

**WILSON COUNTY BOARD OF HEALTH
MINUTES**

February 08, 2022

The Wilson County Board of Health held a regular meeting on Tuesday, February 08,2022 in the Conference Room at Wilson County Health Department. Members present were:

Scott Dixon, D.D.S.	Dr. Ronald Stahl
Shannon Drohan, M.D.	Bill Blackman
Ijeoma Uwakwe	Catherine Melin F.N.P
Rosario Ochoa	William T Bass
Dr. Matthew Aldrich	

Others present:

Teresa Ellen, Cinnamon Narron, Valerie Bulluck, Jordan Jernigan, Celita Graham,

Welcome

Dr. Scott Dixon, called the meeting to order at 6:05pm and welcomed all in attendance.

Approval of Minutes of December 2021 Meeting

The minutes from the December 2021 meeting were accepted without corrections, additions, or deletions.

Review and approval of the minutes shall be construed as review/discussion/approval/of all items distributed prior to the meeting for consideration and shall be so reflected in the minutes.

Administration

Ms. Cinnamon Narron reviewed the financial report for July 2021 to December 2021. Financially the Health department is doing well. The only program that is in the red is the CC4C Social work Program. The CC4C program is not getting as much money as they used to, and it will be investigated. Immunization Action Plan is very solid and has done very well. Medicaid is also steady, and the HD has received some cost settlement that is being used for a few programs. Ms. Ellen mentioned that the cost settlement has changed with managed care and that the HD is supposed to receive quarterly payments. She doesn't expect to receive the funds before the next quarter and luckily has funds from the last quarter. Ms. Narron continued and reported that the cost settlement for this year will be slightly lower than last year because of income being received for Covid copayments but it should balance out.

Dr. Smith started seeing patients after Christmas and started at Winstead Elementary in January. Currently the dentist is seeing patients at FernLeaf Community School with plans to see patients within a week at Vinson-Bynum Elementary. Last year's dental billing has been caught up. Dr. Dixon asked how many children the dentist can see in a day. Dr. Smith has seen up to 7 patients in a day. Some schools have been helpful with trying to get students enrolled in the dental program. The need for Dental is important but there have been some difficulties because of the pandemic. WIC renovations are still incomplete and should take another 2 weeks to complete.

North Carolina Vital Records is implementing the NC Database Application for Vital Events. This system will transition from paper to electronic death records. The system is a secure, web-based, statewide online system used to electronically register death certificates. The primary purpose of NCDAVE is to enable the users who provide decedent fact of death and cause of death information. Training and system implementation began in the fall of 2020. NC State Vital records will no longer receive paper death

certificates. Starting Feb 28th. This date was extended from the original date of January 1, 2022. Birth records will also be transitioning from EBRs to the DAVE system. Dr. Stahl sent a reminder to all the physicians on staff at the hospital and Lisa Bradley also sent out information to physicians to get doctors registered on the DAVE system. Dr. Stahl has received a lot of feedback from physicians about the long wait times, difficulty signing up, and trouble logging into the DAVE system. Dr. Stahl was given information for a representative that works for NC state to help streamline the issues the physicians are having with DAVE.

Personal Health

Valerie Bulluck, Director of Nursing reported that there have been some personnel changes. The nurse supervisor position for the WASH program was approved and will be filled by Kristi Ferrell. A Nutritionist III was recently hired for the WIC program, as well as a QI Accreditation Coordinator. A Processing Assistant was recently hired to help with the managed care program along with two new Processing Assistants to help with billing and clerical needs. Applicant numbers for available jobs have gone down. House bill 96 was signed into law and would allow Pharmacists to administer injectable drugs. A concern would be family planning, and there are no parameters about wellness exams and physicals. Its concerning to possibly see STD cases go up as well as women miss their pap screen appointments. The idea of having the new law is good but there must be some parameters set in place to make sure that people don't get lost in transition. The Pharmacist is required to ask the patient medical questions and to report back to the patient's primary care Dr if they have one. If the patient doesn't have a regular primary care Dr, then the Pharmacist reports to the local Health Department. The law was passed in February, but the State Health Director has not written the standing order. A major concern is also patients not getting regular check ups for certain cancers.

Environmental Health

Mr. Jordan Jernigan, Environmental Health Supervisor gave an update and reported that the Wastewater and Well Program, Food Lodging Institutions, and Children's Environmental Health positions have been filled. The new hires are all interns and will begin Centralized Intern Training later this month with various modules in March and April. Environmental Health has sponsored an East Carolina University senior student to attend Centralized Intern Training. The EH Department is solely responsible for training the student since he is not employed by a county. This process will allow the student to be more marketable when applying for jobs after graduation.

For food and lodging Jersey Mikes will be opening on I-95, Isahana Japanese is going in the old Golden Corral building has put their plans on hold and no open date has been provided. The Breakfast Bar going into the old Bills BBQ has their plans on hold due to other regulatory agencies. The EH Department is at 100% compliance for the first half of the fiscal year on all category I, II, and III food establishments. Category IV food establishments had 100% compliance for the first quarter of the fiscal year however, during the second quarter there was only 78% compliance for required inspections. This was due to two positions not having an authorized agent to conduct inspections.

On-site Wastewater and Well Program for new lot evaluations there is a 12-week turnaround time for permits. Additions, Well Applications and Reuse has a two-and-a-half-week turnaround time. EH Department is looking into an E-Permitting program that will allow the public to search an address to see what permits have been issued and to check the status of pending applications and permits. It will be integrated with Wilson County Building and inspections planning and zoning departments. A demo is set for EH specific requests prior to deciding. Planning and zoning as well as the water department has decided to move forward with the new system. The program will make it easier for customers and more convenient to find out the status of their permits.

Health Director's Report

Ms. Teresa Ellen, Health Director introduced the new Communications Manager and Health Education Supervisor Celita Graham to the BOH members. Ms. Graham previously worked as a Supervisor for The Wayne County Health Department, she has several years of experience and Wilson County is glad to have her. Ms. Ellen presented a visual recap report on Covid-19 starting from the beginning of the pandemic. Jan 21, 2020 was the first reported U.S Covid-19 case in Washington State. March 3rd was the first reported case in North Carolina from Wake County. March 10th Governor Cooper issued a NC State of Emergency. March 13th the first case of Covid-19 was reported in Wilson County. Covid was so new, and everyone was trying to figure it all out at the same time. Ms. Ellen, the Assistant County Manager, and EMS all worked together starting with the first case. There was a media firestorm about Wilson County being the first county to report community spread. NC issued a statewide stay at home order and the first Covid related death in Wilson occurred April 2nd, 2020. Contact tracing became a priority along with quarantining and isolating.

The Health Department immediately set up a call center and the Health Educators Program took the lead and helped with calls. The Health Department and other community partners began hosting testing events into the fall. Efforts continued to flatten the curve and reduce the spread of the disease into the summer. NC issued mandatory facial covering and spread awareness about the three W's. Wait 6 feet, wash your hands, and wear a mask. Testing events continued, including several drive thru events, contact tracing, case investigation, and the call center. The colder months of fall and winter and holiday festivities brought a spike in cases. Covid testing ceased at the Health Department December 14th so that the focus can be on administering the vaccine. The Health Department made an agreement with the Community Health Center to take the lead on Covid testing.

Wilson Medical Center was the first to receive the vaccine in Wilson County. 2021 felt more like a roller coaster ride than 2020. In the world of public health, we endured some major losses, but also made some major gains. 2021 started in a covid surge and reached its initial peak January 4th with 159 cases. Hospitalizations rates were high and death rates raised. The Health Department administered 2,200 vaccines at the first drive thru event. In May 2021 the Pfizer vaccine was approved for 12–17-year old's. In June 2021 the Delta variant became the dominant strand kicking off a 3rd wave of infections, but cases overall were still declining. In July 2021 the HD transitioned to managed care. Vaccinations started declining so the state offered a \$100 summer gift card to people 18 and up to get their first vaccination and offered \$25 to the drivers.

The WASH staff has been critical providing support and testing in the schools. In October 2021 booster shots were approved as well as pediatric doses for those age 5-11. In November 2021 the new Omicron variant was identified causing a surge in new cases and hospitalizations. In Jan 2022 cases started to decline and in late Jan-Feb Free N95 masks were distributed. The HD is awaiting approval to administer vaccines from the FDA for 6 months to 5-year old's. There have been some recruitment and retention issues across Public Health. Changes in isolation and quarantine requirements can cause confusion when trying to convey to the public. The overwhelming vaccine demand led to a high call volume causing the phones to crash. The County received Covid money but the rules on what you can spend it on is restrictive. Clinical patient numbers have suffered along with maternity. The staff have suffered from fatigue and illness. Currently the percent of positives are declining and is at 24.8% Cases per day over the last 7 days for Feb 1st were at 61. In Jan 2022 the schools reported 273 positive cases in one week, and last week reported 24. The schools' numbers include both students and staff. Ms. Ellen contacted the State to ask for additional help for testing and set the state vendor Optum at Darden Alumni to provide PCR covid testing. They will be there until the end of February and the turnaround for test results is 48Hrs.

There have been changes in contact tracing and case investigation requirements. It is now only required for cases that are considered clusters or outbreaks in nursing homes, and schools. Hospitalizations have improved. 28 were reported today and at its peak it was 50 with 88% not being vaccinated. 29 deaths

were reported in January, and 2 were reported in February. The vaccine total population is at 52%, over 5 is at 55.4%, over 12 is 60%, over 18 is 62.3%, over 65 is 80%. Booster numbers are not where they should be, and it is at 30% for those over the age of 18. The demand for the vaccine has decreased. The Health Education Department distributed 3,600 N95 masks at the HD on the first day. Between the Library, and the HD 6,800 N95 masks were distributed. There was such a high demand a second shipment of 5,000 was delivered. 1,592 were distributed last Friday and the rest were delivered to the libraries to reach the rural communities. Anti-Virials are now available however they are not in large supply. Paxlovid is an antiviral to be taken twice a day for 5 days but should be administered within the first 5 days for patients over 12. Sotrovimab is recommended for Omicron and the hospital has very limited doses.

Another sub variant has been reported called Omicron BA.2 which is very contagious but no more severe than the original Omicron. Vaccines continue to be effective against severe illness and hospitalization. The call center is still open for people to make appointments and to ask questions. The WASH is fully staffed there is a new supervisor, a Registered Nurse, and Clerical worker. The WASH Program is looking to expand next year at Fike High School and has met with Mr. Letchworth to identify a space. The HD is excited about the location, access, and capability of the location. The County implemented a new phone system County wide which caused phone issues. The HD would like to request a reclassification for clerical and billing staff due to more requirements, and responsibilities with Managed Care. The classification would be to change the position to Processing Assistant III to Processing Assistant IV, Billing is titled as a Patient Relation Representative IV, and the HD would like to reclassify as a Patient Relation Representative V. The HD would like to reclassify the Dental Office Manager, which is titled as Office Assistant V, and is looking to reclassify the title as Administration Assistant I. The reason for the requested changes is to be more competitive with the salaries in the private sector. The HD is also requesting. The Health Department is also requesting two new positions. Processing Assistant IV, and an Environmental Health Specialist. The Environmental Health position will help with the back log, and help, serve customers in a timelier manner. The HD is not asking for any capital requests this year. The bid has been awarded for the new heating and air system, but the start date hasn't been set. The HD is also looking into getting a mobile unit.

Old Business

None

New Business

None

Member Comments

None

Chairperson's Report

None

Public Comments

None

Adjournment- Meeting was adjourned at 7:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Teresa C. Ellen, Secretary
Wilson County Board of Health

TCE/lmb