

Moore County Board of Health
December 6, 2021

Members Present: Leo Santowasso, PE, PLS, Chair
Betty J. Goodridge, MHA, CMA
William Mang, PharmD
Kamron Monroe, DDS
Tony Price, Vice Chair
Benjamin Wacker, OD
Robert R. Wittmann, MPH, Secretary to the Board

Members Absent: Janice Baker, DVM, MS, DACVPM; Mark Brenner, MD; Louis Gregory;
Paul Kuzma, MD

Call to Order and Introductions:

The meeting of the Board of Health was held in the Community Room of the Rick Rhyne Public Safety Center in Carthage, NC. Chair Leo Santowasso called the meeting to order at 6:18 p.m. Health Department staff present were: Krista Dees, Laboratory Director; Teresa Forrest, Administrative Officer; Tammie Fox, Dental Hygienist; Melissa Fraley, Nursing Director; Matt Garner, Health Educator; Miriam King, Health Educator; and Jennifer Wallace, Administrative Officer. Stephan Lapping, Deputy County Attorney, was present for the meeting. Introductions were made around the table. Jaymie Baxley, with the Pilot newspaper, was present.

Invocation: Robert Wittmann gave the invocation.

Secretary to the Board: Robert Wittmann read the following statement: *Does any Board Member have a conflict of interest concerning agenda items the Board will address in this meeting?* None were noted.

Approval of, and/or Adjustments to, Agenda:

Tony Price made a motion to table, to the next meeting, an item in New Business, which was County Funding to Promote the Health Department. Kamron Monroe seconded the motion. All were in favor.

Public Comments:

Leo Santowasso noted that the maximum time allotted for public comments was thirty minutes, with each person given three minutes. He stated that the Board would hear the comments and then move on to other items on the agenda. The following four people offered public comments: Mike Freidel; BethAnn Pratte; Tom LoSapio; and Jim Pedersen.

Presentations: Leo Santowasso presented a plaque from the Board of Health to Robert Wittmann, in gratitude and with sincere appreciation for his many years of service.

Board of Health Education/Staff Reports:

Communications Committee Report: Tony Price stated that the Committee met on November 24, 2021, with no action to report. He noted that Robert Wittmann had been honored that day by the Moore County Board of Commissioners. The Chair of the Commissioners read a statement about Robert Wittmann's notable career and there was a standing ovation. Tony Price said that he wanted to acknowledge that the Director was very well thought of and had done a good job for Moore County.

Vaccine Committee Report: There was no report given.

COVID Committee Report: There was no report given.

COVID-19 Update: Matt Garner gave the Board an update on current COVID-19 statistics and activities, noting that cases had been on a rise. The Health Department has been giving booster vaccinations and pediatric vaccinations, along with the regular doses of COVID-19 vaccine. Vaccination appointments can be made by calling 910.947.SHOT (7468) and are free to anyone. People who want to receive a booster shot may receive any brand. Mobile testing, conducted by Goshen Medical Center, is available on Tuesdays at the Moore County Health Department, from 8:30 am to 10:00 am. This testing is open to the general public, with no cost out-of-pocket. Matt Garner noted that COVID-19 and flu vaccinations can be administered simultaneously. The Health Department scheduled a free flu vaccination clinic on Friday, December 10th, from 9:30 am to 11:30 am, with appointments required. Robert Wittmann asked Tony Price if he had access to the State's free flu vaccine, for the Moore Free Care Clinic. Tony Price stated no but said that he had ample supply. A member of the public asked about the Board of Education possibly moving to 'mask optional' for Moore County Schools. Matt Garner stated that the Board would be looking at local information, in light of CDC recommendations. Another member of the public said that no vaccinations are free but that taxpayers or insurance companies pay. She asked how many flu cases the County had last year and then stated that she believed there were basically no cases. She asked why the Health Department was pushing the flu vaccine. Matt Garner answered that the Health Department pushes the flu vaccine every year. Leo Santowasso noted that this was not a question and answer period. He asked the public to respect that.

Nursing Director's Report: Melissa Fraley stated that the Health Department had just received its yearly compliance review for the Immunization Program. The Department was compliant, having met all measures required by CDC and State guidelines. She stated that she appreciated all the hard work of the Department's staff.

Health Director's Report: Robert Wittmann stated that the Board of Commissioners had appointed Jayne Lee, that morning, as the Nurse representative for the Board of Health. Jayne Lee is in charge of Infection Control for FirstHealth of the Carolinas. Robert Wittmann noted

that, early on in the pandemic, before vaccinations or treatments were available, Jayne Lee worked with Health Department staff (Krista Dees, Lab Director and Crystal Hodges, Environmental Health Program Specialist) as part of our strike team to go into local nursing homes to review their infection control procedures and give recommendations for improvement. Since residents of nursing homes were our most vulnerable population, Robert Wittmann stated that he believed that team saved a considerable number of lives. There is one vacant WIC nutritionist/supervisor position, with no qualified candidates, and two vacant environmental health specialist positions, with two applicants being processed. There have been recent retirements and resignations. These positions have been advertised. Bill Dunlop, Environmental Health Supervisor, will be retiring the end of December. He will return as a resource worker for Environmental Health in February. Jessica Fountain-Bowlus, immunization nurse, has resigned but will continue to work in a resource capacity. Lailani Rockholt, Environmental Health Specialist, has accepted a Regional Environmental Health position with the State and will be re-locating to the mountains. Jeanne West, Environmental Health Specialist, is retiring effective the end of December. She will return as resource for Environmental Health in February. Teresa Forrest is also retiring, effective the end of December. The School Health Nurse Liaison position has been filled by Carrie Emery and her first day will be December 13, 2021. Robert Wittmann spoke about the COVID-19 virus. He believes it will continue to mutate, becoming more infectious but less deadly, which is the usual evolution of viruses. He believes, in the near future, the government will recognize that COVID-19 has become endemic and will stop focusing on the number of mutations and cases and focus on hospitalizations and deaths, removing restrictions and mandates, and relying on vaccinations, natural immunity and treatments. He thanked the Board of Health for their professional support, through policies and suggestions. He also thanked the Health Department management team and staff for their support.

Approval of Consent Agenda: Tony Price made a motion to approve the consent agenda, which contained the November 1st, 2021 meeting minutes. B.J. Goodridge seconded the motion. All were in favor.

Old Business: RFP to Support Department's COVID Efforts: Robert Wittmann noted that the project has been put out to public bid and was available online for the Board to review. If there was any change or improvement needed, he asked that Board members email him directly and he would share with the appropriate staff. Changes would need to be submitted to the granting authority in Raleigh and then, if approved, to the County Finance Office, where it could be incorporated as an addendum to the bid.

New Business:

Adopt Board of Health Meeting Dates for 2022: Leo Santowasso noted that the Board is still meeting every month but that could be reviewed quarterly. Kamron Monroe made a motion, seconded by Bill Mang, to approve the schedule as submitted. All were in favor.

Annual Review Board Operating Procedures: Leo Santowasso asked that the Board members review the operating procedures and be prepared with any comments and/or concerns to discuss at the January meeting.

Environmental Health Staffing Motion: Robert Wittmann stated that County Human Resources and Administration had requested a manpower study for Environmental Health staff, both on-site and food and lodging. Those studies indicated that the Department needs two additional on-site positions and one additional food and lodging position. He requested that the Board support the conclusions of the manpower studies to add those three positions and task the Health Director to meet with the County Manager to negotiate and arrange for these position requests to be presented to the Board of Commissioners for their approval at the earliest possible date. He noted that it was best to move quickly due to the long process required to find and hire environmental health specialists and the stiff competition with other local health departments. The two new environmental health specialists mentioned earlier will have to come in as trainees. The Department is currently relying on retired staff working as resource employees. Robert Wittmann noted that the twelve-month period of the studies was during the downturn of work due to the pandemic; therefore, the numbers should be considered conservative. Currently the building in the area has increased dramatically and demand for service is high. Kamron Monroe made a motion to approve the staffing report to get support for Environmental Health. Tony Price seconded the motion and all were in favor. Tony Price asked if the Department knew when the workload was peaking and asked if there was a continuous trend. Robert Wittmann answered that demand for Environmental Health services has shown ups and downs over the years. However, he stated that the numbers were trending up until the pandemic, when there was a sudden reduction in demand, with restaurants closing and building stalled. However, building numbers have increased rapidly, with a high demand in the last six months. Further, there has been an increased demand in food and lodging services.

Closed Session

Kamron Monroe made a motion to adjourn the regular meeting to go into closed session at 7:22 pm. The motion was seconded by B.J. Goodridge. All were in favor. The Board returned to open session at 8:05 pm. Leo Santowasso stated that there was discussion but no decision was made and no action was taken.

Adjourn: B.J. Goodridge made a motion to adjourn the meeting. This was seconded by Bill Mang. All were in favor and the meeting adjourned at 8:05 pm. Leo Santowasso noted that the next meeting would be on Monday, January 10, 2022.