

KNOX COUNTY BOARD OF HEALTH MINUTES
October 28, 2020; from 5:00 p.m. to 8:22 p.m.
Knox County Health Department
Via Zoom Meeting

Present:

Martha Buchanan, MD, Secretary
Dianna Drake, PharmD
Maria Hurt, DNP
Jack E. Gotcher, Jr., DDS, Chair
Glenn Jacobs, Knox County Mayor
Patrick O'Brien, MD
Ani Roma, Citizen Representative
James Shamiyeh, MD
Marcy Souza, DVM
Lisa Wagoner, RN; Representing Superintendent Bob Thomas, Knox County Schools

Absent: None

Others Attending:

KCHD: Charity Menefee, Danielle Davis (zoom host), Narda Cappuccilli (recorder)
Knox County: David Sanders, Esq. representing Knox County Law Department
University of Tennessee Knoxville: Chancellor Plowman, Jacob Randolph, Dr. Katie Cahill

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Dr. Gotcher called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

II. ESTABLISHMENT OF A QUORUM

Dr. Gotcher requested Ms. Cappuccilli take roll call, to confirm the establishment of the quorum, all ten Board members were in attendance, therefore there was a quorum.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM OCTOBER 14, 2020 MEETING

Motion made by Dr. Souza and seconded by Dr. Drake, to accept the minutes as written.
Dr. Buchanan noted on page five, Roberta Sturm's name was misspelled.
The motion passed, via roll call vote, nine affirmatives and Dr. Gotcher abstained, as he was not in attendance, on October 14, 2020.

IV. SET THE AGENDA

Motion to set the agenda was made by Dr. Souza, seconded by Dr. Drake, which passed via roll call vote, unanimously, 10 to 0.

V. DISCUSSION WITH DR. KATIE CAHILL, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, Howard H. Baker Jr. Center for Public Policy and ADJUNCT PROFESSOR, Department of Political Science and MPPA Program at UNIVERSITY OF TN

Dr. Cahill highlighted the Center's CORE-19 website, which is updated daily and has seven survey waves. The Statewide web-based survey of 1,000 Tennesseans provides data on their attitudes toward re-opening of the economy to help guide public policy.
See attached PowerPoint presentation, Tennessee Pulse Survey, October 2020.
Key findings included most Tennesseans were extremely or very concerned about the spread of COVID-19, the greatest are concerned about the health of their families, with 85% reported

wearing masks, which has increased over the last few months. About half were most concerned about the economy and the other half about the health impact of COVID-19. An overwhelming majority of Tennesseans report practicing of the Five Core Actions over 75% of the time. Across activities, one in five reported they will not be ready to re-engage until case loads were steadily decreasing.

VI. KNOX COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT BENCHMARK PRESENTATION by DR. BUCHANAN

Dr. Buchanan reviewed the current local situation and the five benchmarks, available on the health department's website as follows:

- 105 new confirmed cases since yesterday's report.
- 12,828 confirmed and probable cases of COVID-19 in Knox County since March 2020.
- 626 probable cases.
- 11,879 of our cases are inactive, giving us 1,472 active cases.
- 464 individuals have been hospitalized at some point in their illness.
- 69 Knox County residents are currently hospitalized, our highest number since March 2020.
- 103 deaths in Knox County, with two additional deaths today.

Benchmark 1: Sustained reduction of stability in new cases for 14 days / Yellow

We have experienced six 'red' flags and one 'yellow' flag, but not on consecutive days. Over the past 14 days, we've seen an average of 114 new cases a day, and over the past seven days, the average has increased to 129 cases per day.

Benchmark 2: Community-wide sustained and increased diagnostic testing with consistent or decreased test result reporting turnaround time / Yellow

Regarding testing there were five 'red' flags and two 'yellow' flags, some falling on consecutive days. Since the beginning of October, overall testing has trended consistently but at a lower volume than we'd like to see. Regarding lab turnaround time, there were two flags on consecutive days, continues to average about 2.5 days.

Benchmark 3: Sustained or increased public health capability / Green

KCHD has initiated investigations of all new cases within 24 hours and close contacts within 48 hours, which is a hard-fast goal of KCHD's and has been consistent since March 16, 2020, with our current epi support team.

Benchmark 4: Health care system capabilities remain within current and forecasted surge capability / Yellow

During the past 14 days, we have noted one 'red' flag and three consecutive 'yellow' flags, for inpatients with COVID-19. These numbers are the highest we have seen yet and have remained at a consistently high level. Additionally, we noted four consecutive 'red' flags for patients in the ICU; and three consecutive 'red' flags and two 'yellow' flags were noted for patients requiring ventilators. Both metrics are based on our published metrics that illustrate statistically significant shifts in the data.

After speaking with our hospital partners, they stated their benchmark should be represented as yellow, because they are currently below surge capacity and have adequate staffing capabilities for the current number of patients.

Benchmark 5: Sustained or decreased COVID-19 related death rate for identified positive or probable cases / Yellow

Over the past two weeks, we have seen twelve deaths, with four in the last seven days.

Supplemental Data:

Chart 1: New COVID-19 Daily Cases per 100,000 Population

This chart will show the seven and fourteen-day trend line. As of today, our fourteen-day trend line shows 24 cases per 100,000 and our seven-day trend lines shows 27 cases per 100,000; both trend lines have increased upward.

Chart 2: COVID-19 Percent Positive Tests

This data is directly from the TDH-Tennessee Department of Health. The seven-day average for percent positive in Knox county is down from two weeks ago at 9.9 %

Dr. Buchanan noted in the distributed White House Task Force – State of Tennessee Report, dated 10/25/20, Knox county has moved from ‘orange’ to ‘red’, in the past two weeks; which may need to be considered in upcoming discussions.

Dr. Shamiyeh stated as healthcare stress shifts around in a 21-county area, when one area becomes stressed, those patients can tend to move around, but with the potential of becoming stressed due to increased patient volume.

VII. UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE MEDICAL CENTER AT KNOXVILLE DATA UPDATE by DR. SHAMIYEH

Dr. Shamiyeh presented data from the University of Tennessee Medical Center and some regional data on COVID hospitalizations, see attached PowerPoint.

Knox County Key Data Points:

- October is already the worst month of pandemic in terms of case growth and hospital inpatient census, setting the stage for a severe November
- Most vulnerable age demographics (51+) continue to see concerning case growth in Knox County and encouraging case levels in youngest age demographic, but both may be artifacts of predominately symptomatic testing
- Tennessee hospitals are currently beginning to feel impacts of COVID-19 on operations, that will likely affect local hospitals in November

VIII. EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS PRESENTATIONS

A. UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE

Chancellor Plowman spoke about the situation at UTK and their plans. See attached PowerPoint.

- 60 active cases, 51 are students, 9 are employees
5 new cases, as of yesterday
304 people in self-isolation, 89 are students living in campus dorms
178 are students off campus and 37 employees
- Continuing comprehensive testing strategies on campus, including pooled saliva testing of on-campus residential facilities since the end of September; every student living on campus will be tested every week; overall the positivity rate maintains at less than one percent.
- Dr. Brix study of 29 universities nationally shows college students have changed their behaviors, mask wearing, adapting, etc.
- UTK fraternity presidents independently initiated a pledge to lead the fight against the spread of COVID-19 on campus, to follow all the guidelines for social gatherings, on and off campus
- UTK is encouraging off campus students to participate in the testing program spring semester 2021
- November 22, 2020 classes end, with the delay of return to campus until January 20, 2021, all students are encouraged to be tested before leaving campus

B. KNOX COUNTY SCHOOLS

Lisa Wagoner presented information about Knox County Schools' COVID data and their process. See attached PowerPoint.

Dr. Gotcher inquired what the fill rate is for substitutes, which will be provided later.

Dr. Buchanan appreciated the partnership and diligence of the Knox County Schools to follow guidance and the display of concern for their students and our community.

Dr. Buchanan also stated that follow up with students will be completed together between the health department and the school system, when holiday breaks are scheduled.

IX. FEASIBILITY OF ADDITIONAL RESTRICTIONS by DR. SHAMIYEH

See attached PowerPoint.

- What to Expect in Next 5 Months
- Population Behavior Change
- Local Policy vs State-wide Policy
- De-escalation Metrics Challenges

Discussion continued regarding de-escalation and lifting of mask mandates and then having to reissue, with the increase of active cases and hospitalizations. Dr. Shamiyeh encouraged the discussion of guidance versus absolute, how are they used in a global sense. Dr. O'Brien stressed the importance of increasing the innovative education of the Five Core Actions in Knox county and surrounding counties working together, for the benefit of the entire region. Concerns included how more widespread adaption of mandate with a non-authoritative approach will increase pushback and anxiety, adding to the tension and fatigue.

X. FINALIZATION OF POTENTIAL METRICS by DR. BUCHANAN

Proposed Metrics for COVID-19 Mitigation Policy: Escalation and Recession. See attached PowerPoint.

We are above the escalation volume for testing, but we are not at the recession barrier, as we are still seeing about 100 plus cases per day.

Dr. Shamiyeh presented information to regional healthcare systems and the consensus was to keep the red, yellow, and green metrics but to add the yellow improving, yellow worsening and yellow stable. Additional discussion on the metrics will continue at upcoming meetings.

XI. REVIEW and DISCUSSION

A. COVID-19 FACE COVERING REGULATION, NO. 2020-1

Dr. O'Brien stated it is apparent, we need to keep this regulation in place as is written.

Dr. Buchanan showed slides from Tennessee Department of Health, data that shows Coronavirus rates in counties with mask mandates, specifically comparing case rates and doubling time; affirming masks work.

Ms. Roma confirming the Board's data driven decision-making, also recognized Dr. Cahill's research noting the high percentage of Tennesseans that agree with masking, and yet there is a small vocal group that have spoken out against it.

B. COVID-19 CURFEW REGARDING THE SALE AND CONSUMPTION OF ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE REGULATION, NO. 2020-5

This regulation will need to be renewed otherwise it will expire at 12:01 am tomorrow.

Dr. Buchanan reported there have been very few complains, no citations, she recommends leaving it in place.

Dr. Gotcher mentioned the economic presentation by Dr. Matt Harris, stating customer downturn was impacted by concern and fear, not necessarily from any regulations.

Dr. Buchanan mentioned a Vanderbilt study showed where all the mandates had been lifted in certain counties and the economic activity had not increased back to pre-Covid levels, in the state of Tennessee.

Dr. Buchanan made a motion to extend Regulation #2020-5, until 11:59 p.m. on November 13.

Dr. Drake seconded the motion, which passed via roll call vote, 9 to 1, with one descending vote by Mayor Jacobs.

C. COVID-19 SOCIAL GROUP TRANSMISSION SUPPRESSION REGULATION, NO. 2020-6

This regulation will need to be renewed otherwise it will expire at 12:01 am tomorrow.

Ms. Roma mentioned that Governor Lee has extended the State of Emergency, including meeting virtually. Discussion continued stressing the Five Core Actions to be practiced especially with family and friends gathering during the holidays, encouraging additional public service announcements, and inspiring the public's compliance. The Tennessee Pledge remains in place. No vote was taken, therefore this regulation will sunset on October 29, 2020 at 12:01 a.m.

XII. MEETING SCHEDULE for 2020

Dr. Buchanan proposed that we move the next meeting to Tuesday, November 10 and the following scheduled meeting is Wednesday, November 25 at 5 p.m.

A reminder that the November 10 meeting, will be the first meeting of the month, therefore includes a public forum.

Dr. Gotcher may not be available to chair the November 10 meeting, Dr. Souza is willing to step in as needed, to chair the next meeting.

XIII. DISCUSS INVITING ADDITIONAL GUEST SPEAKERS

Dr. Gotcher proposed inviting additional guest speakers to educate and enrich the public and the Board, on various topics. Initially he suggested addressing the psychological and psychiatric aspects of the additional stress and concerns, living in isolation with the pandemic, etc. with recommendations for speakers from local resources included: Helen Ross McNabb, Cherokee Health Systems, Mental Health Association of East Tennessee, or University of Tennessee's Department of Psychology.

XIV. MOTIVATING THE COMMUNITY, REINFORCING THE FIVE CORE ACTIONS

Dr. Shamiyeh complimented the media on conveying information regarding the Board of Health meetings and messages. He questioned what the role of the Board is. Dr. O'Brien listed educating the public, to increase participation with Knox County Commission, media, public and social media; to reach the broader community and region.

Dr. Buchanan inquired of the community leadership group that was initiated by Chancellor Plowman and Mayor Kincannon, if they would be able to reinforce and promote the Five Core Actions to the public. Mayor Jacobs stated that is not the role of that organization, although they would entertain discussion of ideas, with members of the Board.

Dr. Buchanan encouraged additional voices and groups carry the Five Core Actions message, in addition to the health department and those from the medical field.

Dr. Hurt reminded the Board of the suggestion of a dedicated effort by a group to focus on public education, by a speaker at the last public forum (Ms. Julie Grubaugh), or a 'workshop session', such as Knox County Commission.

Mr. Sanders stated with proper notification, board members are unlimited, other than open meeting limitations, if two or more members do something together; 48 hours' notice is required, published in the same fashion notices are currently. He will check if small meetings are addressed in the current executive order by Governor Lee. He also stated the webpage electronic forum, discussed at an earlier meeting, is not valid due to the statute which speaks of elected bodies in counties, since this group is not elected, but appointed, it cannot avail itself of that electronic forum; per the Office of Open Records Council. Mr. Sanders prefers for Board members to send professional journal article, for example, to staff member of the health department that is a non-member of the Board of Health, for posting on the Knox County Board of Health's webpage, whereby all Board members and the public have access to the information; stressing one must be very open in this process and extremely careful exchanging emails.

Dr. Buchanan reminded the Board, health department staff that are currently supporting the Board of Health, do have other day jobs. She is working to hire support staff for the Board, using the health departments' COVID-19 money.

Dr. Hurt inquired of Mr. Sanders to interpret the ordinance Knox County Commission is proposing, regarding the requirements of the public forum section of Knox County Board of Health meetings.

Mr. Sanders stated the ordinance must be voted and passed twice before it affects the Knox County Commission; it also may be amended prior to the second reading. He stated there is no enforcement provision to this ordinance, in the absence of specificity the Board chair and membership continue to have a large amount of control over the meetings. The County Commission felt the public needed to have the opportunity to speak more often and more people needed to have the opportunity to speak per meeting. This Board can set its own rules, as far as when and how; in as much as the ordinance is not specific, the Board has the authority to interpret the rules, the way it wants to; but that's only to the extent there's not an ordinance in place, as that would theoretically supersede the Board's procedural rules.

Dr. Buchanan suggested the Board have a representative present at the Knox County Commission meeting, besides herself; to hear the debate, what they are thinking, to understand their perspective and ask questions the Board may be concerned about. The next Knox County Commission Work Session is scheduled for Monday, November 9, at 5:00 p.m., in the Main Assembly Room, a face to face meeting, in the City County Building. This meeting format has the potential for the most discussion. Commission did inquire if the Board would be sending a representative in addition to Dr. Buchanan to the Work Session.

Dr. Hurt pointed out at past Board of Health meetings when public forums were scheduled, there were people pre-registered to be on the docket, that never attended and at one public forum meeting, no one registered to speak at the forum. She wanted to make it clear, the Board is here, open, and available to feedback from our fellow citizens.

Mayor Jacobs had a question regarding who empowers the Board of Health to make their own rules, Mr. Sanders referred that question to the Knox County Law Director.

XV. OTHER BUSINESS

Dr. Buchanan stated the Knox County Commission passed the resolution forming the advisory committee on health and economic well-being. Mayor Jacobs will be making appointments to that body over the next several months. The function and operations of the body is yet to be determined, it did include advising the Knox County Board of Health, although unsure if the final version included that statement. The final document will be sent to you directly by health department staff.

Dr. Shamiyeh said his primary focus is going to be helping guide UT Medical Center through any upcoming response, with the anticipation of difficult months ahead with COVID-19. Therefore, acknowledging the Board's need to concentrate their focus and efforts on public health, the economy, mental health, etc., as they balance all other responsibilities.

XVI. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Next Zoom meeting: **Tuesday**, November 10, 2020 at 5 p.m.

XVII. ADJOURNMENT

There being no other business, Dr. Buchanan moved to adjourn the meeting, with a second by Dr. O'Brien. The meeting was adjourned at 8:22 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Martha Buchanan, MD, Senior Director and Public Health Officer
Knox County Health Department
Secretary, Knox County Board of Health