

Moore County Board of Health
February 1, 2021

Members Present: Leo Santowasso, PE, PLS, Chair
Janice Baker, DVM, MS, DACVPM
Betty J. Goodridge, MHA, CMA
Louis Gregory
Paul Kuzma, MD
Max Muse, RN, ME, Vice Chair
Kamron Monroe, DDS
Tony Price
Benjamin Wacker, OD
Robert R. Wittmann, MPH, Secretary to the Board

Members Absent: Mark Brenner, MD; William Mang, PharmD

Call to Order and Introductions:

The meeting of the Board of Health was held via WebEx and dial in. Chair Leo Santowasso called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m. Health Department staff present were: Teresa Forrest, Administrative Officer; Melissa Fraley, Nursing Director; Matt Garner, Health Educator; Miriam King, Health Educator. Ward Medlin, Deputy County Attorney, was present for the meeting.

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: Kamron Monroe made a motion to approve the agenda, seconded by Max Muse. All were in favor and the motion carried.

Public Comments:

No one offered public comments.

Presentations: None.

Board of Health Education/Staff Reports

Board of Health Committee Reports:

1.) Communications Committee Report

Tony Price stated that the Communications Committee met on Friday, January 29th. Kamron Monroe and Tony Price were present, with Robert Wittmann participating via telephone. Two updates on Committee concerns were to be addressed by Robert Wittmann in the Health Director report: the request for collaboration among the long-term care facilities (LTCF); and a status update on the LTCF regional strike team. Tony Price also asked for a status update on

the reporting on deaths. He commended Robert Wittmann and Health Department staff on the positive notes from the public who have received the COVID-19 vaccine at a Department vaccination clinic.

2.) Vaccine Committee Report – Paul Kuzma stated that the Committee did not meet in-person that month. The Committee is organizing a strike force to deploy teams to community areas where there's a need when the single-dose Johnson and Johnson vaccine is available. He stated that he had a positive experience with the Health Department's vaccine clinic. Robert Wittmann stated that he has been working with Paul Kuzma to develop a Board of Health community strike team. Once formed, the Health Department will furnish training. The strike team will be part of the Department's tactical deployment into the community. In the next few weeks, we would like to identify the members of this strike team, arrange training and have them shadow our operations at the Health Department and Agriculture Center. The National Guard has a team that is already deployed here. They're trained to give vaccinations and to enter information into CVMS (the State's COVID Vaccine Management System). Robert Wittmann asked that any interested Board members contact Paul Kuzma directly and he will keep the Health Department posted on the names and contact info. Leo Santowasso stated that he would like to be on the list. Max Muse stated that he had been extremely pleased with the professionalism of our National Guard team.

3.) COVID Committee Report - Ben Wacker stated that the Committee did not meet in-person that month. He stated that research is ongoing regarding the new strains of coronavirus and whether or not the vaccines will be effective. Leo Santowasso stated that he received his shot at the Health Department and he was very pleased in the operation, beginning to end. He stated that he has heard good words from neighbors and others who have received shots at the Health Department. He said thank you to all associated with the process.

COVID-19 Update - Matt Garner updated the Board. Paul Kuzma asked why the pharmacies have done such a poor job, with not using not all of their vaccine supplies with the long-term care facilities (LTCF). Melissa Fraley stated that the pharmacies are vaccinating through March to do second doses and capture those who chose not to get doses the first time. Melissa Fraley stated that she had heard from some LTCF that there was trouble with getting staff to accept the vaccine initially. Louis Gregory stated that he understood there were only 300 doses this week to be administered. Matt Garner stated that the Health Department did receive 300 doses the past week and administered that in one day. The shipments from the State have been low. An allotment of 400 doses of Moderna was expected, weekly, for the next three weeks. Those are first doses. After that, the State is expected to reallocate based on further guidance. The Health Department is scheduling and giving those doses within a couple of days. Louis Gregory stated that 300 or 400 does not take care of our needs. Leo Santowasso asked if our State and Federal representatives could help us get additional doses. Robert Wittmann stated that, on State calls, staff said they wanted to ramp up efforts in the major metropolitan areas, where they can vaccinate thousands in a day. There are several mega vaccination centers across the State. The State is getting a small number of doses from the federal government so doses to providers, including local health departments, had to be reduced. Moore County gets a set amount of vaccine, divided between the Health Department and FirstHealth of the Carolinas,

Moore Regional Hospital. This will include, in the future, other local providers enrolled in CVMS. Our State representatives went to bat for us and talked to NC DHHS and they were told the following: if they increased the amount given to the Health Department, then they would have to decrease the amount given to the hospital and vice versa. It's the same in all counties in the State, to keep these mega centers up and running.

Nursing Director's Report:

Melissa Fraley stated that we are working with the Moore County Jail on a Hepatitis A case - providing some post-exposure prophylaxis. This is an evolving situation.

Health Director's Report:

Robert Wittmann stated that he had met with the Communication Committee. They had asked about the regional LTCF team that is going out to facilities, looking at procedures and how they are implemented, and giving the facilities advice on improvement. He had sent the Board an email that day that showed information on the LTCF visits. This regional team has several counties to address in Region 6. Of the seven skilled nursing facilities in Moore County, three have been visited, one scheduled, and three to schedule. Two assisted living facilities have been visited. The team has been working with the regional healthcare coalition.

The Health Department is seeking applications for a WIC Nutritionist Supervisor and a WIC Nutritionist. There are currently no qualified applicants. Duties are being performed by a contract WIC Nutritionist. The Health Department requested additional staff for COVID response from the State and received an Air National Guard strike team, with three vaccinators and three administrative support personnel. The team is led by 1st Lieutenant Matt Partridge and is committed, month to month, to support the COVID response in Moore County. The team has contributed significantly. When not running clinics, the team has helped upload data into CVMS. Over 10,000 people have preregistered for the vaccination.

For minority and underserved communities, the Health Department has reached out to local community leaders, including O'Linda Watkins, president of the Moore County branch of the NAACP. Topics have included access to testing and vaccinations. The Health Department has also arranged seasonal flu vaccine clinics in underserved communities. Robert Wittmann talked about independent living communities. He stated that the Department has received requests to vaccinate some of these communities. He noted that all people, 65 and older, who are independent living, whether in a retirement community or at home on their own, are eligible to receive the vaccine according to the State vaccination priority plan. The federal government contracted through the large pharmacies to provide vaccinations in LTCF, including assisted living. However, independent living was considered by the State the same as anybody living independently in their home or apartment. They can be handled in the community by the Health Department and FirstHealth, as well as by some private pharmacies once vaccine becomes available to them. Seven Lakes Pharmacy has been approved as an enrolled provider on the State CVMS and is eligible to receive vaccine, although they have not received any to date. In the future, other community pharmacies will be provided vaccine and people will be able to receive vaccinations at their local pharmacies. Moore County Transportation has provided

transportation, by request, to the Health Department/Agriculture Center vaccination clinics. Some independent living facilities may provide shuttle service or ride sharing options. Accommodations can be made for anyone with mobility issues. The Health Department is currently not able to provide vaccinations outside of the clinic, due to limited supply and the fragility of the vaccine. As supplies become more widely available, we have plans to provide vaccinations in other sites in the community. A citizen called about getting homebound services. Currently, the Health Department is not able to provide vaccinations in homes and the caller was referred to their home health provider. As vaccines become available, these agencies will have access to provide them to their patients.

Leo Santowasso asked about private and charter schools reporting positive COVID cases. Robert Wittmann stated that the schools are required by NC general statutes to report any communicable disease and they have over the years. This includes COVID. Several of these private schools have reported cases of COVID to the Health Department. We will send out a reminder to these schools of their obligations to report but it appears that they have been in compliance.

Regarding delays in reporting deaths, Robert Wittmann noted that NC Communicable Disease Program reporting requirements are different from Vital Records requirements, with separate regulations. To certify a death certificate, a local deputy registrar verifies that the form is filled out and signed by the attending physician and/or medical examiner. If the blocks are filled in and the date of birth and age match, then the certificate is signed and it goes to the Register of Deeds and the State. However, there is a specific process to report a communicable disease to the State Communicable Disease Branch, which requires confirmation of the diagnosis, with laboratory reports and medical records. This process requires obtaining these reports from the patient's medical provider and reviewing these reports before submission to the State for confirmation. Then the death may be locally reported as a confirmed COVID death. The communicable disease reporting process is significantly more involved than the vital records process and takes more time. There may be difficulty in obtaining records and confirming cases, which is often exacerbated by the COVID pandemic. Sometimes the Health Department receives a batch of confirmed cases at a time. Leo Santowasso asked if there was a delay in processing death certificates and Robert Wittmann stated no. The death certificates are immediately available to family and funeral homes. The delay is with the communicable disease confirmation and reporting. Additional staff would not help with that process. The Health Department has to rely on the medical providers in the community to send us the reports and on the State to confirm the cause of death. Leo Santowasso asked if there was a time period for those people to respond and Robert Wittmann stated no. Some medical providers have a high demand of patient services. The State also has quite a workload, so we get them back in batches. Louis Gregory stated that there is a difference between what is reported locally and the documents we have and that is in some cases significant. If we wait till the State confirms what we already know, then it doesn't give the public accurate representation of what is going on. Each death certificate is signed by the Health Department and we know what happened. Robert Wittmann stated that the Health Department can't report the death of a communicable disease without confirmation from the State Communicable Disease Branch. Melissa Fraley gave an

example where a case was listed as a COVID death on the death certificate, without laboratory confirmation. The death was a clinical assessment, diagnosed due to known exposure, but because there was no labwork to support this, the State did not report it as a COVID death. Melissa Fraley stated that there are other deaths determined to be COVID-related that may not be listed on the death certificate.

Approval of Consent Agenda: The consent agenda contained the minutes for the January 11, 2021 meeting. Janice Baker made a motion to approve the minutes. Tony Price seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion carried.

Old Business: There was no old business.

New Business: Robert Wittmann had addressed the topic of Private Schools and Infectious Diseases Reporting in the Health Director's report.

Adjourn: BJ Goodridge made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Paul Kuzma. All were in favor and the motion passed. The meeting adjourned at 7:18 pm.