

MINUTES
Tompkins County Board of Health
February 22, 2022
12:00 Noon
Virtual Meeting via Zoom

Approved 3.22.22

Present: Christina Moylan, Ph.D., President; Edward Koppel, MD; Susan Merkel; and Ravinder Kingra

Staff: Brenda Grinnell-Crosby, Public Health Administrator; Samantha Hillson, Director of Health Promotion Program; Deb Thomas, Director of Children with Special Care Needs; William Klepack, MD, Medical Director; Claire Espey, Director of Community Health; Harmony Ayers-Friedlander and Skip Parr, Environmental Health.

Excused: Melissa Dhundale, MD; Shawna Black; Samara Touchton; Frank Kruppa, Public Health Director; David Evelyn, MD; Liz Cameron, Director of Environmental Health; William Troy, County Attorney and Karan Palazzo, LGU Administrative Assistant

Guests:

Call to Order: Dr. Moylan called the regular meeting of the Board of Health (BOH) to order at 12:00 p.m.

Privilege of the Floor: No one was present.

Approval of December 7, 2021 and January 25, 2022 Minutes: A quorum was not met as approval is need from the legislature of two members.

Financial Summary: Ms. Grinnell Crosby reported that a financial report was not included in the packet this month as the fourth quarter state aid claim was revised to include the imminent threat (when the associated lines exceed the projected expenditures, and there is a declared imminent threat, we become eligible for 50% reimbursement on those expenditures versus 36%). The department continues to work on a variety of COVID related grants to balance out books from 2021 and 2022. The 2021 closing report should be available next month.

Administration Report: Mr. Kruppa was not present.

Health Promotion Program Report: Ms. Hillson had nothing to add to her written report included in the packet. She reported that interviews for the health educator position (a combination position between healthy neighborhoods and tobacco-free communities grant programs) start today.

Strategic Plan Update: Ms. Hillson and Mr. Kruppa updated the BOH Chair, Dr. Moylan and CSB, Chair Dr. Morog on the strategic plan.

The Integration Team interviewed branding agencies to assist with the development of a new logo and name for the combined mental and public health departments that reflects the new identity. A vendor was selected from four finalists and after finalizing a contract, the name of the branding agency will be announced publicly. There was a discussion of engagement and involvement in the process with both Board chairs. The process will take three to five months and anticipates starting in March 2022.

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The Services Team focuses on the internal understanding of services and programs across the organization to better communicate to the larger public and update staff directory. Ms. Espey will update.

Dr. Moylan added that Mr. Kruppa emailed a summary integration update to all board members. She asked that those with any concerns in the process to please contact her via email.

Medical Director's Report and Discussion: Dr. Klepack shared his screen of current COVID data for Tompkins County:

- Hospitalizations are in the single digits
- Mandatory boosters for healthcare workers
- Seven-day average trend of new positive cases is down
- Community transmission is above 200
- Less than 2% positive tests
- Seasonal influenza is on a downtick
- Boosters enhance the diversity and also create a broader spectrum of antibodies
- NYS data shows only the omicron variant circulating
- Reinfections tend to be less common if one is fully vaccinated
- COVID-19 is still a pandemic not yet endemic
- TCHD advises one to continue to mask in, public spaces, inside businesses if one's risk makes it advisable to do so even though NYS has removed the public mask mandate.

Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC)/Adult Use Cannabis: Dr. Klepack shared that the Office of Cannabis Management (OCM) continues to staff itself and recruit. Rules and regulations are expected to be available in the spring to inform growers and producers of cannabis how to submit applications. Rules and regulations for retail sales and consumption may take up to 12-18 months with a 60-day comment period that will follow.

Dr. Klepack referred to a previous discussion of "THC sticker sales". Selling stickers which lead to a gift of THC at the register is illegal. Cease and desist orders have been issued to businesses involved in this type of activity.

OCM must consider how to deal with retail sales at festivals by caterers and regarding edibles at restaurants. What other products can be sold at retail and consumption locations will also need to be addressed.

Ms. Merkel referred to Dr. Klepack's report regarding the increase of Opioid deaths. She asked about the status of the creation of consumption facilities in NYS. Dr. Klepack responded that a consumption facility in Ithaca is not likely in the near future, but that two are underway in NYC.

Dr. Koppel asked about criteria for removing mandates in the county. Dr. Klepack stated that he believes that Frank Kruppa, Public Health Director, has said he would consider removing mandates based on the seven-day new positive case total should it fall to a low enough level.

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Division for Community Health (DCH) Report: Ms. Espey reported that COVID cases have slowed down. All case investigations were transitioned to the NYSHD virtual call center on January 28th. Tompkins County's temporary COVID response team has phased out and the remaining staff will work to monitor quality, and provide support and oversight to NYSHD as needed. Public Health fellows, Shuai Yuan and Dorota Kossowska will support the division approach shifting our focus to higher risk congregate settings and support organizations and companies when needed. They will also support the TCHD in building a new public health workforce inclusive of a mentorship component.

Ms. Espey referred to her report included in the packet on the updates of the non-COVID-related services. She congratulated the team on the WIC RFP application submitted but the funding agency is requiring all applicants to resubmit.

Dr. Moylan asked a question regarding non-COVID-related public health issues, state advisories and social determinants of health. Ms. Espey responded that NYSHD issued an advisory regarding the increasing rates of primary and secondary congenital syphilis statewide but there are no cases at this time in Tompkins County. She said they will integrate with provider offices to ensure support is available for preventable diseases.

Dr. Klepack added that most of syphilis cases reported by NYSHD was not for upstate NY. The rates over the last three to four years in Tompkins County are not remarkable but it is an opportunity for case review. He will include the data in his practitioner bulletin to prompt people to remain sensitive to it moving forward. There are focus groups of facilities and practitioners around the county who focus on syphilis and STDs when upticks arise. An anonymous app is used and are unable to trace cases.

Ms. Hillson added that there is a coalition to address STDs and will follow up with the public health nurses who coordinate the meetings because the meetings may not have been scheduled during COVID.

Dr. Koppel asked about the demographics of syphilis cases. Dr. Klepack responded that the demographics covers a broad range of ages which includes higher education aged individuals and 40-50 year old. Ms. Hillson will provide updated data of demographics for the next meeting.

Ms. Espey will follow up on the lime disease data.

Children with Special Care Needs Report: Ms. Thomas reported two more therapists are in the process of applying to the state to help with the shortage of speech therapists in Tompkins County, but there remains 30 plus children on the waitlist. Advocacy work is going on from the Children's Agenda Group and Common Ground out of Rochester at the state level.

County Attorney's Report: NA

Environmental Health Report: Ms. Cameron was not present, but Mr. Parr was available to answer questions.

Dr. Moylan asked about the status of the Grassroots Festival. Mr. Parr said they are waiting for updated maps. So far, Grassroots has generally met, all the dealines outlined in the BOH Order.

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Community Mental Health Services Board (CSB) Report: Ms. Ayers-Friedlander reported:

- CSB continues work on the bylaws and looking at merger activities
- CSB's March agenda includes community provider representation and family members speaking on fentanyl-laced drugs and overdoses in the community
- In the next few weeks, a decision will be made on the specialized onsite pharmacy to serve the mental health needs of the TCMH clinic and PROS clients

The next meeting is Tuesday, March 22nd, 2022 @ Noon.

Adjournment: Adjourned at 1:00 p.m.