

Moore County Board of Health
April 27, 2020

Members Present: William Mang, PharmD, Chair
Betty J. Goodridge, MHA, CMA
Louis Gregory
Warren Lewis
Kamron Monroe, DDS
Sharon Odom, RT
Leo Santowasso, PE, PLS, Vice Chair
Robert R. Wittmann, MPH, Secretary to the Board

Members Absent: Mark Brenner, MD; Michele Keel, OD; Max Muse, RN, ME

The meeting of the Board of Health was called specifically to give an update on the Health Department's COVID-19 response. Chair Bill Mang called the meeting to order at 4:13 p.m.

Introductions/Recognitions:

Health Department staff present were: Teresa Forrest, Administrative Officer; Melissa Fraley, Nursing Director; Matt Garner, Health Educator; and Jennifer Wallace, Administrative Officer. Misty Randall, County Attorney, was present for the meeting.

Bill Mang stated that no business was conducted at the closed meeting preceding the open session. Leo Santowasso made a motion to reopen the meeting, seconded by Sharon Odom. All members were in favor and the motion carried.

Health Director's Report: Robert Wittmann reviewed the Health Department's response to COVID-19. The first news release from the Department came out on February 7, 2020. Since that time, news releases have been sent out regularly, with the last one dated Friday, April 24. These news releases are sent to the Board of Health and posted on the Department's website.

The State will be revising their COVID-19 dashboard, with case counts and associated information, to add information specific to cases in long term care facilities (LTCF). The Health Department's dashboard will mirror the State dashboard as much as is feasible. Our dashboard will always be more up to date, in regard to case counts. The Department gets case information directly from the providers who requested the test, whereas the State gets the information from the laboratories who performed the test. At this time, data from one private laboratory is not being loaded into the State's surveillance system, NCEDSS (North Carolina Electronic Disease Surveillance System). When the State receives the data, it goes through a 'cleaning' process and there is a delay before the data is posted. The Health Department dashboard is updated regularly. Information is released through our website, social media accounts on Facebook and Twitter, and news releases. The County has a hotline available, through Public Safety, where the public can call in and ask (non-medical) questions.

Robert Wittmann stated that, by State definition, two or more COVID-19 cases in a LTCF constitutes an outbreak. With an outbreak, the Health Department can conduct testing in the facility. At this time, there is only one facility in the County with an outbreak. With help from FirstHealth of the Carolinas, we were able to test residents and staff in that facility. These tests give us a snapshot in time, with a positive/negative result for that day. People could test positive after the test. The facility continues to monitor their residents and staff, per State guidelines, as all LTCF are now doing. If a person exhibits symptoms, then they will be tested, and if they are positive, they will be isolated. Staff follow CDC guidelines regarding when they may return to work. The Health Department received a federal grant and plans to use these funds to contract with a private laboratory to secure more testing options. A letter was sent to all LTCF offering to test residents and staff now. There is a question posed to the State regarding whether the Health Director has the authority to require testing in a LTCF if there is no outbreak. The answer, when received, will be shared with the Board and the public.

Robert Wittmann stated that he has only issued one executive order for the response that has exceeded State requirements. That order closed all food bars in grocery stores, since the utensils for the food would receive a lot of public contact.

It was noted that this special called meeting was not open to public comment but that there would be a public comment session at the next regular scheduled meeting on Monday, May 4. That meeting will also be run on the Webex/call-in format, which is how the Board of Commissioners are currently running their meetings.

Bill Mang asked about the venues of communication to the public. Robert Wittmann stated that information was sent out on news releases; posted on the Department website, the County website, and the Department dashboard; social media (Facebook and Twitter); and frequently asked questions (FAQ's) from the public are now posted on our website.

Robert Wittmann stated that the Department had exercised the pandemic flu plan this year. In March, the South-Central Health Directors Group (SCHDG) convened at Fort Bragg for the exercise. The Health Department has implemented that plan, with modifications, for this response. Our community partners have been really strong. There is a daily call with the hospital and a weekly call with the State Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and with the other local health directors. The Department monitors the Governor's press conferences, as well as national updates. The Department receives daily communications from the DHHS and the CDC. We forward changes in information to the Board and the public through news releases. We update the Department's Epi Team and local providers through emails. Robert Wittmann asked the Board members to consider sharing the Health Department Facebook information on their own sites. He noted that one Board member has a newspaper. News releases are sent to several different news sites in Moore County, as well as some in surrounding counties. Warren Lewis suggested that Matt Garner, Public Information Officer (PIO), do a live Facebook session once a day to put a face on the response. Robert Wittmann stated that he would look into the logistics of that with County IT and would make it happen if it was possible. Warren Lewis stated that he would post the Health Department Facebook

information on his own site. Sharon Odom asked if the Department used Instagram. Robert Wittmann stated that the Department did not have an Instagram account and would discuss that with County IT. Warren Lewis suggested sitting down with the editors of the Pilot and the Sandhills Sentinel to do interviews. Robert Wittmann said that the Pilot editor has called and conducted an interview and that he is available to the Sentinel as well. Misty Randall noted that she and Board member Louis Gregory had been muted via the call-in and she had to log in to the Web application. Staff worked to mitigate this. Robert Wittmann noted that the media had been extremely helpful in getting information out to the public. The response of the residents of Moore County, in following the control measures put out by the Governor, has significantly slowed the spread of COVID-19 in Moore County. He noted the cooperation from the Board of County Commissioners and County staff, including the County Manager, Public Safety, and the Sheriffs Department. He also noted support from FirstHealth of the Carolinas and Moore County Schools.

Under the current situation, the Health Department has access to the staff that we need. School health nurses from Moore County Schools will be available, short-term, to help with contact tracing. The State is working to develop a platform to push out for more detail contact tracing. Robert Wittmann stated that he may ask for another nursing position for the next fiscal year, since another wave is expected in the fall and the school health nurses will be unavailable then. Right now, we have one open vacancy to interview for and then the Department will be fully staffed on nurses.

Louis Gregory stated that our media is necessary to make sure the public is aware of the concerns we are facing. He asked for clarification on whether it was the Director's discretion to test in a LTCF without two confirmed cases. Robert Wittmann stated that it was his understanding that there needs to be an outbreak (two confirmed cases) to impose testing. That question has gone to the State. Testing has been offered to all LTCF. Louis Gregory stated that a facility has one confirmed case now and he would like to address this concern quickly. He stated that he liked open sessions to discuss concerns with the public and suggested doing that more often than the Board has in the past.

Misty Randall asked a question from County Commissioner Katherine Graham. What authority does the Health Department have to confirm a LTCF is following procedures? Who is doing contact tracing on the patients? Robert Wittmann stated that all LTCF are required to follow government guidelines. One facility in the County had cases and then last week there was one case in another facility. Some positive cases don't show symptoms. If a LTCF does not have proper personal protective equipment (ppe) available, they can request it through the County Emergency Management Office to the State. It is up to the facility to comply. Each LTCF has an Administrator, Medical Director, and Director of Nursing to oversee operations. The State went through the facility with cases to verify that they were following procedures (they were) and to verify that staff had proper ppe (they did). With each outbreak, the State will inspect the facility. Louis Gregory asked why the Pinehurst Health Care and Rehabilitation facility issued a statement to the Pilot saying they were discouraged to wear masks? Robert Wittmann

answered that the corporation can request ppe through the County Emergency Management Office. There is no reason any LTCF in this County shouldn't have adequate ppe for staff. Bill Mang thanked everyone listening to the meeting. He noted that the next meeting of the Board of Health is on Monday, May 4, 2020. This meeting is open to the public and public comments will be available. There was a question regarding whether or not to change the scheduled meeting time of 6:00 pm. Teresa Forrest will poll Board of Health members and the majority will rule. The time will be listed on the public notice when it is released to the media. For public comments, the Board of Health will follow the method that the Board of Commissioners is using. Per the Board of Health operating procedures, each person is allotted a maximum of three minutes, first come first served for participants. The total time allotted for public comments is thirty minutes. The County will help the Health Department set this up.

BJ Goodridge made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Warren Lewis. All were in favor and the motion passed. The meeting adjourned at 5:01 pm.