

KNOX COUNTY BOARD OF HEALTH MINUTES
November 10, 2020; from 5:00 p.m. to 6:55 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

Absent:

Lisa Wagoner, RN; Representing Superintendent Bob Thomas, Knox County Schools

Others Attending:

KCHD: Katharine Killen, Kelsey Wilson (zoom host), Narda Cappuccilli (recorder)
Knox County: David Sanders, Esq. representing Knox County Law Department
University of Tennessee Knoxville: Dr. Spencer Gregg

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, nine of the ten Board members were in attendance, therefore there was a quorum.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM OCTOBER 28, 2020 MEETING

Motion made by Dr. Souza and seconded by Dr. Hurt, to accept the minutes as written.
The motion passed unanimously, via roll call vote, 9 to 0.

IV. PUBLIC FORUM

- Sherri Garrett – Questions regarding mask mandate, PCR testing contact tracing, noted email system was not operational, trust issues
- Kevin Hill – PCR testing
- Taylor Zukowski – UT COVID Data, with PowerPoint presentation with UTK information

Dr. O'Brien thanked each of the participants of the public forum for their insights, questions, and passionate presentations.

Mayor Jacobs apologized to the public and the Board, that Knox County IT had taken down the Board of Health's email site for maintenance and unintentionally neglected to reactive it, as it was not functioning for several weeks.

V. SET THE AGENDA

Motion to set the agenda was made by Mayor Jacobs, seconded by Dr. Shamiyeh, which passed via roll call vote, unanimously, 9 to 0.

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:

- 224 new confirmed cases since yesterday's report.
- 14,534 confirmed and probable cases of COVID-19 in Knox County since March 2020.
- 766 probable cases.
- 13,487 of our cases are inactive, giving us 1,692 active cases.
- 504 individuals have been hospitalized at some point in their illness.
- 78 Knox County residents are currently hospitalized, our highest number since March 2020.
- 121 deaths in Knox County, with two additional deaths today.

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

Over the past 14 days, we've experienced seven 'red' flags, of which three were on consecutive days. Our average of 156 new cases a day over the past seven days, and an average of 137 new cases per day, over the past 14 days.

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

Regarding testing there were seven 'red' flags and one 'yellow' flag, in the last 14 days; on two occasions, these flags occurred in three consecutive days. Regarding lab turnaround time, there have been eight 'red' flags and one 'yellow' flag, during this time, all of these occurred on consecutive 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.

Important to note, with the increase in volume in cases and contacts, it's becoming increasingly difficult for us to meet this benchmark. We have added staff and are exploring additional options for assistance with case investigations and contact tracing.

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

During the past 14 days, we have noted three 'red' flags and one 'yellow' flag, for inpatients with COVID-19, although the flags were not on consecutive days. Additionally, we noted four consecutive 'red' flags for COVID-19 patients in the ICU; and two 'red' flags were noted for patients requiring ventilators.

After speaking with our hospital partners, they stated their benchmark should be represented as stable 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 / Red

Over the past two weeks, we have seen 18 deaths related to COVID-19, with ten of which have occurred within 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 29 cases per 100,000 and our seven-day trend lines shows 33 cases per 100,000: both trend lines have increased upward.

Chart 2: COVID-19 Percent Positive Test

This data is directly from the TDH-Tennessee Department of Health. The seven-day average for percent positive in Knox County is 14.36%, which is an increase from previous reports.

Dr. Buchanan noted both trends are not in the direction we had hoped, with several red benchmarks, increasing cases and our largest new case count in the past 24 hours, which is most concerning. She encouraged the Board to consider this information carefully, in consideration of what can be done to slow the spread of COVID-19, in our community.

Dr. Hurt noted that we have never seen three 'red' flags simultaneously, confirmed by Dr. Gotcher, since August 2020.

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:

- Knox and surrounding counties have established a '*new normal*', in terms of COVID-19 inpatients, new cases, and cases among age demographics where the worst of the pandemic thus far is the likely best-case scenario going forward into flu season
- Sustained high positivity rates give us low confidence that we have an accurate assessment of the severity of virus transmission within the community
- Anticipate upcoming holidays are likely to ignite at least two additional spikes (like the spikes in late June and late September)
- Reasonable to expect a continuing worsening situation through January, possibly through April (vaccine effect will take some time)

VIII. EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS PRESENTATIONS

A. UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE KNOXVILLE

Dr. Spencer Gregg spoke about the situation at UTK and their plans. See attached PowerPoint.

- 82 active cases, 77 are students, 5 are employees
10 new cases reported and five new recoveries, since yesterday
390 people in self-isolation, 121 are students living in on-campus residential housing, 271 students off campus and 52 employees
- Continuing comprehensive testing strategies on campus, including pooled saliva testing of on-campus residential facilities, through November 13th. In the past seven weeks, we have collected 6,614 saliva testing samples, referred 265 for further testing and identified 63 positive cases from those pools. University sponsored isolation housing will be available into the break time
- Testing at the on-campus Student Health Center, has significantly increased
- Small cluster discovered, stemming from October 31 gathering of students, resulting in five positive cases and four close contacts, administration appreciated the students' full cooperation
- UTK is encouraging all students to participate in the testing program between Nov. 16-20, before they leave for the semester, to receive their results before the break. Additional hours have been added to the Student Health Center, on weekends and evenings until 7 p.m.
- Free take home COVID-19 testing kits are available from the Student Health Center
- Flu vaccine event scheduled on campus this week, student participation has increased this year; the impetus is that it is a mandated immunization for spring semester 2021, with a hold placed on a student's account, which would limit their academics and activities, on campus; the mandate applies to employees, also.
- November 22, 2020 classes end, with the delay of return to campus until January 20, 2021, spring semester campus wide testing strategy plans for the 2021, are forthcoming.
- Communication with parents continues, health and safety guidelines, website, letters, etc.

B. KNOX COUNTY SCHOOLS

Lisa Wagoner was absent; Knox County Schools' COVID-19 data and information is available on the KCS website. Dr. B stated four schools are operating partially or fully remote, mostly due to substitute availability.

IX. FINALIZATION OF POTENTIAL METRICS by DR. BUCHANAN

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

Dr. Buchanan confirmed both Recession Barrier and Escalation Barrier are based on a 28-day period; and confirmed with regional hospital systems to continue to use the traffic light concept to display levels of concern within the metrics, with the 'stratification of yellow'. The Positivity Rate continues to be above 10%, which is above our escalation barrier; with over 20 new cases per 100,000 cases.

Dr. Buchanan suggested using the metrics as a guide, not as an absolute, but to provided additional data information.

Dr. O'Brien moved to adopt the metrics, Dr. Souza seconded the motion, for further discussion. The Board is aware of the community's tolerance level for any additional restrictions, therefore stressing and encouraging the Five Core Actions, especially with Thanksgiving and December holidays approaching. Dr. Buchanan defined their job as to 'Reduce Risk' throughout the community, of which studies have proven that masks do impact the reduction of cases and hospitalizations, which will also affect the reduction of our seasonal flu.

Dr. Gotcher asked how long it will take for the COVID-19 vaccine to have a noticeable effect if distribution begins in December. Dr. Buchanan responded by stating the vaccine will trickle out, it will not flood the market, volume is not expected to be very high initially, she estimates it will be spring - summer before any perceptible community penetration, or possibly not until fall of 2021; some positive impacts may be noted early by more consistent work attendance of health care workers and first responders. The current highly effective vaccines projected to arrive first, have a two-dose requirement, with 28 days between injections and then a two-week period before full efficiency.

The motion to adopt the metrics as written, passed unanimously, via roll call vote, 9 to 0.

X. REVIEW and DISCUSSION

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

Dr. Buchanan mentioned that most complaints are due to establishments that are not enforcing the mask mandate. The health department continues to educate these businesses, noting most people are complying, encouraging the continuation of the mandate.

This regulation is in place until no longer needed and is to be discussed at every meeting.

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, November 12th, 2020.

Dr. Buchanan reported that the City of Knoxville, in conversation with Mayor Kincannon, is discussing enforcement within the city. There are 24 consistent establishments that the health department has had complaints about, continuing to educate and remind them of the 11 p.m. curfew. To date there have not been any citations issued, but many those violating the curfew are close to UT campus.

Ms. Roma reminded the Board that Wednesday, Nov. 25, the night prior to Thanksgiving, is one of the biggest nights of the year, for the service industry.

Dr. Hurt proposed a motion to extend Regulation No. 2020-5 until November 30th, 2020.

Dr. Souza seconded the motion, which passed via roll call, 8 to 1, with one dissenting vote by Mayor Jacobs.

XI. LENGTH and CONTENT of BOARD OF HEALTH MEETINGS by DR. BUCHANAN

Dr. Buchanan requested the consideration of the Board to shorten the length of upcoming meetings, by reviewing information prior to meetings, such as the educational institutions presentations, both UTK and Knox County Schools post their current information on their websites, as does the health department; and be prepared to ask questions about the previewed presentations, at the board meetings. The current information would also be posted on the Board of Health webpage, on the Knox County Health Department website. She also stated that when a guest speaker is requested to present to the Board, we are clear what the ask is, what specifically are we requesting information about.

Dr. Shamiyeh had concerns that the role of information dissemination to the public would be diminished, as this is the Board's voice and vehicle.

Dr. Souza reminded the Board that UTK students are on break until later in January 2021, therefore UTK reports may be impacted for the next few months.

Dr. Buchanan is willing to have a conversation with both UTK and Knox County Schools, regarding her suggestion to send presentations prior to the Board of Health meetings, for the Board to review and have someone available to answer questions during the live meeting.

Mr. Sanders stated that it would be helpful and a good practice to provide the backup data for the public, although not required.

Dr. Hurt suggested since the Board is reviewing data and trends, it may be helpful to see a comparison to the prior week's information.

Dr. Buchanan stated that Dr. Shamiyeh's regular presentations, provides a level of detail of the entire community and regionally.

XII. OTHER BUSINESS

Dr. O'Brien stated with recent conversations with Knox County Commissioners, they may be amending their public forum rules to provide 45 minutes and once per month. He is suggesting an interactive component to respond to the public forum speakers. He also encouraged Board members to initiate conversations with Commissioners.

Dr. Buchanan clarified there was an ordinance amendment that was withdrawn by the sponsor to change the frequency of public forums, at Knox County Board of Health meetings, to match Knox County Commission's, at every meeting. She also verified that 30 minutes for a public forum is currently written in the Knox County Board of Health Rules.

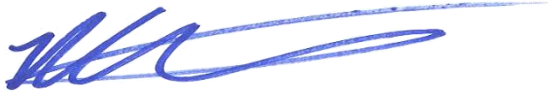
XIII. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Next Zoom meeting: Wednesday, November 25, 2020 at 5 p.m.

XIV. 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 6:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



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