

Pima County Board of Health Minutes
June 24, 2020

Teleconference Meeting
Abrams Building, Room 1108
3950 S. Country Club Road
Tucson, Arizona 85714

1. CALL TO ORDER

Dr. Horwitz called meeting to order at 3:00PM

ATTENDANCE:

Mr. Bin An - Absent
Ms. Betty Villegas
Mr. Rene Gastelum
Mr. Charles Geoffrion, Vice President
Ms. Mary Lou Gonzales
Dr. Paul Horwitz, President
Mr. Mike Humphrey
Dr. Kathryn Kohler
Mr. Miguel Rojas
Dr. Gail Smith - Arrived after roll call
Ms. Carolyn Trowbridge – Arrived after roll call

A quorum was established (8)

Non-Board Members

Dr. Theresa Cullen, Pima County Public Health Director
Ms. Paula Mandel, Pima County Health Department, Deputy Director

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Due to Teleconference Meeting the Pledge of Allegiance was not conducted.

3. MINUTES ADOPTION

- Adopted Board of Health Minutes May 27, 2020

The motion was made and seconded (Mr. Rojas/Ms. Gonzales) that the May 27, 2020, Board of Health Minutes be adopted. No further discussion. Motion carried 8 – 0.

4. APPOINTMENT OF NOMINATING COMMITTEE OF BOARD OF HEALTH OFFICERS

- Dr. Horwitz appointed Dr. Gail Smith to Chair the Nominating Committee for Pima County Board of Health (BOH) Officers.
- Dr. Smith agreed to the nomination as Chair of the Nominating Committee for BOH Officers, and appointed Mr. Charles Geoffrion and Ms. Mary Lou Gonzales as the Nominating Committee members.

5. APPOINTMENT OF A MEMBER OF THE BOARD OF HEALTH TO THE PIMA COUNTY ANIMAL CARE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

- Dr. Horwitz recommended that Dr. Gail Smith remain as the BOH appointed member to the Pima County Animal Care Advisory Committee, as she has done a great job in the past and is anxious to do it again. Dr. Horwitz inquired if anyone else had an interest in the appointment.

The motion was made and seconded (Mr. Rojas/Mr. Geoffrion) to reappoint Dr. Gail Smith as the BOH representative to the Pima County Animal Care Advisory Committee. The motion passed 9-0.

6. DIRECTOR'S UPDATE

- Dr. Cullen gave an update on COVID-19, a brief status of the Health Department's response to the COVID-19 crisis and the possible formation of an Ethics committee to be discussed in the future.
- Dr. Cullen provided spreadsheets to the Board and advised reviewing the Pima County Back-To-Business webpage and the COVID-19 progress report on that page. The progress report update covers disease data, healthcare system availability, and public health tracking and prevention. There are 9 factors monitored by color in the progress report, and currently 6 are RED, 3 are YELLOW, and none are GREEN. RED represents "Criteria Not Met", YELLOW represents "Progress" and GREEN represents "Criteria Met".

Disease Data:

- We are currently in a very accelerated community transmission phase, with about 50% of positive COVID-19 cases coming in the <49 years old age group, but still seeing significant increases in all age groups, and not just due to testing; a percentage is due to increased community transmission.
- Current week has a 3x increase in cases over last week.
- Seeing increasing deaths; death rate is always difficult to know as deaths are reported the day we note them, but that may not necessarily be the day the individual died. Deaths also are a lagging indicator.
- Hospitalizations are in crisis. There are more hospitalizations.
- ICU's are in crisis. There are less available ICU beds.
- Med-surge beds are also increasing with COVID-19 patients. There are less available beds.
- Support has been requested from the Emergency Response Team to help staff two hospitals that have requested help in Tucson.
- T'ohono O'odham Nation graciously supplied extra ventilators to a hospital in Tucson.
- The State of Arizona just indicated that a large number of ventilators (20-30) will be moved to Southern Arizona once they get released from the FEMA stockpile.

Healthcare System Availability:

- Lab testing continues to be adequate but not perfect.

- Pima County has brought on another testing provider.
- Pima County has agreed to test all firefighters (~1000) that are starting to demobilize. Testing will be set up near Oracle, and plan to test up to 50 per day. This is important as many first responders are not from Arizona, and as quarantines have been put in place for people coming from Arizona, the hope is that if they leave with a negative test they will be able to return home to their families.
- Pima County has sufficient PPE, and continue to get more from states as well as buying some. Our warehouse is stocked right now, and the warehouse staff is doing an amazing job!
- Pima County does not have adequate bed capacity to care for the anticipated surge in cases.
- TMC has opened three additional areas to care for patients.
- Banner utilized PACU (post-anesthesia care unit) to open up 21 ICU beds.
- Our local Healthcare system is responding and doing an amazing job, but we are considered RED in terms of hospital bed capacity.

Public Health Tracking and Prevention:

- Case investigations are delayed. The goal is to meet 50% within 24 hours; our goal is 70% in 48 hours. We are RED – we are not able to meet our goal because of the tremendous increase in cases.
 - Getting National Guard help from the State, about 300 Guard members who will be activated for the entire state of Arizona. Told this is not a forced activation.
 - Dr. Cullen is working with the National Guard in terms of how people will identify that they are from the Guard as she is concerned with regard to racial injustice issues. Dr. Cullen and Dr. Francisco Garcia have agreed and indicated to the state that they do not want National Guard members to use their title in the Pima County jurisdiction should any Guard members be posted here.
 - Intermediate care/Assisted living facility support for patients who cannot be discharged home seems to be stable. PCHD does not make these transfers happen; they are facilitated by the hospitals.
- Mr. Geoffrion asked Dr. Cullen if she is confident in how hospitals are responding. Dr. Cullen indicated she is confident that the vast majority of hospitals are overwhelmed, that they are doing what is within their ability to do, but she is concerned that the state is saturated, hospitals are full, and the surge line has hit capacity.
 - Dr. Cullen reminded the board that Governor Doug Ducey owns the public health emergency in Arizona. When the Governor takes the power of declaring a state-wide public health emergency that supersedes any local jurisdictions, but it also opens up FEMA in a way that the County is not able to do, so there is some benefit to that. And Dr. Cullen remarked that Governor Ducey just last week gave local jurisdictions back the ability to modify masking legislation.

- Mr. Geoffrion initiated a discussion regarding how the BOH could be more involved in using multiple media outlets to educate and inform the public about the seriousness of this problem. Ms. Mandel noted that in the past in Pima County, the BOH has been an advocate and voice for the PCHD to the Board of Supervisors. Ms. Gonzales reminded the Board of the need to reach the many non-English speaking communities, as well as reminding the general public that there is a moral and civic responsibility to protect themselves, their families, their neighbors and anybody that they may be around

The motion was made and seconded (Mr. Geoffrion/Dr. Kohler) for Dr. Horwitz to communicate with Dr. Garcia and Dr. Cullen to come up with an idea that would be helpful for the BOH to participate as a group to endorse and get this message across to every population we can in Pima County, and to do it in a bilingual fashion and get it out there. The motion passed 10-0.

- Dr. Cullen advised that PCHD has entered into a non-financial Memorandum of Understanding with Partners in Health out of Boston, MA to provide guidance with case care management and contact tracing by helping PCHD identify, aggregate, evaluate and figure out what we will need moving forward. In using a different approach to contact tracing, the hope is that the community will see PCHD as a resource rather than an imposition.
- Mr. Rojas asked Dr. Cullen if she is aware of the number of bilingual people who are non-Spanish speaking (i.e., Russian or African languages) and are confirmed COVID-19 cases, and inquired about who will be interviewing them for contact tracing. Dr. Cullen does not have that number, but did discuss that the selection criteria for the contact tracing contract includes the availability to provide care in multiple languages. Dr. Cullen noted that this is an issue in healthcare, and that translator phones are successfully used in hospitals currently. Ms. Mandel noted that PCHD uses a translation line for a variety of areas as well. Dr. Cullen noted that the hope is that multiple organizations have applied for the contact tracing contract who will reflect what the local community needs are, and that many languages will be available, but not all will be represented.
- Dr. Cullen and Ms. Mandel spoke about the process of forming an Ethics Committee at PCHD. Dr. Horwitz is very supportive of that and wants to involve the BOH. Dr. Horwitz asked who would comprise an Ethics Committee, and Ms. Mandel responded that it is generally an across-the-board representation of the community, with the Health Department Director as Chair, and would most likely include members from the BOH, legal counsel, the faith-based community, the non-profit community, law enforcement, first responders, schools (K-12 and collegiate representation), businesses, hospitals, and the County medical association. Dr. Horwitz will include the Ethics Committee draft as an agenda item at the next BOH meeting. Ms. Mandel advised that the process of forming that committee has been started, and agreed to provide a first draft available to the BOH for review prior to the next BOH meeting.

7. INCREASE IN COVID-19 CASES, HOSPITALIZATIONS, DEATHS SINCE MEMORIAL DAY

- Dr. Horwitz asked Dr. Cullen if the PCHD has any ideas regarding the increases in positive COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations and deaths since Memorial Day, and why is the mortality rate in Pima County twice as high as in Maricopa County. Dr. Cullen stated that the PCHD can't determine causality, but can recognize relationships. From an epidemiological perspective, there is an exponential relationship: an increase in backyard transmission will get more transmissions. May need to do a death file review to understand the 2x increase in deaths.

8. AN ANALYSIS OF COVID-19'S IMPACT ON PIMA COUNTY DISTRICT 5 "THE PANDEMIC SHINES A LIGHT ON SOCIAL INEQUITIES"

- Supervisor Villegas discussed the analysis she and her staff did using census tracks with an overlay of nursing homes, congregate group homes, jails, etc. in Pima County District 5 to identify the impact of COVID-19 in that area. They were able to identify 4-6 congregate homes, but it was not clear where the majority of the cases are coming from. The belief is that hotspots or outbreaks may be attributed to health care workers who can't stay home or isolate, that they may be bringing COVID-19 home to family members or vice versa. The recommendations in the analysis are based on existing health inequities and disparities in these areas, which the COVID-19 pandemic has really brought to light. Supervisor Villegas strongly believes there is a need to do mobile testing and do contact tracing to get control of the outbreaks in these areas.

Dr. Horwitz commended Supervisor Villegas and her staff on the report, and asked what action the BOH could take on this. Supervisor Villegas advised that this analysis is a working document, and asked that BOH members please provide feedback and support for the report and for some of the recommendations presented in it. Additionally, Supervisor Villegas has asked Administrator Huckelberry and Dr. Cullen to review the analysis and see if they can help.

9. BAN ON THE USE OF "RUBBER BULLETS" BY LAW ENFORCEMENT IN PIMA COUNTY

- Dr. Horwitz recommends that the BOH be proactive and make a statement condemning the use of rubber bullets in Pima County. Mr. Humphrey inquired if this is a problem, or relevant, to Pima County. Dr. Horwitz responded that he doesn't want it to become a problem and considers this a proactive stance. Ms. Trowbridge suggested amending the statement to include the additional wording of "now or in the future" at the end.

Supervisor Villegas moved to accept the statement "We, The Pima County Board of Health recommend that the Pima County Board of Supervisors prohibit and/or advise the banning of the use of any types of rubber bullets in all cases of law enforcement in Pima County now or in the future." Dr. Horwitz accepted the change and seconded the motion. The motion passed 10-0. Mr. Humphrey subsequent to the meeting formally requested to change his vote to no.

10. BOH SUMMER MEETING SCHEDULE

- Dr. Horwitz asked if the BOH want to set the summer meeting schedule to once per month, or to meet more often if necessary. Ms. Gonzales recommended monthly, and Ms. Trowbridge stated that emergency meetings can be called as needed. No vote was taken.

11. SUMMATION OF ACTION ITEMS & PROPOSAL OF FUTURE ITEMS

- Discussion of the Ethics Committee draft will be added to the next BOH meeting agenda, and Ms. Mandel agreed to make the draft available for review by BOH members prior to the next meeting.
- Ongoing conversation with possible action recommendations regarding Supervisor Villegas' white paper "The Pandemic Shines a Light on Social Inequities."
- Dr. Horwitz reminded the Board to email him any items for the agenda.

12. ADJOURNMENT

The motion was made and seconded (Ms. Gonzales/ Mr. Rojas) that the June 24, 2020 meeting adjourn. Motion carried 10-0.

The meeting adjourned at 4:59PM

The next meeting is scheduled for July 22, 2020, at 3:00 P.M.