

**Whiteside County Board of Health
Minutes of the Regular Meeting, February 23, 2021**

Members Present: Dr. Mark Mench, Rick Cavazos, Karen Nelson, Margo Myers, Dr. Mathew Mathew, Cindy Zander

Members Absent: Dr. Robert Whittaker

Staff Present: Cheryl Lee, Kimberly Good, Steve Brenner, Peggy Blase, Staci Shaffer, Savannah Davis, Cory Law, Tina Hodge

The meeting was called to order at 7:08 p.m.

Hearing from the Public:

Robert Sondgeroth, Regional Superintendent of Schools, commended Cheryl Lee for her leadership and Cheryl and Cory Law for keeping them up-to-date with the pandemic. He stated that he feels the kids are safer in the schools with Cheryl and Cory's leadership. He commended the Health Department for their assistance with testing and vaccinating the teachers stating that many have been vaccinated with second doses already. He also commended the Health Department for sending their staff to Fulton to accommodate vaccinating. Dr. Sondgeroth shared that he has spoken with many of the school superintendents and they agree that it is better for the kids to be in schools, and that under the Health Department leadership, kids have been able to be in school with minimal problems. He again commended the Health Department and the great job they are doing.

Kris Noble, Executive Director of the Sauk Valley Area Chamber of Commerce, expressed concern regarding the emergency rule and enforcement. She feels that there is a lack of enforcement and that this is pitting the businesses against each other. Dr. Mench inquired as to how she feels this is happening? She states that some businesses are following the guidelines and some are not and she feels that enforcement has not been consistent. She feels that law enforcement and all of Whiteside County are not all on the same page and she would like further clarification. She indicated both Cheryl and Cory were on a Zoom meeting with businesses earlier that day to answer questions and provide clarification.

Dr. Tad Everett, Sterling CU District 5 Superintendent of Schools, commended the Health Department for their leadership throughout the pandemic. He states that Sterling schools are part of an organization called LUDA, which stands for Large Unit District Association. He shared that a LUDA conference last week he was asked how he was able to have student face-to-face. He shared that they have a color coded system utilizing a daily collection of data to determine the positivity rate, and as of today they have .08 percent student positivity rate and a .29% staff positivity rate, which, according to their system, is green,

and is way below the CDC guidelines. He states the success of this is only possible because of one constant, and that being the Health Department. He states as a result of students being able to be in school face-to-face, those in need have access to food, shelter, and warmth. He shared that the teachers also commended the Health Department staff to him in regarding to the positive experience they had with their vaccination process.

Dr. Mathew Mathew made the motion to approve the January 5, 2021, regular meeting minutes, seconded by Margo Myers. The motion passed unanimously.

Correspondence – None

Administrator Report

Cheryl Lee shared that the MAT Program is moving forward with the Lee County expansion with the Tri-County Opiate Task Force. She states the Lee County Sheriff's office donated space to us for this. Cheryl went to say that we are revisiting the school-based health center option, which was put on hold last year due to COVID. She states we are looking into how we can bring that into schools and may be able to utilize our mobile unit for this as well. Cheryl shared the upcoming changes with the Medicaid and Managed Care Organization's payment methodology, which may be moving to a per member per month (PMPM) form of payment as opposed to the current fee-for-service payment method. Cheryl report that in regard to the current lemonade stand legislation, that we are just waiting and watching at this time. Cheryl shared that we have submitted our UDS report in early February. She also shared that we have extended an offer to a part-time physician, who has accepted, and an offer to a full-time physician which we are waiting on. Cheryl reported that our newest nurse practitioner, Kathryn Beck, has been credentialed with most insurance payers, however, we are still waiting on a couple. She states the timeline of this process has also been affected by COVID as many of the payer's representatives and staff are also working remotely, thus causing delays in the usual processes. Cheryl commended Cory Law and Staci Shaffer for their hard work throughout this pandemic. She states we are hopeful that the Johnson & Johnson one-dose COVID vaccine will be approved Friday, February 26, 2021. She states that the allotment of vaccine is not consistent, that early on we were told we would receive 700 doses per week, then we were told 200, which does not go far in getting the thousands of people on the waiting list vaccinated. Cheryl reports that we are currently vaccinating the 1B category. She also reports that contact tracing and testing continue, along with all of our regular duties. She shared that we will be receiving \$240,000 from the state for the year for vaccination.

COO Report

Kimberly Good reported that, up to now, the state had been providing the courier service for PCR testing, along with the decontamination of N95 masks, however, we have been

informed they will no longer be paying for either of these. She states for the PCR testing, we will be transitioning to LabCorp. She also states we are trying to order more N95 masks. Kimberly shared that we will continue to do rapid testing on Fridays. Kimberly went on to report that we have just been notified that FQHC's will be receiving their own allotment of COVID vaccines. This is in addition to what IDPH is giving out. She shared that we do not yet know when we will be receiving this, and that there may be challenges with the public understanding of the difference between the Health Department and the FQHC. Kimberly reported that there has been a positive response from patients regarding telehealth visits, and that we have completed 7,557 visits so far in the pandemic. She shared that IPHCA is working with HRSA to see if telehealth can continue at FQHC's after the pandemic is over, however, we do not have a ruling or any guidelines on that yet. Kimberly report that, through grant money, the dental department has purchased and installed a dental isolation system that will help to lower aerosol from dental procedures. She stated the MAT program continues to work with Lee County regarding the expansion. Kimberly shared that Patrick Albert will be retiring and that we will be replacing the position with someone who also sees children. Cheryl added that the MAT program currently sees about 100 patients with a 48% success rate.

Public Health Report

Staci Shaffer shared that contact tracing continues as it has for the past year. She shared that we are vaccinating as well, along with all of our regular duties. Staci reported that we have held a clinic at McCormick Center in Rock Falls, and we plan to hold more there as long as we continue to get vaccine. Staci shared that we are encouraging people to get on the list and we are calling everyone that is on that list. She states we are currently working through category 1B. Staci also states that we will continue to work with hospitals to get vaccine in arms as soon as possible. We have a dedicated COVID line that staff are manning and responding to calls as quickly as possible. Cheryl added that the contact tracing grant was extended to the end of the year, however, there will not be any additional funds available. Cheryl states that we will continue to contact trace regardless. Cheryl also shared that, in addition to COVID contact tracing, we regularly contact trace other required diseases, which we will continue to do as well. Cheryl reported that contact tracing is done seven days a week. She shared that all doses in a vial must be used and that they cannot be saved for later.

Board Education

Steve Brenner reported that we are putting together a board orientation manual that will include historical information, state information, legal information, as well as other pertinent information. Karen Nelson requested that the manual include an organization chart that lists the names of the people who hold those positions, along with a contact list

of board members. Cheryl added that the manuals will also include information about the individual programs under the Health Department.

Committee Reports

1. Finance: Under Regular Business

Karen Nelson stated that, with the retirement of Howard Melchi, they are in need of a third person to sit on the Finance Committee. Karen shared her willingness to step down if newer members would like to step in.

2. Personnel - None

3. Bylaws - None

Regular Business

1. With the resignation of Howard Melchi, the position of President was opened up to other interested Board members. Dr. Mench expressed his interest in this position. Karen Nelson made the motion to approve Dr. Mench as President, seconded by Rick Cavazos. The motion passed unanimously.

2. Peggy Blase reported on the following end-of-year finances:

Public Health Fund:	2020	Beginning Balance	\$ 349,183
		Receipts	\$11,280,214
		Expenses	\$11,413,223
	2020	Ending Balance	\$ 216,174

January 1, 2021	Beginning Balance	\$ 205,184
	Receipts	\$1,062,118
	Expenses	\$1,236,110
January 31, 2021	Ending Balance	\$ 31,193

Animal Control Fund:	2020	Beginning Balance	\$164,807
		Receipts	\$ 341,279
		Expenses	\$ 357,271
	2020	Ending Balance	\$148,815

January 1, 2021	Beginning Balance	\$140,739
	Receipts	\$ 25,676

	Expenses	\$ 25,430
January 31, 2021	Ending Balance	\$140,986

Peggy shared that this shows a loss of \$133,000, and that we had budgeted for \$142.4 thousand. This loss is Public Health only. Peggy reported that, of the whole, the FQHC is between 75-80% of the total budget, and that the FQHC pays for itself. Peggy shared that, according to a nationwide FQHC report from a reputable company that looked at over 1400 clinics, there has been a 26% decline in patient visits in FQHC's throughout the US, which we were right on target with. She went on to say that the report showed that 1600 clinic sites have actually closed down since April 2020. She stated the report predicts that 29,000 staff will be laid off and 66% of the clinics will drain their reserves drastically in the first half of 2021. Peggy reported that we were able to put almost \$2 million in our FQHC savings this past year and commends our leadership for this. She went on to say that she pulled the last 10 years of financial data for the Health Dept, and there has been a loss each year, which is expected, and that her, along with Cheryl and Staci are looking at ways to cut expenses and/or bring in more revenues. Dr. Mench expressed his desire to not have to ask the County Board to fund the Health Department. He asked if any of the positions on the public health side can legitimately be transferred to the clinic side. Cheryl responded that, traditionally, public health struggles and that HRSA does not allow FQHC monies to be spent on public health. Peggy then responded to Dr. Mench's question regarding the timeframe for funds to run out, stating that she estimates about two years if no changes. Cheryl added that we are evaluating all programs, staff, and positions for ways to run public health more efficiently. Kimberly added that with traditional public health services, Whiteside County has always been unique in that we have offered services five days a week, whereas other counties offer 2-3 days per week instead. She states that this does not have to be a barrier as the services will still be offered. Kimberly responded to a question regarding Family Planning and public health, stating that it is an IDPH grant, but has been absorbed into the FQHC, though it is still separate from the FQHC. The position that oversees that just has to make sure grants are written, etc., and that has been absorbed by another position. Kimberly went on to say that Immunizations also does not typically see patients full-time, except in the case of school physicals and special circumstances. She also shared that Infectious Disease is usually slower as well. Karen Nelson expressed concerns about cutting services to the public and questioned if it would be possible to share some public health staff with the FQHC. Cheryl confirmed that we are not planning to cut any services. We are just reorganizing to keep within our budget. Karen then posed the question of what would happen to the Health Department if the funds were to run out? Cheryl deferred to Joel Horn, Whiteside County Administrator, who stated that we had not had that issue before and would address if it comes to that.

3. Peggy Blase presented the bad debt summary totaling \$295,029 for the FQHC and \$1,836 for the Health Department. She shared that we are within the national average of 3-5% for this. Margo Myers made the motion to approve the Bad Debt write-off, seconded by Karen Nelson. The motion passed unanimously.
4. Cheryl Lee presented the 2021 Fee Schedules for Immunizations, Animal Control, and Environments. She shared that we did not raise any fees unnecessarily due to COVID. Karen Nelson made the motion to approve the 2021 fees, seconded by Dr. Mench. The motion passed unanimously.
5. Cheryl Lee presented the Health Department 2020 Annual Report and commended Betty Johnson for her work on putting this together. A motion was made and seconded to accept the 2021 Annual Report. The motion passed unanimously.
6. Steve Brenner presented an update to the employee handbook to return to the previous vacation policy which would mirror the County policy. Steve responded to the question as to why this change stating that there had been some complaints, so Cheryl and Steve spoke with Jim Duffy and Joel Horn regarding this, and made the decision to return to the previous policy. Margo Myers made the motion to approve this change to the handbook, seconded by Rick Cavazos. The motion passed unanimously.

Another discussion was had regarding whether to mandate that all employees receive the flu vaccine. The decision was made not to mandate, but to strongly encourage employees to receive the vaccine, and those who do not wish to receive the vaccine will sign an acknowledgement that they have been offered the vaccine and will be required to wear a mask. Karen Nelson made the motion to accept this decision, seconded by Dr. Mathew. The motion passed unanimously.

Other Business

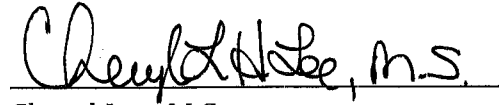
A discussion was had regarding whether to give each employee a hard copy of the handbook, or whether to utilize electronic access, and the decision was made to utilize electronic access, also offering the option of a hard copy at the employee's request, and to require all employees to sign an acknowledgement of receipt. It was also decided that this process would be used for handbook updates as well.

Cheryl reported that we are in the process of updating our website. She shared that the new website will include a portal for employees, a portal for board members, and the option for patients to pay their bill online.

Rick Cavazos made the motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Cindy Zander. The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 8:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Cheryl Lee, M.S." written over a horizontal line.

Cheryl Lee, M.S.

Public Health Administrator/CEO