



**Williamson County and Cities Health District
Board of Health Meeting
Thursday, November 5, 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 6:34 p.m. by Board of Health Chair Marlene McMichael

- 1) Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance
Ms. McMichael asked that Mr. Strout 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), , Joanne Land (Williamson County), Scott Parker (Liberty Hill/Leander), Cynthia Flores (Round Rock), Joan Maxfield (Taylor), Derrick Neal (WCCHD)
Absent: Terrence Owens (Hutto)
- 3) Acknowledge staff and visitors; hear any comments.
Staff members and visitors present: Richard Hamala, Justine Price, Cindy Botts, Abena Asante, William Buster, Lori Murphy, Ivah Sorber, Alissa Orozco, Michelle Broddrick, Caroline Hilbert, Cassandra Edwards, Nicole Evert, Khaila Pippin, Karina Martinez, Jason Fritz
- 4) Recognition of William Buster

Mr. Neal introduced this item by stating that the recognition by the Board for Mr. Buster was bittersweet, due to the fact that he has decided to move on from his role at the St. David's Foundation, to an organization in his home state of North Carolina. During the past year, under Mr. Buster's tenure, the Williamson County and Cities Health District has been able to formalize a working relationship with the St. David's Foundation, which has resulted in funding for the Health District to begin establishing a HUB model of community health service. The establishment of a HUB model has been a project that the Health District has wanted to begin for several years but lacked funding opportunities to do so. Mr. Buster sat down at the table with the Health District to assist in getting this project "up and running"- for which the Health District is deeply appreciative. Mr. Neal stated that the Health District wanted to recognize the enormous impact Mr. Buster has made in helping the communities in Central Texas.

Ms. McMichael read the proclamation from the Health District Board of Directors to Mr. Buster. Mr. Buster was then invited to speak on his recognition. Mr. Buster expressed his appreciation of this recognition and stated that he will continue doing the work he does because of his belief that all individuals have a right to be heard and to be provided the services they need. Ms. McMichael once again thanked Mr. Buster for his efforts and for his services to the County.

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 5-10)

- 5) Approval of minutes, Regular Meeting 09/03/20
- 6) Approval of current investment report (August 2020, September 2020)
- 7) Approval of 2021 Board Meeting Dates
- 8) Approval of Episcopal Health Foundation's Accountable Communities for Health (ACH) Initiative
- 9) Ratify and approve the NACCHO COVID grant interlocal agreement with Williamson County
- 10) Approval of City ILA for Vector Control

Motion to approve consent agenda

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

REGULAR AGENDA

- 11) Recognition of Scott D. Evans Awardee

Ms. McMichael asked Ms. Botts to play the video for the Board of Health and then explained that the video was in recognition of the Scott D. Evan's award. This award, she continued, was for a single employee, nominated by other employees, as exemplifying the highest levels of public service and public health practice. After the video was played, Ms. Botts invited Mr. Neal, Ms. Price or Ms. Sorber to add any other statements they may wish to make to the Board, regarding this item or the awardee. Mr. Neal stated that Nicole Evert, the awardee, was honored and recognized yesterday in the "All-Staff" meeting. He went on to explain that not only was she thrust into the role of a new Division Director, a couple of months later, the Health District was faced with a pandemic and one of the initial decisions made by him, as Executive Director, was that the response to the pandemic was to be "Epi Driven", meaning that the epidemiologists, those who knew most about infectious disease and pandemics, were to lead the response. This was additional pressure that was put onto her and she excelled past expectations. He went on to explain that there were some tough days, initially, trying to forge relationships with those at the ESOC, but the challenge was expected and Ms. Evert was able to not only forge those relationships, but continue to cultivate them. Mr. Neal stated that Ms. Evert has been very consistent and dependable, when it comes to the pandemic and that the Health District would not be in such a good place in the response, had it not been for her leadership. Mr. Neal expressed his sincere gratitude for her and the work that she has done. He made a point to express that like anything else in the organization, nothing is "given away"- it must be earned - and Ms. Evert has definitely earned this award and recognition.

Ms. Price began her comments by mentioning that Ms. Evert deserves this award several times over. Ms. Price served on two interview panels for Ms. Evert's positions, one for when she came to the agency as an Epidemiology Lead, and again, after serving in the Interim Director position, for the Division Director position. Ms. Price has always been impressed by Ms. Evert's leadership abilities, from an analytical analysis of a problem, to various personnel issues that needed to be addressed, Ms. Evert is extremely adaptable and capable. This response has just shown those traits to another level. Ms. Evert has served as the Incident Commander, holding down the DOC, getting everything in our Operations Center scaled up and forged those relationships with City and County partners. She later served as Ops Chief and Epi Ops Chief, navigated tough data analysis problems, liaised with schools and long-term care facilities for resolving clusters, trained a new crop of epis and had to wade through the most complex grants, funding and managerial items as part of this response. Ms. Evert has had so much on her plate and has just been an incredible force. Through out all of the pressure, Ms. Evert has stuck it out and grown so much. It has really been an honor to work with such a public health leader.

Ms. Sorber quickly commented that there was a total of four nominations and that two of the four were actually for Ms. Evert, which is why the Board only reviewed three at its 9/3/20 meeting. As a recipient of the Scott D. Evans Award, Ms. Evert's name will be added to the Scott D. Evans Award plaque, that hangs in the Scott D. Evans conference room, and contains the names of the previous award winners. Ms. Evert will also receive a personal plaque.

Ms. Evert commented that she wanted to thank everyone for recognizing her work. As she mentioned on the "All-Staff" meeting, she didn't know if she was deserving of the award, but was very humbled to be selected, especially by her team and her colleagues. She stated that she was very thankful to work under and alongside Ms. Price and Dr. Palazzo. All of Executive Leadership Team has been very supportive of growing up new leaders. She recognized that everyone at the Health District has put a lot of "blood, sweat and tears" into the response and she is so thankful for the recognition.

Ms. McMichael thanked Ms. Evert for her service and hard work on behalf of the whole of the Board of Health. Ms. McMichael stated that having such a worthy candidate was really exceptional. Ms. McMichael asked if any of the other Board Members wished to make additional comments. Ms. Flores congratulated Ms. Evert on her award and congratulated the team that put the video together, stating that it was well done.

No action – Informational Item Only

12) WCCHD 2021 Holiday Schedule

Ms. McMichael explained that her understanding of the major differences from that of the Williamson County holiday schedule, which is traditionally followed, was based on a staff survey. Staff is opting to give up Veteran's Day and Independence Day holidays, in order to extend their Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays. Ms. McMichael asked if there were any questions from the Board. Ms. Land stated that she appreciated Administration asking the staff what they would prefer.

Motion to approve the proposed Holiday Schedule

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

6:58PM: Ms. Maxfield entered the Board meeting.

13) COVID-19 CARES Expenses

Ms. Price explained that at each Board Meeting, Staff has been presenting an update on the CARES expenses. Staff estimates that the funds from CARES have now been fully expended, and so a breakdown of those costs are being presented. Ms. Price presented that breakdown. She explained that the costs, either encumbered or booked, totaled \$990,570. Those expenses break down into three main categories: (1) Testing Kits and Supplies- \$626,022. This amount will be adjusted slightly, due to some QA that occurred after the agenda packet was produced. After the 935 test kits that should have been paid for under the St. David's Foundation grant funding, 6,000 test kits were funded just by the CARES funding. These kits were purchased through AIT Laboratory at approximately \$100 per test kit and the Descina Laboratory kits that were negotiated at \$75 per test kit. (2) Staff Overtime/Catastrophic Pay - \$320,000. This policy was based on the Williamson County pay policy and was approved by the Board of Health during the beginning of the response. There is still one additional pay period, containing Overtime, that has not been booked yet. Staff has been trying to walk a balance between keeping up with the onerous burden of the case count peaks and operating in ICS structure for approximately 276 days so far, while trying to keep people to a manageable work-life balance. (3) Other. This category was equipment, travel to and from testing sites, contractual services, waste disposal of PPE, plexiglass, etc. Eligibility criteria for the CARES reimbursement from the County has evolved over time and staff is working very closely with the Auditor's office at the County to try to negotiate those changes. There are no new changes or expenses to ratify or approve since the prior Board meeting, this is just an update and an overview of the prior Board-approved expenses.

Ms. McMichael reminded the Board that the County allocated \$1 Million of its \$93 Million CARES funding to the Health District. This \$1 Million has nearly been expended, with the response still ongoing. Ms. McMichael stated that she didn't know if a request for additional funding for test kits was in process by WCCHD staff. Ms. Price stated that staff was considering requesting enough test kits to provide community testing until December 31, 2020. This might be another 1,000-2,000 kits. Case counts are increasing locally, as well as all over Texas. Staff expects those case counts to continue to rise because of re-openings and the holidays. Staff anticipates there will be a need for testing, for a long time- even after a vaccine is available. WCCHD wants to be able to meet that need, the testing site is available, and the process is a "well-oiled machine" at this point. Unfortunately, the CARES federal requirements have stated that all purchases must be done by November 30, 2020 and purchasing items to be used beyond that November 30th deadline is discouraged. Unless the federal deadline is extended, requesting additional kits may not be possible. WCCHD staff will continue to work with the County Auditor's Office on options.

No action – Informational Item Only

14) Discussion and possible action on Adoption of FY21 Budget

Ms. Price explained that the FY21 Budget has not changed significantly from the FY20 budget. She explained that in the past four years, since WCCHD began doing a line-item budget process, the Division Directors have been gradually been building more and more of their own budgets, reviewing costs and sending those Division level budgets to Executive Leadership for additional QA review and final assessment. Last year, Staff informed the Board that DSRIP funding was beginning to wind down and additional funds would need to be allocated into Reserves to compensate for the 11-15 Medicaid Waiver that would be going away as a major funding source from the Health District. To replace that funding in coming years, would require a lot of different strategies. One of those strategies would be pulling money out of the Health District's Reserves strategically, to help shore up those gaps. Additional strategies included looking at attrition and vacant positions, growth and streamlining the District's own internal processes and budgets. In the FY21 budget, there is approximately \$282,000 identified as needing to be pulled from the Reserve funds, due to the "stepping down" of the DSRIP funding. This amount is approximately half of what the Health District will actually be losing. This is a conservative estimate, though, as 2020 has been a non-standard year, making it a challenge to estimate costs for the coming year, based on this year's actuals. Revenue estimates for investment income and direct client services were intentionally decreased with the assumption of continued COVID challenges into 2021. Cost increases were mainly in the Salary and Fringe category, specifically for two new epidemiology positions. These increased costs are offset by new grant funding. This has allowed for the difference in what the District will actually be losing, as a pose to what the District will be required to pull from its Reserves. The Health District is also continuing to aggressively pursue additional forms of funding. Areas of growth include IT overhead, paid to Williamson County, Subscriptions and Reporting Software costs. The Health District still needs a Pool Program tracking software program, as well as a Retail Food software replacement. Currently a manually managed database is being utilized, while a software implementation has not been feasible during 2020. It is a major need, however, and has been budgeted for implementation in FY21. A modest 2% merit increase has been included in the budget, as has a 2% incentive and retention bonus, which the Board has approved for the past two years. These increases, though modest, have worked extremely well. Even amongst the COVID pandemic, staff retention has been extremely high – higher than it has been in years. Prior to the pandemic, the Health District's Emergency Management team had been essentially "gutted" from the loss of institutional knowledge and significant turnover several years ago, including the loss of

the Executive Director. Epidemiology and Emergency Preparedness staff have done a lot of work during the pandemic to shore up those gaps. This shortfall is going to be critical moving forward, in order to continue to keep the talented, knowledgeable people the District currently has. It's also important because of how contentious and politicized public health has become. People are getting "burned out" throughout the Country, meaning that there is not a lot of availability for replacement, if individuals leave the District, particularly in epidemiology and preparedness positions. As COVID fatigue continues, this will continue to be an issue. Even when COVID goes away, there will be challenges for the Health District with the HUB, Public Health 3.0, Social Determinants of Health, DSRIP transition, Alternative Payment Methodologies, etc. There is an immense amount that public health does, with approximately 100 staff for a population of nearly 600,000, and WCCHD Leadership feels it is important to support the staff, while maintaining a balance in order to keep level funding from the County and Member Cities in a year where everyone is struggling. Ms. Price also brought to the Board's attention that in the Consent Agenda, the Board has previously approved the ACH grant, through the Episcopal Health Foundation for the work the District will be doing on the Social Determinants of Health with various community partners. The Health District was originally notified that it won the award for \$210,000. The District has since been updated that this amount is to be split amongst all the community partners. Though WCCHD remains the backbone of the grant and will therefore get a larger share of the funding, the specifics of that funding is not yet known. The District has budgeted \$77,000, which will cover one year of salary and fringe for the Community Partnerships position. As more is learned, budget amendments will be brought before the Board.

Mr. Parker asked how long the new Epidemiologist I position was funded and when the Board needs to look at sustainment of that position. Ms. Price explained that most of the existing epidemiologists have come into the Health District, including herself, on an IBC grant. Generally, those positions come in as two-year grants from the State, and at the conclusion of that grant, the funding is brought at the State-level, for consideration into the General Budget. If it is approved, as other grants have been, it becomes sustainable funding. Mr. Parker also asked if the total cost of fringe benefits also included the potential merit increase. Ms. Price explained that it was the total cost and assumed that all of those employees who were eligible for the increase received it. That will not be the case in actuality, but for budgeting purposes, the more conservative number was used.

Motion to approve the FY21 Budget, as presented.

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

15) Update to Merit Compensation Eligibility Policy

Ms. Sorber presented the new merit compensation policy. She explained that the largest difference was in the wording of the merit eligibility. The previous policy had a disqualifier for receipt of a performance-based merit increase for those employees who received a salary increase, including those that received an increase due to a reclassification. That has been changed in the new policy.

Ms. McMichael asked about the potential impact on the number of eligible merit increases. Ms. Sorber explained that while she wasn't aware of the exact number for 2020, a majority of the WIC employees were reclassified at the beginning of 2019, making them ineligible for a performance-based merit increase in 2020. The few that were not reclassified were eligible to receive the increase, leading to a challenge of inequality within the division. The changes to the merit compensation policy will address that moving forward.

Mr. Parker asked if the merit increase was eligible every fiscal year, or every anniversary date. Ms. Sorber explained that it was currently every fiscal year, based on the employee's hire date. Mr. Parker raised a concern about the clarity of the language regarding the timing regarding the hire date versus the promotion date for the annual merit eligibility. Mr. Parker asked if the item could be tabled so that he and Ms. Sorber might work on the policy language to clarify those concerns. Mr. Hamala agreed that, legally, that was perfectly fine and advised that the Board defer action until the end of the meeting.

Action on this item was deferred until 8:24PM. Ms. McMichael stated that she re-read it and clarified for the Board that there is not a single month in which the merit increase is typically awarded. Ms. Price concurred. She explained that the merit increase is typically awarded as part of the Budget process and then the District Leadership team together determine the tiers for how that merit may be awarded. Ms. Flores, Ms. McMichael and Mr. Parker all discussed the potential language changes that was presented by Ms. Sorber. Ms. Land stated that she also approved of the new wording.

Motion to approve the Merit Compensation Eligibility Policy, as presented, with the language changes identified during the meeting.

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

16) Executive Director's Report

Mr. Neal began by stating that he has been with WCCHD for nearly two years now and last year WCCHD leadership came to the Board requesting funding for leadership training for the Division Directors. Now, because the COVID-19 pandemic, many leaders have been made out of necessity. He stated that he was grateful and thankful for the growth of so many WCCHD staff. For the leadership that so many have shown, including Ms. Evert, who was honored earlier tonight. One of the changes that the pandemic has brought has been that irrespective of whether the employee reports to Ms. Price or Mr. Neal, both are involved in the annual evaluation process. This has been because of the level of workload the pandemic has brought and the shared Incident Commander status, both the Executive Director and the Deputy Director have been very involved in supervision for all of their direct reports. This has allowed for well-rounded feedback. Staff quickly pivoted from working in the traditional office to working remotely and very successfully as a cohesive team over the last year. Mr. Neal is so proud of staff for their level of professionalism and ability to be just as effective remotely.

The Marketing and Community Engagement team has continued to be very involved in the 2020 Census outreach, and even with the pandemic, have been able to reach all of its metrics, making sure that all of the Hard to Count populations are reached. This was a huge responsibility and was done well and was not an easy process. Additionally, WCCHD is one of the few Accredited Health Districts in Texas, and again, despite COVID response, have continued to move forward on the Reaccreditation process. Staff has managed to continue to do the priority projects within public health in addition to responding to a pandemic. The County Indigent Program has been in a holding pattern with the County in order to maintain this program. It is now moving ahead, and Staff will continue to be "forward-thinking" with our most vulnerable communities. Ms. Brodderick and the Finance team will continue to work with the County Auditor's office on both the County Indigent Health program and the CARES Act reimbursement process. Mr. Neal concluded that he was very pleased with the direction the Health District was going in at this time, and though things can always get better, but it's great to come to work every day with individuals that are truly invested and motivated in making the lives of the citizens of Williamson County better.

Ms. Price added that Mr. Fritz, who runs the District's Integrated Vector Management Program, was also in attendance at the meeting and she wanted to highlight what a tremendous job Mr. Fritz has done in building that program up. He has been working with City stakeholders, with what has sometimes been a contentious issue, because of spraying and political considerations on the Mosquito Management Working Groups. He has taken the lead on getting those Integrated Local Agreements processed and keeping both the District and stakeholders informed on trends for West Nile or Zika Virus in Williamson County. He's been on YouTube and many recent interviews about the large number of West Nile cases in Williamson County in 2020. Ms. Price stated that Mr. Fritz is a rising Public Health star and wanted to publicly acknowledge all that he has done.

Ms. Maxfield asked Mr. Neal to expand on reopening plans for the Health District, in terms of vaccination clinics, and a return to a more "normal" state of business. Mr. Neal stated that Dr. Palazzo established criteria, based on the initial White House Reopening Plan, from the beginning of the pandemic. This plan identified "gating criteria" for reopening schedules, based on case counts, testing availability and level of spread in the community. Mr. Neal explained that WCCHD was one of the only municipalities in Texas that was using this plan. This translates to WCCHD prioritizing direct client services for the reopening. WIC was recently given an extension until the Spring, in order to more safely provide services. Mr. Neal clarified that WCCHD was being extremely strategic on how employees were brought back to work, on a Division by Division basis, coupled with the Health District's Gating Criteria, which takes into account the positivity rate and the level of virus in the community. At this time, while there are a few individuals who are choosing to continue to work out of the office, WCCHD Leadership is encouraging employees to continue to work out of their house, in order to not become a danger to each other. It's important for WCCHD to be a model example for all of the other agencies in Williamson County. He stated that if WCCHD is not doing "the right thing", we can't expect others to do it either. WCCHD needs to "lead by example". Ms. Martinez, WCCHD Clinical Services Director, announced that staff was very excited to reopen one clinic, for now, and anticipated that clinic to be Cedar Park. The anticipated open date will be November 16, 2020. The clinic will have limited services but will include vaccines and Latent Tuberculosis Infection services. Ms. Martinez clarified that because Clinical Staff was still very much involved in the ongoing COVID response, testing would continue to be done in the mornings, with clinic openings in the afternoon. She also clarified that throughout the response, the TB team has continued to see tuberculosis patients and the Nurse Practitioner has seen individuals for sexually transmitted infections and birth control through Tele-Health visits. The clinic will move to a "contactless check in" process, which is all done by the patient before they enter the clinic. This eliminates any paperwork changing hands. This team has also been doing a free drive-through flu clinic for the past four weeks. Mr. Neal explained that this same team will also transition to vaccine administration, when it becomes available.

17) Set next meeting date, place, agenda (Thursday, January 07, 2021, 6:30 p.m)

18) Adjourn

Motion to adjourn

Moved: Mary Faith Sterk
Seconded: Cynthia Flores
Vote: Approved unanimously

Board Chair McMichael adjourned the meeting at 8:29 p.m.



Recorded by: _____
Cindy Botts, Executive Assistant

Reviewed by:  _____
Mary Faith Sterk, Secretary