



**Williamson County and Cities Health District
Board of Health Meeting
Thursday, July 7, 2020 6:30p.m.
Meeting Held via Video/Telephone Conference Call
Due to a Disaster Declaration and the Existence of the COVID-19 Epidemic
Round Rock Public Health Center
Scott D. Evans Conference Room
355 Texas Ave., Round Rock, TX 78664**

The meeting was called to order at 6:31 p.m. by Board of Health Chair Marlene McMichael

1) Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance

Ms. McMichael asked that Mr. Parker lead the Pledge of Allegiance, which he did. Ms. McMichael gave the Invocation.

2) Roll call was taken

Present: Chair Marlene McMichael (Williamson County), Secretary Mary Faith Sterk (Georgetown), Vice Chair Ed Strout (Cedar Park), Scott Parker (Liberty Hill/Leander), Joanne Land (Williamson County), Terrance Owens (Hutto), Derrick Neal (WCCHD)

Absent: Joan Maxfield (Taylor), Cynthia Flores (Round Rock)

3) Acknowledge staff and visitors; hear any comments.

Staff members and visitors present: Richard Hamala, Justine Price, Cindy Botts, Nayely Ocana

Ms. Ocana introduced herself and stated that she recently joined Realty Texas and was asked by her broker to attend the meeting. She stated that she has no comments, but is interested in listening and learning from today's meeting. Ms. McMichael thanked Ms. Ocana for her comments and her time to attend the meeting this evening.

CONSENT AGENDA

The consent agenda includes items considered to be routine that the Board of Health may act on with one motion. There will be no separate discussion of these items unless requested by a Board director in which event the item will be removed from the consent agenda and considered in its normal sequence on the regular agenda. (Items 4-5)

4) Approval of minutes, Emergency Meetings (03-23-20, 03-31-20, 04-16-20, 04-30-20); Regular Meeting (05-07-20)

5) Approval of current investment reports (April and May 2020)

6) Approval of New Grants

Ms. McMichael asked that Ms. Price articulate, for the record, what new grants were being brought forth for approval through the Consent Calendar. Ms. Price stated that the new grants include a \$50,000 grant from the Georgetown Health Foundation to hire administrative help to assist in community-based resiliency training. It also includes two allocations that are additional and specific to COVID response, added to an existing Public Health and Emergency Preparedness (PHEP) federal grant. The additional allocations are being titled "COVID A" and "COVID B" and will be used to cover COVID-specific expenses, including personnel, supplies, testing kits, etc. Lastly, is the \$110,000 Saint David's Foundation grant, also specific to COVID response, and will be used for additional testing kits and support of the software that is needed to schedule and process people through the testing site.

Mr. Strout asked if any of the grants related to COVID were required to be repaid to the grantor, if the funds were not fully exhausted prior to the end of emergency COVID response? As a follow up question, he asked if any residual funds remained, could they be reallocated within the Health District's budget to fund other projects? Ms. Price answered that none of the grants require any repayment. The "COVID A" and "COVID B" allocations that are tied to the existing PHEP grant would be available through March of 2021, as part of the lifecycle of the existing grant contract. As further detailed in item 9 of the agenda, Staff is anticipating utilizing approximately 85% of the allocated funds for the current fiscal year, with the remainder being utilized at the start of the next fiscal year as a drawn down for staffing requirements. These staff members would continue to fulfill the grant requirements associated with the allocation, which would continue even after the direct COVID response element concludes. The Saint David's Foundation funding is anticipated to be drawn down very quickly, based on the current rate of community-based testing, likely within a month of its receipt. The Health District has also been "pre-awarded" an additional allocation funds through the Emerging Acute and Infectious Disease federal grant. Previous allocations through this grant have been made to the District in the past for Foodborne Illness and Ebola. No formal paperwork has been received as of yet, but when it is, it will also be brought before the Board of Health. The District is anticipating those funds to be available in August. The funds will be used to pay for additional epidemiology positions, for approximately 2 years. In the past, additional allocations, once complete, were brought before Congress for determination as to whether the allocations would remain as a regular budget item through this grant.

Motion to approve consent agenda

Moved: Joanne Land

Seconded: Ed Strout

Vote: Approved unanimously

REGULAR AGENDA

7) WCCHD Purchasing Policy Update

Ms. Price explained that the Purchasing Policy update came about due to feedback from previous Consolidated Annual Financial Reports (CAFRs), and was later discussed at the May 7, 2020 Board meeting as a need to develop a policy that brought the Health District's procedures in line with general accounting principles. Much of the policy is standard language outlining the District's ethics of spending and the operating guidelines. Typically, the standard operating guidelines are not brought before the Board, but Staff chose to do so for this policy in order to provide insight to the Board on how these guidelines are aligned with those of the Comptroller, which break purchasing down into different tier levels and clearly articulates when price quotes, RFPs, etc. are required. Ms. Price clarified that Staff is asking the Board of Health to approve the Policy, which is broad, but the Standard Operating Guidelines, which was provided for background information and listed the different price tiers, did not need to be formally approved.

Motion to approve the Purchasing Policy, as presented.

Moved: Mary Faith Sterk
Seconded: Joanne Land
Vote: Approved unanimously by roll call (called by Cindy Botts)

8) Ratification of Pre-approved COVID-19 Expenses

Ms. McMichael stated that related to this item, she, as Board Chair, had pre-approved multiple expenses since the last Board meeting. Most of these purchases were in relation to testing kits and temporary staffing. She then invited Ms. Price to further detail the expenses. Ms. Price presented a PowerPoint slide deck to the Board of Health detailing relevant updates on Summary Budget to Actual COVID-19 related expenses, as of June 18, 2020. Ms. Price summarized the total FY20 Budget to Actual, including COVID-19 expenses. Actual expenses were under operating budget year to date expectations, as was revenue. CARES funding is anticipated to come into the budget as a reimbursement from the County in the coming months and is not yet reflected in the revenue. Most of the cost savings on the expenses is related to salary savings for vacant positions that were not able to be hired due to the pandemic. Information regarding variances in the operating expenses, specific COVID expenses, and the unknown availability of additional funds from the County to continue to support the District's response efforts were also discussed. Ms. McMichael requested information about the County's additional CARES Act funding that could be provided the District, as response efforts continue. Mr. Neal and Ms. Price explained that the County is intentionally holding approximately \$8 Million in unallocated funds of the \$92 Million in total it received, specifically for the Commissioner's Court-approved Phase 2 of the Wilco Forward program. Phase 2 would provide for the potential of additional funding opportunities for the Health District, Bluebonnet Trails and City jurisdictions.

Motion to approve all COVID-19 expenses pre-approved by the Board Chair since May 7, 2020.

Moved: Ed Strout
Seconded: Mary Faith Sterk
Vote: Approved unanimously by roll call (called by Cindy Botts)

9) FY20 Summary Budget Amendment

Ms. Price presented a Summary Budget Amendment schedule that detailed all the major changes to the previously approved FY20 Budget. The schedule lists the approved budget amounts in addition to an adjustments column that details both the amounts increased and lost and a "working" columns that represents the updated totals to each category, considering the adjustments column. Ms. Price discussed that an assumption of fifty-percent of budgeted revenue in Clinical Services was anticipated to be lost due to the inability to see patients for standard clinical practices. Ms. Price also clarified that the "COVID A" and "COVID B" amounts included in the adjustment columns is only 85% of the amount specified in Item 6 of the agenda. This is because the grant allocations overlap fiscal years and the remaining 15% will be detailed in the FY21 Budget. Ms. McMichael asked how the Health District was managing overtime during the response to avoid overworking Staff involved in the response. Ms. Price stated that managers see the hours worked, by employee, when approving timesheets.

Additionally, Mr. Neal gave a directive to all WCCHD staff that those individuals not on the Command Staff, that were involved in the response can and should avail themselves of time off to avoid burnout. The overtime hours have correspondingly declined for most of the individuals in the response. For Command Staff, which includes Team Leads and most of the District Leadership Team and the Executive Leadership Team, people are still working a lot of hours. Ms. Price explained that this is because there isn't enough staffing to do all of the required elements of the response. Additional surge staff, as approved by the Board, will help with this. The District has also shifted some staff, where they could be spared, from other operations to assist and have submitted a STAR request to the State of Texas for additional epidemiologist staffing, which has been approved. Ms. McMichael asked if there was anything further that the Executive Leadership staff could do to reduce their hours. Ms. Price agreed that Mr. Neal, Dr. Palazzo and herself have all had several pay periods that have been significantly heavy, in terms of hours. Unfortunately, she explained, these hours vary based on the needs of the response. As the decision-makers of the agency, it is a requirement to be available to respond if there is a cluster outbreak, a long-term care facility needs Leadership input and oversight, response elements arise with stakeholders, work is done preparing and giving meetings with City Councils, etc. Ms. Price stated that they do try to limit the number of hours worked, however possible, and delegate out as much as they can, but needs are such that they are being asked to, and must, respond. Mr. Neal added that he and Ms. Price have discussed this several times, but there are no other backups or anyone else who can make decisions for the agency in that capacity. He expanded that it is his belief that the level of response required from COVID is such that there may be many individuals who leave the public health field. Many of the investments should have been made up-front and providing money for implementation during a response doesn't "fix" everything. In Williamson County, we are looking at a tidalwave of cases where contact tracing isn't relevant anymore. Public Health will do the best it can to mitigate the impact, and right now, that is keeping the most vulnerable populations safe. Ms. Price added that she believed some of the overtime hours would start to decrease once new procedures internally are in place. Part of the challenge, she explained, is that while cases are surging, many things are changing regularly, even weekly or daily, which can have a significant impact upon the response. For example, WCCHD is currently working on a software implementation that is linking our database to the State's database that will allow us to shift a portion of the case load investigation and contact tracing to those at the State. This will greatly help with addressing overwork on caseloads, but is a challenge currently to implement and work through all of the procedural changes. Reporting to our external partners is much the same. There is an immense effort in trying to automate those reports, cross-train individuals, address requests for additional data and how that needs to be presented so that it is informative for decision makers. Anytime things change at the State or with those processes, they effect other processes and it is important the Executive Leadership Team has oversight on those changes because none of the tools or systems were in place prior to the pandemic and much has been done by WCCHD staff, often on the fly, as required from ever changing guidance and requirements. Mr. Neal clarified that without attempting to play "the blame game", not having a national strategy in place leaves local health districts fending for themselves. As soon as processes are in place and are working, the protocol changes. There is no continuity at the top, which leads to a victimization of the local health districts. He explained that the Texas Association of County and City Health Officials (TACCHO) sent out a survey recently to all of the local health districts in Texas asking how long they think they will be "in the midst" of the COVID-19 response. Most of them thought the better part of a year and a half to two years. Mr. Neal explained that he believed this was due to the lack of a strategy, as has been with other pandemics, such as Ebola and SARS, where Public Health understood what it needed to do and was given the support to do so. Marlene thanked Ms. Price and Mr. Neal for their insight and asked that the District do the best it can given the situation.

Motion to approve the FY20 Summary Budget amendment, as presented

Moved: Mary Faith Sterk
Seconded: Terrance Owens
Vote: Approved unanimously by roll call (called by Cindy Botts)

Ms. McMichael asked that agenda items 10 and 11 be switched so that the COVID-19 Response can be addressed prior to the Executive Director Annual Evaluation. There was no objection from the rest of the Board.

11) COVID-19 Response Update

Mr. Neal explained that while Ms. Price gave a detailed look at the Health District's response to COVID-19, he would be providing a higher-level overview. Mr. Neal explained that the County's Emergency Security Operations Center (ESOC), which was set up in response to COVID-19, has fully demobilized. Since then, the response has increased in efficiency, though much can still be done. Due to the exponential growth, the District has more work than it can handle. The Health District is focused on the epidemiology side and ensuring that the epi surge element is adequate. Staff is doing the best it can to ensure that the most vulnerable populations are protected, including beginning to set up strike teams and protocols for behavioral health facilities. Mr. Neal stated that he and Ms. Price are switching, on a monthly basis, holding the title of Incident Commander, to allow for a small break in the workload. Ms. Price is holding the title for the month of July. Mr. Neal explained he held the title in June and will resume it in August. This is in addition to the normal positions of Executive Director and Deputy Director. Looking forward into the late summer and fall, the District is preparing for concerns relating to

schools restarting during a pandemic, including required vaccinations, of which the District typically is heavily involved in. Mr. Neal concluded that the District is extremely fortunate that the County has supported our response efforts with the CARES dollars. He explained that he has talked to several health districts in Texas where the funding was not shared with Public Health at all. No organization should be required to “go into the hole” for managing a response, if funding is leveraged correctly. It is the Health District’s intent to manage the funding it has received to the best of its ability. That being said, this is the first pandemic in 108 years, but the District will do the very best it can to appropriately manage the funding.

Ms. Price presented a slide deck to the Board of Health detailing relevant updates on COVID-19 cases within Williamson County and the Health District’s related response efforts. Ms. Price summarized the current case count and explained the epidemiological relevance of the charts in the PowerPoint. Information regarding current hospital capacity, long-term care facilities and community testing were also discussed. Mr. Strout asked if repeated tests by a single individual were included in the testing numbers or if the numbers reflected each individual that was tested, regardless of the number of times they were tested. Ms. Price responded that because the State was controlling the data for the County specific to counting and reporting testing numbers, the information was not readily known to the Health District. She stated that WCCHD would reach out to the State to clarify that the data on testing numbers was actually “de-duped” and did not contain multiple tests for each unique individual. The WCCHD site, she clarified, only counts numbers of tests, not unique individuals, but she does not believe that the duplication rate is significant enough to impact the overall numbers. Mr. Strout explained that he works in a surgery center and for patients that have cataract surgery done on both eyes, the surgeries are done two weeks apart, with a COVID test done prior to each, resulting in many of the surgery center’s patients having at least two tests done. His concern is there an artificial increase in the testing numbers.

10) Consider and Take Action on Executive Director Annual Evaluation

7:46PM – Executive Session called

8:14PM – reconvened to Regular Session

Motion to accept the Executive Director’s evaluation, as presented, including the recommendation.

Moved: Joanne Land
Seconded: Scott Parker
Vote: Approved unanimously by roll call (called by Cindy Botts)

Ms. McMichael thanked Mr. Neal for his leadership and congratulated him, as referenced in the recommendation accompanying the Executive Director’s evaluation, and stated that she looked forward to working with him in the coming year. Mr. Hamala asked Ms. McMichael to clarify for the record, the recommendation accompanying the Executive Director’s evaluation, included a pay increase. Ms. McMichael clarified that the evaluation was voted on and accepted, as written, which included a recommendation that Mr. Neal be congratulated and receive a pay raise of three percent.

12) New Business

Ms. McMichael asked if there was any additional new business. Mr. Neal stated that there was not at this time.

13) Set next meeting date, place, agenda (Thursday, 09-03-2020, 6:30 p.m)


14) Adjourn

Motion to adjourn

Moved: Joanne Land
Seconded: Ed Strout
Vote: Approved unanimously

Ms. McMichael thanked the Board for their time and the Executive Director Evaluation sub-committee (Ms. Land and Mr. Strout) for their additional efforts in serving on the sub-committee. She concluded by stating that everyone “stay safe” and have a happy Fourth of July holiday. Ms. Price added that Staff also wanted to thank the Board members for their time, which is volunteered, and is sincerely appreciated.

Board Chair McMichael adjourned the meeting at 8:18 p.m.

Recorded by: 
Cindy Botts, Executive Assistant

Reviewed by: Minutes approved on September 3, 2020, as part of the Consent Calendar. To be signed at a later date.
Mary Faith Sterk, Secretary