

October 11, 2021

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

Members Absent: Mark Brenner, MD; Paul Kuzma, MD; Louis Gregory

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 6:09 p.m. Health Department staff present were: Melissa Fraley, Nursing Director; Matt Garner, Health Educator; Miriam King, Health Educator; and Jennifer Wallace, Administrative Officer. Tami Golden, Moore County Internal Auditor, and Stephan Lapping, Associate County Attorney, were present for the meeting. Jaymie Baxley, with the Pilot newspaper, was present.

There was a Moment of Silence held for Max Muse, RN, Vice Chair, deceased.

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:

The Board Chair spoke with Robert Wittmann and the following was suggested. The TIDES presentation would be given by William Johnstone. All committee reports would be tabled until next month; Matt Garner would give his COVID-19 update; the Nursing and Quarterly reports would be tabled until next month; the Health Director would give his report; there would be a vote to approve last month's minutes; and there was no Old Business. New Business first item would be the selection and nomination of a new Vice Chair, followed by other items and lastly the closed session. Leo Santowasso asked for

a motion to approve the amendments. Motion was made by Tony Price and seconded by Kamron Monroe. All were in favor and the motion carried.

Public Comments: There were no public comments.

Presentations: TIDES Program William Johnstone, MD: There are an increasing number of women with Opioid addiction coming through labor and delivery or OB/Gyn practices in Wilmington, NC. William Johnstone shared the story of a young woman who was admitted to the hospital to deliver a child but faced challenges and ultimately passed away post-partum as a result of “dirty needle” use for opioids. He explained that TIDES program is a holistic program that encompasses a collection of agencies which offer services to assist pregnant women in the recovery process from opioids. It includes life skills, job skills, housing, therapy, counseling and mental health care, transportation, Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT), etc. TIDES is recognized as 501c3. William Johnstone explained that Trauma Informed Care is the concept that trauma/abuse in early childhood is a gateway to addiction. Trauma Informed Care is the basis of TIDES execution. Since the pandemic’s beginning, overdoses and increased usage have been prevalent. There is an aim by TIDES to keep children with their mothers, though mothers may be experiencing addiction or are in the midst of recovery. There was an interest by the County Sheriff Ronnie Fields and Health Director Robert Wittmann to bring the TIDES program to Moore County. William Johnstone presented to the Moore County Commissioners. He is predicting that Moore County’s TIDES Program will be fully operational in June of 2022.

Leo Santowasso asked for a motion to endorse the TIDES Program. The motion was made by Kamron Monroe and seconded by BJ Goodridge. All were in favor and the motion carried.

Board of Health Education/Staff Reports:

Communications Committee Report: Tabled

Vaccine Committee Report: Tabled

COVID-19 Committee Report: Tabled

COVID-19 Update: On the 24th of August we saw a high mark for the case positivity that overtook the mark set at the peak of the pandemic on January the 11th. Our weekly case totals for the County have been on a decline for the last three consecutive weeks. Our 7-day average for new cases has been reduced by more than half since last month. Some milestone stats for the state of North Carolina as a whole: 70% of adults aged 70 and up have received at least one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine. Our County population has just over 50% of its citizens fully vaccinated. Melissa Fraley shared that the FDA is set to approve Pfizer pediatric doses toward the end of October, but there has been no news concerning Moderna or Janssen. Matt Garner shared completed outreach for September and October. Matt Garner mentioned proposals for upcoming

events. The Health Department continues to offer mobile testing onsite through Goshen Healthcare Inc and will begin offering testing twice a week.

Department's First Quarter Activity Report: Tabled

FY 22 First Quarter Fiscal Report: Tabled

Department's Performance Measures: Tabled

Nursing Director's Report: Tabled

Health Director's Report and COVID-19 Observations: Robert Wittmann noted that the Health Department has been recognized by the State prison system for its collaborative effort with the County jail during COVID-19. The State admires how the Health Department offers testing and vaccination to the local inmate population and wishes to recommend it as a model for other counties.

Further,

- There are three safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines approved by the FDA.
- One of these vaccines has been approved as a booster for the most vulnerable of our population and is currently being administered.
- Two of these vaccines are being reviewed by the FDA to determine whether a booster vaccination will be recommended.
- The vaccine data are being reviewed by the FDA to determine the vaccine and dosage that will be approved for children below 12 years of age.
- There are a number of safe and effective treatments for COVID-19 approved by the FDA.
- The trials have ended for a Merck pill for moderate COVID-19 and data has been submitted to the FDA for approval.
- The percent of people currently vaccinated in North Carolina is 58% with at least one vaccination and 54% fully vaccinated. The percent of people currently vaccinated in Moore County is 55% with at least one vaccination and 52% fully vaccinated.
- The percent of people fully vaccinated in Moore County that are at high risk of serious illness or death from this disease, ages 65 to 74, is 84% and, 75 years of age and older, is 93%. This at-risk population is currently receiving booster vaccinations.
- The Delta Variant of COVID-19 is highly infectious and is infecting unvaccinated, and some vaccinated, people. The majority of hospitalizations are unvaccinated for COVID-19. The unvaccinated people that get COVID-19 acquire a level of natural immunity to this disease.

- In light of the above, the number of cases of COVID-19 and COVID-19 related deaths should fall perceptibly in the weeks to come.
- I stated in my letter to Moore County Schools the targets that should be reached before the School Board considers making masks optional. I am in hopes that these targets will be reached in the near future.
- The Health Department has developed effective public COVID-19 information and educational protocols, relationships with community partners, vaccination programs, and policies. These will continue and adapt as more people become eligible for vaccination or boosters and as we move into the fall, winter, and spring.
- In addition, the Department, and health care organizations in general, should make every effort to encourage people to receive the seasonal influenza vaccine; as the CDC cautions that seasonal influenza is predicted to pose a significant public health threat this winter.
- Given that the Health Department currently has adequate and highly competent staff and protocols to deal with COVID-19 and other communicable disease concerns, it is my intent to retire December 31, 2021. I have presented a signed letter to that effect to the Board of Health Chair; copies were presented to those in attendance.
- This will conclude my over fifty years of service in public health in both Virginia and North Carolina.
- County Human Resources, the County Manager, the County Attorney's Office, and I are available to the Board for consultation as you move through the search and hiring process.
- I recommend that the Board of Health contract with an experienced retired health director as an interim director, effective midnight December 31, 2021. I would highly recommend the Board seriously consider contracting with Dr. Tommy Jarrell, retired Health Director for Richmond County NC, as the interim health director.

Board members congratulated Robert Wittmann on his retirement and his over twenty six years of service as the Moore County Health Director. It was noted that his was the longest tenure of service of all five Moore County health directors from 1928 to date.

Approval of Consent Agenda: Consent agenda contained the minutes for the September 13th, 2021 meeting. Tony Price made a motion to approve the minutes. Kamron Monroe seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion carried.

Old Business: There was no old business.

New Business: Robert Wittmann initiated the discussion of hiring a Public Relations (PR) firm for the Health Department to address vaccine hesitancy regarding COVID-19. Tami Golden explained the Moore County guidelines. Robert Wittmann suggested that the campaign for PR would run through 2023 and he recommended that the Board approve the request and recommend it to the Commissioners. BJ Goodridge asked if approval from the Board would guarantee involvement in the PR firm's decision making and advertisement process. BJ Goodridge questioned if the money would be spent to address vaccine hesitancy or a promotion of the Health Department in general, because they are different. Tony Price stated that the process for all of this would take too long. He also agreed that the Board must be involved in the PR firm's decision process. Tami Golden explained the process to Board members and expressed that there was little to no deviation allowed with such matters. The Board members agreed that the PR firm should promote the Health Department's services as well as COVID-19 vaccines, as outlined and defined by the grant. Leo Santowasso asked for a motion to approve that the Health Department recommend the PR firm to the Commissioners using the federal grant money. The motion was made by Janice Baker and seconded by Tony Price. All were in favor and the motion carried.

Leo Santowasso addressed the vacancy of Vice Chair and asked for a volunteer. Kamron Monroe and Ben Wacker nominated Tony Price. All other Board members present were in favor. Tony Price was officially nominated and selected to be Vice Chair. Robert Wittmann explained that the Vice Chair is automatically nominated for Chair in January.

Robert Wittmann discussed a proposal to set a career pathway for a Registered Environmental Health Technician (REHT) in the NC Community College system. He proposed that the Richmond County Community College coordinate with Western Carolina University and East Carolina University to develop a two-year curriculum for a REHT to qualify for a position in a local health department to issue on-site sewage and water supply permits. Further that the North Carolina State Legislature pass the required legislation to establish this position by North Carolina State Human Resources and the State Board of Environmental Health Specialist Examiners. The outcome would supply more qualified professionals for our health departments. Students would intern at a local health department and demonstrate their skills and abilities. Leo Santowasso asked for a motion to endorse moving forward with the two-year career path. The motion was made by BJ Goodridge and seconded by Tony Price. All were in favor and the motion carried.

Closed Session: Due to Robert Wittmann's notice of retirement, Leo Santowasso asked the County Attorney if a closed session was needed. Stephan Lapping said that no closed session was necessary.

Adjourn: Leo Santowasso asked for a motion to adjourn. Kamron Monroe made a motion, seconded by Janice Baker. All were in favor and the motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 7:46pm.