



OFFICE OF COUNTY MAYOR GLENN JACOBS

Knox County Health Department • 140 Dameron Avenue, Knoxville, TN 37917-6413

KNOX COUNTY BOARD OF HEALTH MINUTES

July 15, 2020; from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

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
James Shamiyeh, MD
Marcy Souza, DVM
Lisa Wagoner, RN; representing Superintendent Bob Thomas, Knox County Schools

Absent:

None

Others Attending:

KCHD: Katharine Killen, Charity Menefee, Kelsey Leyrer Wilson, Danielle Davis (zoom host) and Narda Cappuccilli (recorder)

Knox County: Daryl Hobby, Myers Morton, Esq. representing Knox County Law Department

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Jacobs called the meeting to order at 5:05 p.m.
He then moved to elect a chairman pro tempore, as Chairman Dr. Jack Gotcher, was joining us intermittently and unable to chair the meeting.
Dr. O'Brien nominated Dr. Souza to chair the meeting.
Mayor Jacobs seconded the motion.
The board voted unanimously for Dr. Souza to act as the Chairperson Pro Tempore.

II. ESTABLISHMENT OF A QUORUM

Dr. Buchanan requested Narda Cappuccilli take roll call, to confirm the establishment of the quorum.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS: MAY 20, 2020 STANDING MEETING AND JULY 1, 2020 SPECIAL CALLED MEETING

Dr. Drake made the motion to approve the May 20, 2020 quarterly meeting minutes as they stand.
Dr. O'Brien seconded the motion.
Narda Cappuccilli took roll call and the May 20, 2020 minutes passed unanimously.

Chair Pro Tempore Souza entertained July 1, 2020 special called meeting minutes, for discussion.

Mayor Jacobs made a motion to accept the July 1, 2020 meeting minutes, as written.

Dr. Shamiyeh seconded the motion.

Narda Cappuccilli took roll call and the July 1, 2020 minutes passed unanimously.

IV. GENERAL HEALTH DEPARTMENT UPDATE

Dr. Buchanan stated the Community Health Assessment, which was to be released in April, has been delayed with the onset of COVID-19. We anticipate having it published soon although it will not be as accurate as the data is dated, but the community needs to know where we are health wise.

We are trying to schedule for back to school, opening next month, as the requirements for immunization for schools are not relaxed. We are relying on many of our partners, school nurses to print vouchers, etc.

We are also determining if we can schedule flu mist distribution in the schools, since it would be very difficult to socially distance and protect our staff, school staff and the children. The flu vaccine will be very important this year, since COVID-19 will still be circulating.

Also, we did receive from the State of Tennessee Health Department (TDH), a contract for COVID-19 funding, for a little more than \$7.1 million; for assistance in testing, increase staffing and hopefully this will be approved by Knox County Commission, this month.

V. STAFFING AND OPERATIONS UPDATED

Dr. Buchanan confirmed KCHD continues to operate under our Continuity of Operations Plan, well over 75% of our staff are working on COVID-19 response related activities, seven days a week at a very intense pace, which we have doing for several months. KCHD continues to provide limited family planning services, WIC services virtually has seen an increase in program participation, limited vaccinations, some dental services and the Parents as Teachers and the CHANT programs, which are both home visiting outreach programs are provide services virtually. We have approximately 20 audits currently scheduled between now and August, that will take place from the State.

We are hopeful with this new funding we will be able to increase some of the services that we have not been providing and return to more regular operations at KCHD, that is our goal. Mayor Jacobs recognized Dr. Buchanan and the health department staff for the work they are accomplishing in response to the COVID-19, in addition to the day to day routine operations.

VI. BENCHMARK PRESENTATION

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

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

We have had several consecutive days with significant and continuous increases in cases with the largest increase yesterday with 180 new cases. The pipeline is currently Red, a concerning trend of the rate of increase of new cases. We expect new cases to increase our rate, which is significantly higher than it had been, this is concerning for us as a community and as a health department.

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

For this benchmark, the health department utilizes two bar graphs. One that shows a sample of the tests conducted for Knox County residents and another for average time between specimen collection and lab report data.

This week there have been some challenges, as there has been a greater lag time between tests conducted and receiving lab results; due to several reasons, lab delays, increased volume slowing down the process, availability of testing supplies and the lab we use the most often, AEL, has had some changes to their internal processes. Anecdotally we have heard from other providers, they are seeing the same trends. We are currently exploring additional labs to work with us.

Benchmark 3: Sustained or increased public health capability / Green

Our aim is to reach out to new cases within 24 hours and close contacts within 48 hours; which has been consistent since March 16, 2020. We have been able to continue this standard, utilizing our staff, other county departments' staff and some volunteers. Hopefully with the additional funding from TDH, we will begin to increase staffing and this benchmark will remain Green throughout this situation.

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

These graphs show the availability of regional hospital beds, ICU beds and ventilators from area hospitals. It also shows the additional surge capacity for these categories, as well as the COVID-positive patients and the patients with pending test results in the hospital. This data is gathered from the information hospitals put into the Tennessee Healthcare Resource Tracking System (HRTS). It may reflect Knox County, East Region or patients from other jurisdictions.

This benchmark remains Yellow due to the increase of hospitalizations, but overall capacity hasn't changed much since our last review, so hospitals have been able to maintain capacity. Dr. Shamiyeh may have additional information later in the meeting.

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

This benchmark, the health department shows the chart that details cases, hospitalizations and deaths.

Unfortunately, we have gone from five deaths to fifteen in the last two weeks, although the number is not very high, what's most concerning is the rate of increase, as we have had a death reported daily, this week.

Discussion of Benchmarks:

Dr. Shamiyeh clarified that the impact from an infection control standpoint in the community, with a quick result, you are able to quarantine and provide contact investigation if you are getting the results several days later, with a gap of the pending test, the impact becomes significantly less.

Dr. Buchanan confirmed that some positive test results are already outside their isolation period when we get their results. We have been told by one lab we were previously using that they would not be able to continue to provide service to us because they are working with the State, therefore health departments are competing with each other for the same lab services.

Dr. Shamiyeh concluded that we do not anticipate this improving soon.

Dr. Buchanan agreed, as we do not have control and some physicians, as well as some labs are only testing people who are symptomatic, creating mixed messages to the public. We are internally discussing how we make the best use of resources, to make sure people who need to be tested, get tested, without sending a message that we are turning people away. We asked the recently visiting CDC team to explore, if there is something, they could do to increase the availability of everything from swabs, to rerouting testing, etc. and they are taking this back to the federal level.

Dr. Shamiyeh presented a sixteen-page PowerPoint Presentation, COVID-19 Update-July 15, 2020, to the Board. The information was compiled from real regional data, from UTM, Knox County and Knoxville District, which includes eight surrounding counties to Knox County.

Data related slides included:

- UTM Positive Test, Inpatient and Age Demographics
- UTM Length of Hospitalization and Hospitalization Correlation
- New Cases – Pace, by Week/Month, and Hospitalizations by Week/Month
- THA Knoxville District Census and Projection thru Labor Day, 2020
- UTM COVID-19 Deaths
- Health Systems Collaboration and Five Core Actions

Conclusions presented:

- Shift to younger people being diagnosed and hospitalized with COVID-19
- Healthcare utilization data is a pure indicator to creating projections
- Average length of hospitalization has been over 8 days
- COVID-19 disease information is continually changing and increasing
- Projecting there will be 52 new hospitalizations for every 1,000 new cases
- Noticeable increases in hospitalizations lags increases in identified cases by 3 to 4 weeks, impacting the healthcare infrastructure
- Rate of increase began in late June and continues to rise in July
- Health Systems have increased inter-communication, updated surge plans, agreed to distribute patients across the system, identified staffing as the biggest challenge

Questions were encouraged by Dr. Shamiyeh and any for Dr. Buchanan, regarding benchmarks.

Dr. Souza asked if the projections considered the return of students to the University of TN.

Dr. Shamiyeh responded not specifically, this reflects a model of the current data and the rate of case diagnosis.

Dr. Shamiyeh asked Dr. Buchanan if there were any outstanding larger sets of current cases, which would impact action.

Dr. Buchanan responded that there are not any current clusters or widespread problems, it's everywhere in our community, small impact areas in workplaces, churches, social gatherings, etc. We continue to strongly encourage the consistent utilization of the five core actions to the entire population.

Mayor Jacobs agreed the projections are alarming, inquiring what is the strategic endpoint, where do we go from here?

Dr. Shamiyeh responded that the intensity of the situation is real, collaboration between health systems, creation of additional space and to continue to maintain the delivery of care to all patients, which has not slowed down, has been the most challenging of his career. He noted the lag time between diagnosed cases and hospitalizations is thought-provoking, due to any significant unknown action can impact the situation either way, positively or negatively. We will be dealing with a very active COVID-19 for an extended period, until the vaccine is available. We are all suffering from COVID-19 fatigue, on many levels, individually and as a community.

Dr. O'Brien asked if we are beginning to see covert infections among healthcare providers and how that impacts the entire system.

Dr. Shamiyeh replied that is extremely low based on our use of PPE. Although staffing will continue to be a challenge throughout the medical community, as well as businesses, the effects of stress, working additional shifts, the economy and productivity will be impacted.

Dr. Buchanan stressed the five core actions to the public, encouraging the community to benefit all our citizenship, our health systems and our economy, with their strict participation together. Mayor Jacobs thanked both doctors for their work and continued efforts.

VII. COVID-19 FACE COVERING REGULATION REVIEW AND DISCUSSION

Dr. Souza has observed with the lack of enforcement of the Regulation #2020-1, it will not have the desired impact without the public's participation and wholesale support, as there has been considerable pushback.

She stated, earlier today the CDC advised everyone nationally to wear a mask for the next two months, to potentially save over 40,000 American lives.

Dr. Buchanan said the Health Department is providing extensive education to the public, employers, signage to businesses, distribution of the regulation, offer our support to have their staff and patrons use masks; as it is a challenging process and we encourage proactive public information campaigns throughout our region.

Dr. Buchanan brought up the issue of the upcoming elections and how the face covering regulation has been challenged regarding the infringement of one's personal rights to vote.

Would the Board be willing to entertain an exception for all voting places, no masks are required, an exception to Regulation #2020-01?

Dr. Buchanan said this issue ultimately may be overruled by the state, and additional discussion continued.

Dr. Gotcher encouraged all to read an article from The New England Journal of Medicine, published on April 9, 2020, at NEJM.org, "**Perspective: Disease Control, Civil Liberties, and Mass Testing—Calibrating Restrictions during the Covid-19 Pandemic**" by David Studdert and Mark Hall; he will send a copy of the article to the Board, for their reference.

All agreed to keep the **Face Covering Regulation #2020-01** in place, as is, continue to educate and review the status at the next meeting.

Dr. O'Brien mentioned 281,996 free masks have currently been distributed by our Knox County Health Department, continuing to be an excellent resource for the public.

We will not see an impact of the widespread mask wearing for another three to four weeks.

VIII. OTHER BUSINESS

Dr. Shamiyeh proposed a draft resolution, due to his concerns from his prospective on the hospital side and if the five core actions are not consistently followed by every organization, business, person and schools; the potential is significant that we will experience extreme issues, and now is the time for action.

He referred to the July 8-10, 2020 visit from the CDC, FEMA and ASPR team to KCHD, since Knox County was identified as a “hot spot”.

Dr. Shamiyeh read the two statements from his draft resolution:

- Whereas, if the rapid growth of new COVID-19 infections in Knox County cannot be brought under control through the actions of Knox County residents, businesses, and public entities, further closures may become needed to protect public health and to ensure Knox County hospital systems are not overrun and will be able to continue to meet the needs of the patients suffering from COVID-19 and other critical health needs; and
- Whereas, it is vital for the Knox County public health, economy, and the education of the children of Knox County that the Knox County Board of Health in concert with the Knox County Health Department, the Knox County Commission, and the Knox County Board of Education work to ensure appropriate actions are taken to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 and to attempt to avoid the need for full or partial closures.

The Board members read the draft resolution and discussion revolved around several topics including legality and science.

Dr. Drake proposed a motion to adopt the COVID-19 Community Education Recommendation.

Dr. Gotcher seconded the motion.

The motion was passed unanimously.

Dr. Souza stated the effective date of this regulation is 12:01 a.m. on July 16, 2020.

Dr. Souza inquired if there was any additional business to discuss.

Dr. Shamiyeh suggested meeting on a weekly schedule, since the Board is making data driven decisions, the impact of that data and knowing how rapidly the pace of data can change.

Discussion continued, confirming all meetings would be in the Zoom format until August 29, 2020, per the governor.

The Board agreed to meet every Wednesdays at 5:00 p.m., for a Zoom meeting, through August 29, 2020; with the option to cancel the meeting, as needed.

Dr. O'Brien added to Mayor Jacobs earlier comment, that the staff of the Knox County Health Department is doing a phenomenal job, working for our community, protecting and educating our citizens and thank you.

Dr. Buchanan appreciated the comment stated she would pass it along to her staff.

IX. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Next Zoom meeting: Wednesday, July 22, 2020; at 5:00 p.m.

X. ADJOURMENT

**There being no other business, Dr. O'Brien moved to adjourn the meeting.
Motion carried unanimously. The meeting ended at 6:46 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted,



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