by phone or email to explain the rules and usually gets compliance. He has no enforcement ability. Cases would have to go to the courts and so far, the case in Flathead County was thrown out by the court. There is a case pending in Gallatin County, but it deals with a business not shutting down at the required time. Austin can refuse to renew their license if it is near the end of the year, otherwise he would refer them to the board of health.

Melissa thanked Jim for his time on the board of health and county commission as Jim is retiring. Sam Carlson will take his place.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:30 am. The next regularly scheduled meeting will be Wednesday, March 17, 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