



Macon County
Public Health

MACON COUNTY BOARD OF HEALTH
MINUTES
8/25/2020

Members Melissa Bell, Pharmacist and Chair, Nathan Brenner, Dentist and Vice-Chair; Teresa Murray, General Public; Jeff Todd, Veterinarian; Paul Higdon, County Commissioner; Mitchell Bishop, Engineer; Gosia Tiger, General Public; Dr. Kevin Foley, General Public, Ellen Shope; Nurse Representative and General Public, Ross Dodge

Members Absent: Melissa Bell & Jeff Todd

Staff Present: Kathy McGaha, Jennifer Garrett, Melissa Setzer, Emily Ritter, Kyle Jennings, Ellen Holbrooks, Emily Stepp, Jessica Caucum, Tara Raby and Renee Barnes

Guests: None

Media: None

Public Comment:

Mike Evers joined the meeting via Zoom to discuss his concerns regarding the fees for septic permits. As a realtor and a developer in the community, he feels that the fee for a new permit to replace an expired permit is too high. Mr. Evers has a development with 14 lots that were previously permitted, those permits have expired. He would like to re-permit those lots but the fee would be \$500 per lot, which would run him approximately \$7000 dollars. He would like to know why he has to pay for these permits, when they were issued one time before. Mr. Evers stated that he does not understand why it matters how long it was since the permit was written Mr. Jennings explained that the state of North Carolina sets the General Statutes that a permit is valid for 5 years. The state has also issued several extensions over the last several years with no fee to the individual.

Mr. Evers stated he would like to have a detailed report to show how much revenue has there been made from permit renewals. He also stated that the county sets the fees for the permits not the state, so how many of the application through Environmental Health have been reapplications for expired permits. Mr. Evers stated that there is over 22 million dollars in the county reserve, so why does he have to pay another \$500 per lot. Why is he being penalized? Kyle Jennings stated that the General Statutes states that once the permit has expired it no longer exist. A current Environmental Health Specialist will not sign off on a permit that another Environmental Health Specialist has written. Mr. Jennings also stated that even though the ground might not have changed that there are other factors that they have to look at. This is not technically a renewal because an Environmental Health Specialist still has to go out to the property and do the site work, research and layout a system just like it was a new permit. Some of the old permits were written before the well program started. When a septic permit is written it takes in to consideration any wells that maybe in the area. A lot may not have a well on the premises when it was originally permitted, but now it has a well, this results in new site work, research and layout system just like a new permit. This is a huge concern when renewing permits.

Mr. Evers stated that the commissioners need to be made aware of this. Mrs. McGaha stated that Paul Higdon is present for this Board of Health meeting to represent the County Commissioners. Mr. Higdon stated that he would

bring up this issue at the next County Commissioners meeting and invited Mr. Evers to attend. Mr. Higdon stated that he has been trying to get the fees reduced or done away with for years. Mr. Evers stated that the Board of Health and the Health Department need to look at the fees that Macon County is on a growth spurt and this would effect it.

Call to Order: Meeting was called to order at 6:17 p.m. by Nathan Brenner.

Welcome/Intro: Mrs. McGaha introduced new employees: Renee Barnes, school nurse; Jessica Caucum, Phlebotomist; Emily Stepp, Environmental Health; Ellen Holbrooks, Animal Services

Approve Agenda:

Teresa Murray made a motion to approve the agenda with the motion to move the Child Fatality Report presentation to the September Board meeting. Dr. Kevin Foley seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

Presentations:

A. Flu Season Plan - Jennifer Garrett, Nursing Director

The flu plan will be a little different this year it will be a drive thru clinic in the back of our building. We have already started vaccinating our staff, when we receive more vaccine we will start vaccinating the public. Our first order of vaccine we received was short so not all of staff was vaccinated. We have been informed that we will be getting more flu vaccine this year because they do not want individuals getting COVID and the flu at the same time. MCPH will be holding a clinic in Highlands and one here at the HD since we already have the tent set up. We hope to start holding flu vaccine clinics in early September. Plans have not been completed due to COVID. MCPH will be getting the regular and the high dose; it will be the regular quad that we normally get.

B. Child Fatality moved to September Board Meeting

C. Strategic Plan Update – Emily Ritter

Overview of MCPH 2020 Strategic Plan:

In 2019, we conducted a survey of employees who serve on the strategic planning committee asking them to identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats facing the health department. Following the survey, we invited a discussion of the themes that the participants had in their responses. Overall, most agreed that the health department has strength in the quality of its staff, that we interact positively with our community, and that we offer valued and innovative services to the residents of Macon County. The participants identified a need for improvement in the following areas: a need to increase capacity of our technology utilization through training and improvement, pay and benefits, and improved marketing and outreach.

The strategic planning committee agreed to spend the year 2020 working to improve identified areas engaging county, department, and local stakeholders to continue to train and develop a workforce willing and able to serve our mission.

Overview of Priorities:

1. Improve Utilization of Technology Through Training and Improvement
2. Pay and Benefits
3. Outreach and Marketing

Improve Utilization of Technology through Training and Improvement:

Through discussion throughout the committee's meetings, it became clear that technology and its proper utilization is not currently being optimized for the best performance in the health department. Participants report employees not knowing who to go to with questions about complicated software programs that present challenges to performing efficiently. It was also reported that employees would benefit from Information Technology training provided by the county's department, as well as having an IT professional on-site that can assist with technology related issues.

- ▶ Scheduling a county **IT professional to attend training days** at the health department to provide a basic technology training, and to troubleshoot issues users may be having
- ▶ To **create and manage an internal list of software users and their proficiency levels** to identify internal application experts that may be able to troubleshoot issues and offer training to those who need improvement on respective software's
- ▶ Offer time for those who use particular software applications to **improve their knowledge through information sharing or training**
- ▶ For **human resources to manage technology training opportunities** and resources
- ▶ To **evaluate current training methods and other technologies** to insure we are using cost effective strategies without sacrificing quality
- ▶ **Budgeting for an IT professional** to be housed full-time within the health department
- ▶ **Supporting the IT department** in the county for their continued capacity building

Pay and Benefits:

The topic of pay and benefits dominated the conversations around the 2020 strategic planning goals. There is a wide concern amongst the committee members that employees are leaving the health department for better paying jobs elsewhere in the surrounding area. While the committee is limited in its ability to increase salaries and pay scales, the committee feels that this issue deserves the support of the health department as a whole to advocate for improved pay and benefits in order to keep valued and trained staff on board.

- ▶ For the county to continue its **pay plan review** comparing the jobs and duties of our staff with a similar county in the area to assess any pay discrepancies
- ▶ To generate a **report on staff turnover** including figures like frequency of departures, reasons why employees are leaving, the cost of bringing that employee on and training them appropriately, years of services before leaving, whether their departure was planned or unplanned, and whether their departure had a negative or positive impact on the department
- ▶ **Improve benefits for employees**, specifically programs like:
 - ▶ Employee Assistance Program
 - ▶ Pay/work-load balance
 - ▶ Educational benefits (i.e. educational/extended leave, tuition reimbursement, loan repayment opportunities)
- ▶ Develop a process for **bonuses and/or raises based on performance** or through skills building within the employee's job duties
- ▶ To continually **evaluate the duties of each position** to ensure that the duties do not spread employees too thin
- ▶ **Increase pay for experience**
- ▶ Evaluate and improve the **Employee Health Services and the LIFE Program**
- ▶ Propose that **county leadership develop their own county-wide strategic plan** to foster continued growth within the community

Outreach and Marketing:

Outreach and marketing is how we engage most of our patients and customers to access our services. Throughout the strategic planning process, the committee agreed that the department is not doing enough to reach out to our community through free and paid media as well as participation in community events.

- ▶ Ensuring that employees have the **time to meet program expectations of outreach** to their program populations
- ▶ Establish a **budget for an independent health department website**
- ▶ Increasing the available **budget for advertising**
- ▶ To **develop a wide range of marketing strategies** that can reach clients from a variety of backgrounds

Approval of the Strategic Plan

Ross Dodge made a motion to approve the Strategic Plan. Teresa Murray seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

D. CHIP/SOTCH – Emily Ritter

WHAT IS THE CHIP?

- ▶ Our Community Health Assessment (CHA) gives the health department the health priorities that the community is facing and the CHIP creates the action items for work around those health priorities
- ▶ CHA 2018 Health Priorities for Macon County
 - ▶ Substance Use
 - ▶ Overweight and Obesity
 - ▶ Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault
 - ▶ Mental Health

WHAT CHANGED IN 2019?

- ▶ **Substance Use and Mental Health**
 - ▶ These two priorities were combined due to the overlapping nature of many of the resources available to our community. The two groups who meet regularly on these topics have agreed work on improving outcomes together.
 - ▶ The most common positives of substance use and mental health care in Macon County were: public recognition of the problem; engaged community stakeholders; creative collaboration among agencies to address these issues.
 - ▶ The most common negatives of substance use and mental health care in Macon County were: cost of services; lack of ability to recruit healthcare professionals to work in the area; lack of affordable housing for those in recovery; unsure of how to reach a younger demographic.
 - ▶ What the Health Department has committed to help: MCPH will continue to facilitate the partnership engagement and management of these task forces and to continue to implement the school-based health center.
- ▶ **Overweight and Obesity**
 - ▶ The most common positives of overweight and obesity care in Macon County were: activity opportunities in the community (greenway, parks, nature); recognition in the community that this problem needs to be addressed; social opportunities to meet new people while living a healthy lifestyle.
 - ▶ The most common negatives of overweight and obesity care in Macon County were: there is a barrier to entry to find healthy lifestyle resources and information; people looking for a “quick fix”; cultural association with food in the region; perception of healthy foods/resources being expensive, difficult, or unavailable.
 - ▶ What the Health Department has committed to help: Continuing to offer low-cost nutrition services, helping to coordinate a healthy community kick-off event, continue to be a resource for the public.
- ▶ **Overweight and Obesity**
 - ▶ The most common positives of domestic violence and sexual assault care in Macon County were: prevention efforts in the schools through REACH; agencies having protocol on how to handle domestic violence situations; national awareness of the issue.
 - ▶ The most common negatives of domestic violence and sexual assault care in Macon County were: domestic violence being perceived as “no big deal”; no forensic nurse in Macon County or surrounding area; other determinants of health including housing, substance use, and employment.
 - ▶ What the Health Department has committed to help: Continuing to develop the domestic violence manual that includes instructions protocols, and state statutes with agencies to use in domestic violence situations and increasing the use of these manuals throughout the county.

WHAT IS THE SOTCH?

- ▶ In between the CHA, MCPH must produce a SOTCH which updates the state on changes that may have effected the health of a population, either regarding changes that effect CHA priorities or just the general health of the county.

New and Emerging Issues:

- ▶ Since the transition to close labor and delivery services at Angel Medical Center and the purchase of Mission Hospital by HCA, there are fewer OBGYNs and specialty providers in the county that are able to provide for our citizens. In addition to OBGYNs, the following types of physicians are limited within Macon County: Pediatricians, Primary Care, Ophthalmologists, etc.
- ▶ There have been reported increases of teen tobacco use, specifically the use of e-cigarettes and vaping products.
- ▶ Macon County has been identified as having a poor record for veterans with mental health issues.
- ▶ There is no forensic nurse in Macon County, so all Domestic Violence/Sexual Assault victims must travel to Asheville to be seen by a forensic nurse.
- ▶ Affordable housing is limited throughout the county.
- ▶ There was a Meningitis outbreak in 2018 throughout the community.
- ▶ Continued need for broadband access.
- ▶ A need for resources for those who are experiencing homeless.

New Initiatives or Changes:

- ▶ Entegra Bank was sold.
- ▶ The transition from Mission Hospital to HCA took place.
- ▶ Challenges in the political climate in Raleigh stalled the North Carolina budget and delayed Medicaid Transformation.
- ▶ The Balsam Center announced the closure of their Mental Health Urgent Care facility.
- ▶ Macon County WIC now has the capacity to do mobile enrollment.
- ▶ The formation of the Dogwood Health Trust offers funding opportunities throughout the region.
- ▶ Macon County Transit now has the capacity to take mobile payments from its customers.
- ▶ A new, large grocery store opened in the southern region of Franklin.
- ▶ Needle-drop boxes were placed throughout the community.
- ▶ Jail programs were expanded or started; including: a substance use peer counseling program, a Hepatitis A vaccine clinic, and healthcare for inmates.
- ▶ Tele-Psych is now made available at the Health Department.
- ▶ The Post Overdose Response Team (PORT) expanded their program to include staff able to directly respond to events.
- ▶ Robert C. Carpenter Community Building was renovated.
- ▶ South Macon Elementary School was renovated.
- ▶ The Health Department clinic was renovated with the assistance of high schools in the area.
- ▶ A school-based health center was started at South Macon Elementary School.
- ▶ A new Substance use clinic was opened.
- ▶ MANNA foodbank pop-up markets took place throughout the community.

CHIP & SOTCH were completed before February of this year.

Approve Minutes from Previous Meetings:

Teresa Murray made a motion to accept the minutes. Ellen Shope seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Old Business:

A. COVID-19 Update – Jennifer Garrett, Nursing Director

As of today MCPH has tested 4861 individuals at the HD, 243 test results pending, 530 total cases, 29 active, 497 recovered and 4 deaths. We have had an active few days and have been testing yesterday and today. Yesterday MCPH tested 155 and another 34 today. Call center took 260 calls yesterday alone. A lot of this is from school going back into session. We will be testing again tomorrow and Friday.

Ellen asked how many came to the community screening. Mr. Jennings stated that 96 came through the clinic. Mrs. Garrett stated that there wasn't as many as we had predicted. Ellen asked if it was advertised. Different members of the staff replied that yes it was on Facebook, the radio, and in the newspaper.

The question was asked if all the physicians in town were testing and sending in their documentation. Dr. Foley stated that he was only advised to notify MCPH of any positive that he had, he has not been sending in the tests that were negative.

Mr. Higdon asked what was MCPH's plan was to deal with the COVID-19 issue. Mrs. McGaha stated that it comes in waves, when there are big gatherings our numbers start to rise requiring more staff. Staff has had to prioritize what they are doing. She advised that they are working very hard to get staff back to their normal jobs and back to manageable hours. For example, Mrs. Garrett worked 20.5 hours this past weekend on top of what she worked during the week. Mrs. Garrett was here to do contact tracing for all the positive cases in the school. Mrs. Garrett stated that staff is working very hard long hours and not getting any time off. When things get extremely busy they are even having to pull other staff to fill in. Mrs. McGaha stated that there is currently staff that is out had has been put in isolation for either testing positive or being around someone that has tested positive.

Mrs. Garrett stated that they are hoping to have a vaccine out around January. This vaccine will be a two-part vaccine and require MCPH to purchase a new freezer and will be very time consuming. Also, stated that MCPH will only be able to give the vaccine here at the MCPH due to the temperature level that the vaccine has to stay at.

Mr. Higdon stated that growth is going to happen in Macon County, he wants to make sure that we do not let our regular services suffer.

Mrs. McGaha stated that they only pull Environmental Health staff when they are desperate for extra staff for COVID-19 response.

Jennifer stated that the staff here has worked extremely hard to make sure the citizens of Macon County are taken care of. As she stated before the staff is working very long hours, nights and weekends to make sure each person is taken care of and we are still trying to cover all our services.

Mrs. Shope asked about other test that would make collection easier and quicker. Ms. Ritter stated that the CDC does have a saliva test that has been approved but getting that out to the LHD has been extremely slow.

Jennifer stated that Dr. Dewhurst is researching several different test that we could use. Mrs. Shope stated that the test Ms. Ritter is talking about is inexpensive. Mrs. McGaha stated that we are researching the feasibility of using the Abbott test that is quick and easy to use for the Jail.

Discussion:

At the Board of Health meeting in July, Dr. Foley asked if he or Mrs. McGaha could contact the state to see if there was anything that the state could do to make the hospital test patients that come into the ER. Mrs. McGaha stated that she had contacted the state and that, NCDHHS met with some of the higher ups at HCA, and they were unable to get any further to that than we did. The hospital will not test a person unless the person is being admitted to the hospital. Dr. Foley stated that he does not think HCA is helping the community. Dr. Foley is concerned because his patients go to the hospital after hours or on the weekends and the hospital will not test them. The hospital is telling them that they have to see their primary care physician or the Health Department. This means that they have to wait until their doctor opens. This means there is a delay in testing and receiving the results back. Dr. Brenner asked if it would be an option to reach out to our state representatives, could we put this in writing and send it to our local representatives. Mrs. McGaha stated that they would work on generating letter.

Announcements: None

Next Meeting Date 9/22/2020

Adjourn

Motion to adjourn made by Dr. Kevin Foley. Ross Dodge seconded that motion. Motion to adjourn passed unanimously.

Time Adjourned 7:30 P.M.

Minutes Recorded by: Melissa Setzer