

Moore County Board of Health  
September 13, 2021

Members Present: Leo Santowasso, PE, PLS, Chair  
Mark Brenner, MD  
Louis Gregory  
Paul Kuzma, MD  
William Mang, PharmD  
Kamron Monroe, DDS  
Tony Price  
Benjamin Wacker, OD  
Robert R. Wittmann, MPH, Secretary to the Board

Members Absent: Janice Baker, DVM, MS, DACVPM; Betty J. Goodridge, MHA, CMA; Max Muse, RN, ME, Vice Chair

**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 6:02 p.m. Health Department staff present were: Teresa Forrest, Administrative Officer; Melissa Fraley, Nursing Director; Matt Garner, Health Educator; Miriam King, Health Educator; and Jennifer Wallace, Administrative Officer. Stephan Lapping, Associate County Attorney, was present for the meeting.

Board members and staff introduced themselves. Guest 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 approve the agenda as presented. This was seconded by Paul Kuzma. All were in favor and the motion carried.

**Public Comments:**

There were no public comments.

**Presentations:** None.

**Board of Health Education/Staff Reports:**

**Communications Committee Report:** Tony Price stated that the Committee met on August 25<sup>th</sup> and discussed the flu vaccine, long-term care facilities, mobile events, vaccinated versus unvaccinated hospitalizations on the FirstHealth website, and the FDA approval of the Pfizer vaccine. Tony Price asked Stephan Lapping to give an update on virtual attendance for Board members at a Board of Health meeting. Stephan Lapping stated that Board meetings can be either in-person or virtual but not a hybrid of both. In essence, if a Board member participates remotely, that converts the meeting (even if other members are in-person) to a remote meeting with all the requirements thereof. The meeting would have to be livestreamed to the public. Everyone would have to participate via virtual platform even though they might be sitting together in a room. Robert Wittmann asked about public participation and Stephan Lapping stated that, for virtual meetings, the public notice would need to include information on how to log in and participate in the meeting. Tony Price stated that the Board may want to consider going back to virtual meetings because other businesses and government entities are having virtual meetings. He noted that he, Kamron Monroe, BJ Goodridge, and Matt Garner all attended the Committee meeting.

**Vaccine Committee Report:** There was no report from the Vaccine Committee.

**COVID Committee Report:** Ben Wacker noted that Mark Brenner was on his way and might have more to add to the report. He stated that the Board's message was simple. Remind people that COVID-19 is still very much alive in the community, with people getting sick and being hospitalized. Our goal is to keep the public safe and healthy, keep the people working and keep the kids in school. Communicate that the vaccine is effective, with all media outlets available. Encourage people to get the vaccination and target the unvaccinated, tailoring the approach to the remaining people. Ask the public to work together in the community and try not to attack each other for our viewpoints.

**COVID-19 Update:** Matt Garner reviewed the latest COVID-19 statistics. The current average number of cases was near peak pandemic levels. There were four active long-term care facility outbreaks: Quail Haven; Peak Resources – Pinelake; Pinehurst Healthcare & Rehabilitation Center; and The Greens at Pinehurst Rehabilitation & Living Center. He noted that cases were up in the younger population, 0-17 years. FirstHealth of the Carolinas is publishing the vaccination status of their hospitalized patients, with a breakdown of vaccinated and unvaccinated ICU patients and patients on ventilators. Community vaccination events for August included these sites: Robbins Farmers' Day; West End Presbyterian; and Sandhills Community College. There are no community events currently scheduled for September. In October, the Health Department will be offering shots at the County's employee health fair and at Aberdeen Lake Park for 'Ashes to Beauty' on the 16<sup>th</sup>. The Department continues to vaccinate at Moore County Jail and at Pinehurst Treatment Center. Goshen continues to offer mobile testing in the Health Department parking lot, on Fridays from 8:30 -12:30 pm. With an increase in demand, Goshen will add testing on Tuesdays as well, starting September 28<sup>th</sup>, from

8:30 – 12:30 pm. Paul Kuzma asked if there was any difficulty getting the vaccine and Melissa Fraley stated that there was not. He asked about vaccines expiring and going to waste. Melissa Fraley stated that we recently had a small batch expire, but that was one we had accepted from the hospital to help them use. Mark Brenner stated that one group of vaccine-hesitant was women, and even men, of child-bearing age. He stated that they were basing this decision on emotional information and not true facts. He noted that the CDC recommends the vaccination for pregnant women. The Department should focus on communicating facts to this group, utilizing trusted sources, such as local obstetricians or pediatricians. Robert Wittmann stated that it would be helpful to have a local obstetrician write some articles for the media or do a YouTube video to allay their fears. Robert Wittmann asked Mark Brenner to approach the local obstetricians with this idea and he agreed that he could talk with the obstetrician leaders in the community. Robert Wittmann said that Matt Garner and Miriam King could help get any articles out to the media or could help develop a video.

**Nursing Director's Report:** Melissa Fraley stated that the Department has two new nurses, Jessica Fountain-Bowlus and Leslie Dillow. Jessica worked with the Health Department on COVID-19 investigations last year and has an interest in public health. Leslie has relocated to Carthage from the Person County Health Department. We saw an increase in respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) cases this summer, although typically those cases are in the winter to spring. The virus is spread by droplets, coughing and sneezing, like the COVID-19 virus and it is sometimes hard to tell the difference. Practitioners have been advised to consider RSV if COVID-19 is ruled out in a case. RSV is not a reportable communicable disease but, because of the unusual spike, we are monitoring that activity.

**Health Director's Report:** Robert Wittmann noted the long-term care facility report from Tamiko Gland, Infection Prevention Coordinator, Regional Infection Prevention Support (RIPS) Team Region 6. There is a WIC Nutritionist vacancy, with no qualified applicants. The Department continues seeking two Registered Environmental Health Specialists. The Board of Commissioners approved, on September 7<sup>th</sup>, an additional public health nurse in this year's budget, to act as liaison with the local schools. This position is funded by a State grant. All local print and electronic media have been helping to inform the public and to promote COVID-19 control measures. The Department continues to work closely with our community partners, including Moore County Schools (Dr. Bob Grimesey, Dr. Seth Powers) and FirstHealth of the Carolinas (Dr. Jenifir Bruno, Jayne Lee). The Department continues vaccination clinics at the Health Department in Carthage, as well as off-site vaccination events, including offering the booster dose to the immune-compromised. Goshen offers a drive-through test site at the Health Department, for anyone, with or without symptoms, at no cost to the patient. The Department continues to respond to public information requests regarding COVID-19. The County Attorney's Office and County IT have been helpful in supporting

our responses. Robert Wittmann noted that the President had announced a vaccination plan which is to include a vaccination requirement for employees of health care entities receiving federal funds, federal employees, contract employees with the federal government and any business employing 100 or more people, administered through an OSHA rule. Once these mandates go into effect, that would more or less make moot any State or local debates about mandating masks or vaccinations.

**Approval of Consent Agenda:** Consent agenda contained the minutes for the August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2021 meeting. Kamron Monroe made a motion to approve the minutes, seconded by Bill Mang. All were in favor and the motion carried.

**Old Business:** There was no old business.

**New Business: BOH Options to be more Active in COVID Response - BOH Vaccination Resolution:**

Leo Santowasso stated that he had approached Robert Wittmann with a question about what the Board of Health could do to be more active in the fight against the spread of COVID-19 and its associated variants. A meeting was held on August 31<sup>st</sup> with Leo Santowasso, Robert Wittmann and Stephan Lapping, where options for Board of Health involvement were discussed. Stephan Lapping was asked to prepare a resolution in support of asking the NC Commission for Public Health to add COVID-19 to a required list of immunizations. Board members discussed the resolution. Kamron Monroe noted that the wording was not limited to school children. Louis Gregory noted that this resolution would be coming directly from the Health Board and no one else from the County. Stephan Lapping stated that the resolution did not specify an age, it was for all those eligible, although the list is currently directed towards school children. Secondly, he noted that the resolution was a request. No specific authority has been granted to Boards of Health in regard to COVID-19. If the Board adopted a local rule here, he would anticipate very strong objection and any implementation would be difficult. In terms of a process, this resolution is requesting that the State act, which would filter down to locals. Mark Brenner stated that the issue was bigger than the State and that it was a national decision. Robert Wittmann stated that the Commission has been looking at this for some time and this request is to put it on their agenda. A lot of research goes in before they require a vaccination to be mandated but it needs to be done at that level and not the local level. Tony Price asked if the resolution would go to the legislature after the Commission. Robert Wittmann stated that the Commission has the rule-making authority under general statutes. Stephan Lapping concurred that the Commission is the body that determines the required immunizations. The legislature provides the health departments the power to execute those determinations of the Commission. Robert Wittmann stated that it may be moot, due to what is going on in Washington right now, with the President's vaccination plan and possible OSHA rules mandating COVID-19 vaccinations. Paul Kuzma stated that the resolution does not specify children but says all eligible people. He also stated that the resolution was asking the Commission to act rather than to study or place this on their agenda. He stated that he felt it would polarize people and we don't need to mandate for adults. One of the four main tenets of medical

ethics is autonomy. Adults have the autonomy to refuse to be vaccinated. As written, he stated he disagreed with the resolution and would not be in favor, although he is a big proponent of vaccination. Tony Price asked what the benefit of the resolution would be, saying that he felt it was not going anywhere and that decisions would need to come on the national ground. Leo Santowasso stated that it would show the public that the Board of Health is trying to help people. Tony Price stated that he would like to see the Board spend its time with multimedia messages and marketing, which would strongly recommend vaccination. Robert Wittmann said that, at the next meeting, the Board could approve a resolution which supported that all eligible people be vaccinated. Kamron Monroe stated that she also did not support the resolution as written and that she was not sure the Board needed to have a resolution to support the public. Robert Wittmann stated that a member of the public might note that the Board of Health went on record supporting that all eligible people get vaccinated. Kamron Monroe stated that that message is what the Board is already giving. Tony Price stated that, in the Communications Committee meeting, they did discuss having a stronger multimedia presence. Mark Brenner stated that we need to market to the identified unvaccinated populations. Robert Wittmann stated that targeting the identified hesitant was good and nationally the most vaccine hesitant have been African-Americans and those with college degrees. In Moore County, we have been working to reach the historically marginalized communities. Leo Santowasso asked if the Communications Committee had their next meeting set and Tony Price said that it would be on September 29<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 pm. Leo Santowasso suggested that discussion on the resolution be tabled. He will talk with the Communications Committee and get their thoughts and come back to the next Board meeting. Tony Price asked if there was local data supporting the statement that one of the largest groups of unvaccinated is African-Americans. Robert Wittmann stated that Matt Garner could get that data and give it to the Communications Committee. Tony Price stated that the data would tell us where to do the targeting. Mark Brenner stated that we need to identify at-risk groups and market to them specifically, using local leaders in that field and presenting data that is simple and accurate.

**Closed Session:** Kamron Monroe made a motion to adjourn the regular meeting and go to a closed session. Tony Price seconded the motion and all were in favor. Leo Santowasso asked for a five minute break at 7:19 pm. At 8:02 pm, Kamron Monroe made a motion to adjourn the closed session and return to the open meeting, seconded by Tony Price. All were in favor. Leo Santowasso stated that no action was taken but there was a lot of discussion.

**Adjourn:** There was no further business. The Board adjourned at 8:04 pm.