

**KNOX COUNTY BOARD OF HEALTH MEETING MINUTES**  
**December 16, 2020; from 5:00 PM to 7:19 PM**  
**Knox County Health Department**  
**Via Zoom Meeting**

**Present:**

Martha Buchanan, MD, Secretary  
Dianna Drake, PharmD  
Jack E. Gotcher, Jr., DDS, Chair  
Maria Hurt, DNP  
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:** Katharine Killen (Zoom Host), Charity Menefee, Michelle Moyers (recorder)  
**Knox County:** David Sanders, Esq. representing Knox County Law Department

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

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

**II. ESTABLISHMENT OF QUORUM**

Dr. Gotcher requested Dr. Buchanan take roll call to confirm establishment of the quorum. All Board members were in attendance; therefore, the quorum was met.

**III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM DEC. 2 MEETING**

Motion made Dr. Souza and seconded by Dr. Drake to accept the minutes. The motion passed unanimously, via roll call vote, 10 to 0.

**IV. SET THE AGENDA**

Dr. O'Brien requested to withdraw Resolution 2020-C. He was the sponsor of Resolution 2020-C. Dr. Buchanan requested to add a resolution she had crafted and shared with the board this afternoon. Mr. Sanders provided guidance to Chair Dr. Gotcher on how to proceed with these amendments.

Motion was made by Dr. Souza and seconded by Dr. O'Brien to approve the agenda as amended. Dr. Hurt requested time on the agenda to discuss a recent vote by Knox County Commission discussion to remove regulatory authority from the board. Dr. Gotcher advised Dr. Hurt that this could be discussed under "Other Business."

**V. 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:

- 472 new confirmed cases sine yesterday's report
- 4,274 are active cases, which is up significantly since the last board meeting.
- 128 Knox County residents are currently hospitalized.
- 11 additional deaths to report today, raising our total to 234. This is the highest number of deaths that we have reported out in a single day.

**Benchmark 1: Sustained reduction or stability in new cases for 14 days/RED**

Over this time period, we once again hit a new record high case volume, with the average number of cases per day trending up. Because of these factors, we are continuing to represent this benchmark as red.

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

Regarding testing, the total number of tests conducted has increased over recent weeks. The issue we are continuing to see is with lab turnaround time. We are continuing to see an average turnaround time of six days in our community. Because of these factors, we are representing this benchmark as red.

**Benchmark 3: Sustained or increased public health capability/RED**

Based on our internal assessment of our capabilities and acknowledging the need to prioritize our case investigations and contact tracing, we are representing this benchmark as red.

**Benchmark 4: Health care system capabilities remain with current and forecasted surge capacity/RED**

During this time period, flags were noted for positive inpatients, ICUD patients and ventilated patients. After speaking with our hospital partners, they have recommended that benchmark be represented as red.

**Benchmark 5: Sustained or decreased COVID-19 related death rate for identified positive or probable patients/RED**

Deaths have continued to increase in our community. During this time period, we have seen 19 deaths related to COVID-19 over the past seven days and 38 deaths in the last 14 days. This information leads us to represent this benchmark as red.

**Supplemental Data:**

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

This chart shows new daily COVID cases per 100,000 population. As of yesterday, our 14-day trendline shows 82 cases per 100,000, and our seven-day trendline shows 97 new cases per 100,000—both of which are up from last week.

**Chart 2: COVID-19 Percent Positive Test**

This chart shows the percent positive for COVID-19. This data is received from the Tennessee Department of Health. The seven-day average for percent positive in Knox County is 21.75%-- which is also above the threshold for the metrics the board has adopted regarding escalation

There were no questions from the board regarding the benchmark presentation. Dr. Hurt commented that benchmark data was concerning and profoundly sobering.

**VI. UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE MEDICAL CENTER AT KNOXVILLE DATA UPDATE BY DR. SHAMIYEH**

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

Dr. Shamiyeh shared that looking at cases by week and by month over the district, fifteen days into the month of December, cases have already exceeded the entire month of November. Across the state, Knox County's closest peer (with regard to cases) is Davidson County; yet, Knox County's population is not as large as Davidson.

Unlike the last few weeks, case growth is now increasing in every age demographic not just 51 years old and over. The most significant growth in new cases is in 51 years and older.

UTMC's ICU COVID-19 inpatient age demographic indicated more evenly distributed age demographic. Knox County's 7-day positivity rate is at 21.07%

New hospitalizations in December are on pace to exceed November. We are just getting into the case spike post-Thanksgiving. Dr. Shamiyeh concluded by saying his key point is that situation will not correct itself in the near term.

Discussion from the board regarding Dr. Shamiyeh's presentation centered around staffing and rural hospital's capacity to take care of COVID patients. Dr. Shamiyeh shared that there is significant illness among staff that is putting a strain on capacity. Health care providers being able to be vaccinated will assist in keeping them well through this next phase of the pandemic. We have space and equipment by staff is the main concern.

Dr. Buchanan asked Charity Menefee to provide some additional data that was compiled by KCHD Epidemiologist Roberta Sturm. The data points are as follows:

- In December, 26.8% of the total cases have presented
- 21.8% of the COVID-19 deaths have happened in the last 16 days
- There have been 51 deaths for the month
- We have averaged 397.8 cases per day for the month

**VII. QUESTIONS FOR EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS (presentations sent previously)**

**University of Tennessee Knoxville/Knox County Schools (KCS)**

Ms. Wagoner shared that KCS went red this week, so they went virtual and cases have gone down some.

**VIII. PROPOSED NO. 2020-B RESOLUTION TO GOVERNOR LEE TO REINSTATE EXECUTIVE ORDER #17 BY DR. O'BRIEN**

Dr. O'Brien shared that he had put forth his draft resolutions as a holding place for the board to put something together to send to Governor Lee. After speaking with Unified Command, it was recommended that the board create a resolution to send to as request to the governor. Dr. O'Brien felt the one thing the board could agree on was a state-wide mask mandate.

Motion was made by Dr. O'Brien to accept the proposed resolution and seconded by Dr. Drake. Group discussion followed. Discussion centered on support for a mask mandate and its effectiveness. There was an acknowledgement that Governor Lee's strategy related to masks was centered on education and the creation of PSAs to promote mask wearing in the state. The proposed resolution was edited by board members to include updated metrics and language changes. The amended resolution passed via roll call vote, 9-1.

**IX. PROPOSED NO. 2020-C RESOLUTION SAFER AT HOME AND BUSINESS GUIDANCE BY DR. BUCHANAN**

Mr. Sanders advised to refer to Dr. Buchanan’s proposed resolution as 2020-C vs. 2020-D since Dr. O’Brien had pulled his proposed resolution at the onset of the meeting.

Motion was made by Dr. O’Brien and seconded by Dr. Buchanan.

Dr. Buchanan provided some background rationale on this resolution. She shared that the pure public health approach would be to send everyone home and stay at home, but economic, social, and political tolerance is low in this community. This resolution sends a message to the community that you are safest at home—reduce unnecessary trips. In addition, it provides guidance to our business community.

Discussion from the board followed and board members offered suggested amendments. One amendment was related to school extracurricular activities.

The amended resolution passed unanimously by roll call vote (10-0).

**X. REVIEW AND DISCUSSION**

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

No action was taken on this regulation.

**B. COVID-19 RESTAURANT OCCUPANCY LIMITATION AND EARLY CLOSURE REGULATION, NO. 2020-7**

This regulation is set to expire on Dec. 23. Motion made Dr. Buchanan and seconded by Dr. Drake. Discussion followed regarding the effectiveness of the regulation and feedback received from local operators. The board voted 9-1 (confirmed by roll call) to continue the measure until January 6, 2021.

**XI. OTHER BUSINESS**

Dr. Hurt brought up the recent Knox County Commission meeting and potential action to dissolve the board. She requested feedback from board members on this. Discussion focused on the responsibility board members face and the resulting challenges.

**XII. ADJOURNMENT**

There being no other business, Dr. Drake moved to adjourn the meeting with a second by Dr. Gotcher. Meeting was adjourned at 7:19 PM.

Respectfully submitted,



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

**List of Attachments:**

- COVID-19 Update-Dec. 16, 2020; PowerPoint Presentation by Dr. Shamiyeh