



**November 11, 2020 Board of Health Meeting
Virtual Meeting**

The Board of Health convened in open session at 5:15 pm

The meeting was called to order by Merey Price

Board Members Present

Quorum is reached

Don Bodeau
Liz Spencer
Merey Price
Terry Miskulin
Mark Kaeding
Emily Berge
Martha Nieman
Jennifer Eddy

Staff Members Present:

Lieske Giese
Janice Vinopal
Marisa Stanley
Jeff Robb
Gina Holt (recorder)

Public Comment:

- None received

Board of Health Priorities

- Priorities and Action Discussion:
 - Suggestion for Priority 2: add education so it reads support, advocate and educate public health priorities
 - Suggestion for Priority 3: Mention health equity. Any place in the page that discusses all policies adding health equity and raise awareness.
 - Suggested adding specific wording around COVID perhaps adding a separate priority or adding COVID to actions. Discussion regarding adding COVID specific actions.
 - Suggestion to add maintain and develop the health departments capacity, the capacity to deal with a pandemic.

Work Session and Facilitated Discussion

- Overview of COVID: Eau Claire County's case rate is currently higher than the states. Our goal is to follow up on all cases and then follow up with close contacts. This has not been achieved that due to the high case numbers. We are working with institutional partners to notify close contacts. The department continues to work with the Wisconsin National Guard test site as well as working with the clinical test sites. UWEC has been doing antigen testing and is now testing faculty and off campus students. If a positive antigen test is received, they do a confirmatory PCR test on site. UWEC is working with the ECASD to offer additional community antigen testing at Memorial High School on Saturdays, Sundays, and Wednesdays for the next four weeks. This will focus on asymptomatic testing. We are looking at adding a policy maker briefing that would be some key talking points and messages that would go to policy makers (city council, county board, Health Department as well as other government entities)

Facilitated discussion will be structured under the following "buckets"

1. Policy/legislation-Questions asked and discussed: It appears other continues have stronger orders, what is the consequence or pushback that they have received? Does the WI supreme court decision negate statute 252? Would any proposed ordinances include oversight of the Health Director? Is there any sense of power behind the current Public Health Expectations document? What are the results of lack of national and state leadership during the pandemic?

- The order had a sense of power to it but was limited due to the inability to write citations. We continue to receive and investigate complaints. The department works hand in hand with the Chippewa Valley Recovery Task Force. Giving institutions backing and support helps throughout this difficult time.
 - The lack of national and state leadership has been a burden on local government. Other counties in Wisconsin that continued with stronger orders have faced litigation. The existence of ordinances and or orders can have a community impact to slow the spread. An example of sending a clear message would be something like a mask requirement in restaurant or stores with signage like no shoes no shirt no service.
 - Partnership with all local government is ideal. If we were to try and limit things like gatherings would it be helpful if it were in conjunction with the City Council and County Board. Ordinance action is municipality by municipality.
2. Budget- Questions asked and discussed. How is the focus on COVID taking away from other areas of work in the Health Department? What would be the roadblocks in using tax levy money to hire temporary employees? What does COVID funding look like for 2021?
- The department has spent a lot of money on COVID related work. We are estimating well over \$2 million dollars to be spent in 2021, and we know that there will be a gap in funding. We also have not been able to focus on fee-based programs and doing things such as applying for new grants. These things all effect the budget. If our estimates of our expenses are correct for 2021 there could be a \$1.8 million dollar gap. We are trying to figure out what our priorities will be. What services do we stop, what do we start etc.? We are also negotiating with the City/County around unspent tax levy from 2020. Staff that would have been tax levy funded have been funded through COVID with federal grant funding that would have otherwise been levy funded. We indicated that we would like to move some of those funds into a fund balance account that we could draw from for 2021 COVID expenses, We have hired a number of people for disease investigation and a number of individuals across incident command beyond our regular public health staff. Having funding to continue with those people in 2021 is so important.
3. Workforce-Questions asked and discussed: How is the negative feedback regarding public health effecting staff morale? Will future recruitment become difficult?
- One of things that we are worried about is the large percentage of staff that is retirement eligible. Because of our response to COVID-19 it is difficult to bring new staff members on and have an effective orientation. We are working on a way to hire replacements earlier than usual and being strategic with training.
 - There has been so much negative feedback regarding public health throughout all of this. It is hard when staff care so much, they have an enormous workload, and are receiving non supportive feedback. Health officers and staff are leaving due to the overwhelming nature of the work. We are trying to find ways to continue to show support to our staff. We are working with WIFLI to look at what opportunities there may be to support the management team who does not get paid or compensated for extra hours worked.
4. Advocacy-what can you do/what can the community do questions and discussion: A lot of community members have reached out to City Council and County Board members asking what they can do to help, any ideas or recommendations on how to respond?
- Advocacy about funding will continue to be important. Board members continuing to bring ideas back to the department which is so helpful. Sharing the “Caring is Contagious” message is a great way to advocate. State and Federal elected official’s advocacy and letting

them know what we need. Working with local municipalities and local government to continue advocacy work.

Requests from Board members for future agenda items to be given consideration

- a. None made

Next scheduled BOH meeting is December 9, 2020 at 5:15 p.m.

Merrey Price adjourned the meeting at 7:08 p.m.