BOARD OF HEALTH MINUTES
SPECIAL MEETING
Friday, April 24, 2020

THIS MEETING WAS CONDUCTED BY REMOTE PARTICIPATION DUE TO THE CORONA VIRUS PANDEMIC

MEMBERS PRESENT: Pete Daggett, Don Dashiel, Johnna Exner, Steve Kiss, Elbert Koontz, Steve Parker, John Ridlington, Karen Skoog

MEMBERS ABSENT: Hcward Hambleton

STAFF PRESENT: Sam Artzis, M.D., Kelly LeCaire, Matt Schanz, Logan Worley

GUESTS: Nicky Aguilar, KCVL/KCRK Radio; Camille Alumbaugh, Citizen; Karen Balcom, Northport Mayor; Aaron Edwards, Ferry County Health Chief Executive Officer; Wes McCart, Stevens County Commissioner; Brian Rcpp, Catholic Charities; Mary Selecky, Providence Health & Services Board; Drew Wilson, EZ Rock Radio

CALL MEETING TO ORDER: Chair Johnna Exner called the meeting to order at 1:02 p.m. A quorum was present.

INTRODUCTIONS: Introductions were made by all.

PUBLIC APPEARANCES: No public appearances were pre-registered.

ADDITIONS OR CHANGES TO AGENDA: There were no changes to the agenda.

PUBLIC COMMENT: There was no public comment.

CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) UPDATES: Johnna feels that now is the time to look at slowly and cautiously reopening our counties as they have had statistically low numbers of positive cases. She suggested opening county by county and extending into a regional approach to establish a safe return to public life. She would like to send a letter from the Northeast Tri County Health District (NETCHD) Board of Health (BOH) to Governor Jay Inslee and Secretary of Health John Wiesman. Matt Schanz provided a summary of the letter NETCHD sent to Governor Inslee and Secretary Wiesman on April 23, 2020 to include: a very low level of illnesses and mortality; NETCHD has the capacity to conduct case investigations; there is a strong surge plan within the Spokane medical catchment area including coordination with each of our hospitals; effective strategies to ensure long term care facilities (LTCFs) have strengthened systems to protect staff and residents; through Washington State Department of Labor and Industries (L&I) guidance, mitigation measures have been established to help employers provide a safe and healthy work environment. The letter noted that we will need sustainability with test kits to ensure our medical providers can continue to provide testing and adequate personal protective equipment (PPE) for our medical and first responders to meet long term demands.
The letter also states that we believe it’s appropriate to release restrictions in a staged approach on May 4, 2020, provided there continues to be a low disease prevalence within the area. We believe this can be accomplished regionally if the same conditions don’t exist in other areas of the state. With this approach, it will be important to recognize that restrictions will need to be implemented to prevent travel from areas of higher disease transmission to our rural areas. Within our counties, it is imperative that we have a defined approach to intelligently move forward to balance public health with economic health.

Dr. Artzis indicated that another component that wasn’t mentioned in the letter is the potential issues with emergency medical services (EMS) if we were to have an increase in transports. We have established mutual aid with Pend Oreille County to assist in transport services.

Dr. Artzis will be holding a tabletop exercise with a local LTCF. As we reopen businesses, our testing rate will increase. We need a plan to obtain test kits, yet not overwhelm labs, determine what additional testing can be done with results received in a timely manner. He noted that as of today, we are not totally prepared. Johnna Exner asked Dr. Artzis if he is talking about testing concerns regarding those who are symptomatic, or with a soft opening, and needing to test everyone? Dr. Artzis is not suggesting testing everyone. There would probably be 100 people needing testing with the LTCF. He added that if we are all testing here as well as other areas, another variable we can solve, labs will need to handle increased testing. Work is being done to try and get that setup and ready. He noted that we have been lucky so far with area LTCF’s.

Johnna suggests developing a cohesive plan jointly, so we can go out together on May 4th. Karen Skoog finds it helpful to see how Secretary Wiesman is communicating with hospitals, etc. Matt Schanz adds that we need to make sure we are in accordance with state law. We will make sure that we inform Governor Inslee and Secretary Wiesman of our needs and give them input of how the staged approach can be accomplished within a region. Dr. Artzis indicated that eastside counties have voiced their opposition about fitting within the westside counties and did so recently on a call with Vice Admiral Raquel Bono, Washington State Director for COVID-19 Health System Response Management. He noted that it is complicated.

Karen talked about small businesses in small towns that rarely ever have more than a couple of people at one time. The likelihood of some businesses never coming back from this exists. She understands the matter of health but feels that local businesses could reopen with guidelines. Allowing rural citizens to shop local keeps them from traveling to Spokane to shop. There was discussion about the lack of confidence from area citizens if the May 4th deadline is extended.

Matt reported that Governor Inslee just announced a plan to allow current construction projects to be completed. The plan includes additional guidance for construction activities in accordance with L&I. Steve Parker would like a copy of the L&I guidance document for BOH review as he is very curious on this topic and has concerns about the appropriateness of the guidance.
Board of Health Minutes
April 24, 2020
Page 3

Dr. Artzis reported that Hewes Marine Company in Colville appealed to the governor’s office and were given approval as an essential business. NETCHD has been working with them to help with reopening. Our job is not regulatory, but rather educating and support to ensure success in the reopening transition. Dr. Artzis said everyone is being responsible about the process. Steve Parker appreciates that very much.

Matt Schanz believes the L&I guidance document is good information. The document is posted on our website and he will send that out to elected officials. Wes McCart asked what protocols/measures would you want to occur prior to businesses reopening, such as spacing, limiting people in the store, etc.? Matt said it is outlined in that document. Another element to this is if businesses reopen without the approval as an essential business, eligibility with the federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act may be adversely affected. Municipal Research and Services Center (MRSC) will also put information about pitfalls of opening without approval on their website. Logan Worley said hot topic issues are currently being reviewed by attorneys and that information should be coming out soon. The information is more tailored to local agencies but applies to businesses also.

Elbert Koontz said Republic area businesses are barely hanging on but seem to be doing okay for now, though not many are going to last much past May 4th. Most don’t have proper training with PPE, such as how to take gloves off properly, etc., possibly some training would help. Johnna Exner believes that businesses can develop a plan by using guidance provided by NETCHD and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in deciding how they would choose to reopen.

Johnna asked the BOH if they would like to add a caveat and a letter, and if so, what would that entail? Steve P. talked about information from NETCHD on readiness, our low incidence rate, which is the best information that we can operate on. Wes McCart thinks the letter sent previously by Dr. Artzis and Matt is good. He feels that we need to work more with Emergency Operation Centers to make sure we have that a continued supply of PPE, which was addressed in the letter. Karen Skoog also approved of the letter. Pend Oreille County is working on letters from the Hospital District to demonstrate a unified front. Pend Oreille County are also closely watching the supply of PPE. Matt spoke with the Newport Hospital and they had a 30-day supply of PPE. The concern would be that if you have a few incidents of treatment, you can go through those supplies very quickly and we don’t want to run low.

Johnna asked the BOH for direction on developing a letter from the BOH. The counties will continue to work with EOC to monitor the PPE supply as well as continue to support and work with businesses.

Karen Skoog moved, and Steve Parker seconded the motion for NETCHD administration to work with the BOH Chair to develop a letter on the issues discussed to include support of the three counties.

Steve P. asked for more clarification on the letter. Johnna explained that the BOH is supporting and working closely with NETCHD and our health officer to address and monitor impacts from COVID-19. The letter will note our counties low number of positive cases, that we will continue to work on getting more PPE and will work toward opening slowly on May 4th. Johnna will send out a draft to BOH members for review and approval.
Motion carried.

Camille Alumbaugh feels the reason we have done so well is the order stopped people from coming to our area unless for essential travel. Johnna added that we need to continue to keep those travel restrictions in place.

**ADJOURNMENT:** Chair Johnna Exner adjourned the meeting at 1:54 p.m. The next regular meeting of the Board of Health of Northeast Tri County Health District will be on Wednesday, May 20, 2020. The meeting will be held by remote participation.

Respectfully submitted,

[Signature]

Samuel A. Artzis, M.D., Health Officer

By [Signature]
Kelly D. LeCaire, Executive Secretary

[Signature]
Johnna Exner, Chair