



Macon County  
Public Health

MACON COUNTY BOARD OF HEALTH  
MINUTES  
January 22, 2013

**Members Present:** Russell Stevenson – Chair, Frank Killian, MD, Molly Phillips, Ron Winecoff, Fred Berger, MD, David Silverstein, DDS, Stacy Shannon & Roberta Swank.

**Staff Present:** Jim Bruckner, Becky Barr, Barry Patterson, Kathy McGaha, Tammy Keezer, Tonya Hodgins, and Charlene Bellavance

**Media:** There was no one from the media present.

**Public Comment:** There were no public comments.

**Call to Order:** Chairman Stevenson called the meeting to order at 6:17 p.m.

**Approve Agenda:** A motion was made by Ms. Swank and seconded by Dr. Killian to approve the agenda as submitted. The motion passed unanimously.

**Welcome/Intro/Departures/Recognition:** Mr. Stevenson recognized Bobby Koppers past County Commissioner to the Board who was unable to attend the meeting for his service to the Board and asked Mr. Bruckner to send him his plaque.

**Presentation:**

**Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting:** A motion was made by Mr. Winecoff and seconded by Ms. Phillips to approve the minutes from November 27, 2012 as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

**Old Business**

**FY12 Monthly Budget Update:** - Ms. Hodgins directed the board members to the report in their packets. She indicated that the expenditures for December were 7% and the YTD total was 45%. This is slightly under what had been projected. She further stated that the revenue for the month of December was only 4% but the YTD total was 52% and this is a little above what was projected. She noted that there was a large allocation to the CTG line in November that came in and that was why December's revenue was lower than the previous month. Ms. Hodgins specified child dental as one of the revenue lines that was down slightly from this time last year. She also stated that lab fees were down. The agency is hoping to do some marketing for these programs in the community to try to get the numbers back up. Mr. Bruckner advised the board that if we market our lab we are competing with the hospital. Mr. Bruckner asked for the board's approval for the agency to do some advertising to some of the local doctors and send letters home for the molar roller through the school students. Ms. Phillips asked if the department had a budget for marketing? Mr. Bruckner responded that the majority of the cost for marketing is printing of letters or flyers. We do not

have a marketing budget for adult dental of lab, but that most of the marketing that would be done would be by visiting the doctor's offices and a very small cost for handing out flyers. Mr. Bruckner also informed the Board that competition for revenue based services is going to continue to be a challenge for the agency. A motion was made to allow the agency to market their services to the public through the Doctor's offices and by flyers to the parents of school age children by Dr. Berger and seconded by Ms. Phillips. The motion passed unanimously.

**Well Program Update:** Mr. Patterson gave a brief history regarding the well program for the new board members. He stated that under state and Federal laws it is the owner's responsibility for both the water quality and construction of their private well. The Environmental Health Section (EHS) permitted over 500 wells since July 2008 and there are over 100 in process currently. Of the 500 wells we received water test results for, there are 55 wells that tested positive for lead. The State staff are recommending that at the locations where these wells are testing high the occupants stop drinking the water and re-sample to get additional information on what to do to correct the problem. Estimates are that ten to fifteen thousand wells have been installed in Macon County. Barry has directed his staff to look further into the situation and note any other locations that may be affected. Findings so far indicate there was no particular well driller who was responsible. The wells were installed all over the county and many different drillers were used to install them. The EHS began to look at the pipe the drillers were using as the potential source of the lead contamination. One of the owners volunteered to have his well pipe removed and tested for the purposes of this investigation. The EHS has been in touch with state epidemiologists for direction and they have begun an official investigation on the subject. It is believed that this is not just a Macon County issue. They are now retesting the 55 wells with 'first flush' sampling techniques. The re-testing order was established to protect public exposure by starting with the highest lead results and those structures housing pregnant women and children. They are taking six samples of each well, 3 at the tap and 3 at the well at 1 minute, 5 minutes and 15 minutes simultaneously. It is thought that as the water is flushed through the pipes the lead should become less. EHS has notified all of the property owners of these 55 wells. They have currently re-sampled 32 of the 55 wells with the new testing method. Of the 32 samples we only have six results back from the state lab. The state lab is in the process of moving. Of the six results we have, five have continued to show higher than acceptable lead levels. Some of the homes have a particulate filter that seems to be filtering the lead out. They are looking at water chemistry to see why this is happening. It is unusual that this type of filter would screen the lead. They continue to talk with the well drillers regarding the pipe and well components that are being used. All of the well drillers have agreed to discontinue using foreign pipe until this issue has been resolved. The focus currently is to determine what the public exposure is and how many of the wells contain the lead pipe. Possible natural causes and additional drilling/ construction practices are also being investigated. Of the pipe that was taken out of the one owners well there were four types of markings on the pipes from four different countries and the United States. EHS sent several samples of pipe to be tested for lead and results were extremely high. They will be collecting more samples and sending additional samples that have been removed from other wells that will be tested. Ms. Phillips asked if there were other county well programs that have had these same results. Mr. Bruckner noted that our county is one of the few that has a data base for collecting this type of data. Although all of the counties have well programs very few have a searchable data base and we are only one of 5 or 6 with a GIS database. This is the primary reason why our EHS discovered the discrepancies in the lead levels. The state EH Section Chief Layton Long has asked other counties to look through their files for documentation that may reflect higher than normal lead levels in any of their well water sample testing. Mr. Winecoff asked how many wells had the foreign pipe been installed in since the 2000. Mr. Patterson said that a rough estimate would be between three and four thousand wells. Mr. Patterson said he was not comfortable giving a number of exactly how many wells could be affected. He indicated there were a few different reasons why the pipe might be used. The first is if a well is over 700 feet deep the metal pipe was used for its strength. Mr. Patterson indicated they are also seeing some that were not that deep but the owner wanted a large pump for more water pressure and therefore needed to use the heavier pipe to take the torque of the pump. All of the representatives are in agreement that we will need to inform and educate the public in a responsible manner. The driller's records indicate whether the pipe was galvanized or PVC. The information that was given to our EHS was that galvanized was not used in any of the 55 wells but when our EHD personnel tested the first five wells all five

were galvanized pipe. Haywood County has given permission for us to use their well camera. We have also been working with staff from the Office of Environmental Epidemiology and at the state lab. Mr. Bruckner asked the board for approval to absorb the cost of the water tests for the individuals with these 55 wells. Mr. Bruckner noted that if it is discovered that the pipe is the cause of the higher than normal lead then it isn't just a Macon County issue. This is not something that can be positively identified at this time due to the lack of data. Mr. Bruckner will be in Raleigh this week and meeting with state personnel to discuss how to keep the potentially bad pipe out of the market. The state's and Health Department's primary concern is children under six and pregnant women in the homes that are showing high lead levels. Our department has been the driving force exposing the issue and collecting the data. Macon County drillers have been proactive in agreeing not to use the foreign pipe. The Federal test that is the standard for lead is called ANSI Standard 61 and is the leachate test that the pipe has to pass. If it fails then it will be a problem for more than just Macon County. A motion was made by Dr. Silverstein and seconded by Ms. Swank to allow the EHD to absorb the cost for the well water testing of the 55 wells. The motion passed unanimously.

**Strategic Plan Update:** Ms. McGaha reported that we have met with expanded leadership and will be reviewing the updated version of the strategic plan. We were successful in meeting some of the goals, communicating our services to stakeholders is an example of a goal met. We will be providing a finalized version to the leadership team within a few weeks.

**Flu Update:** Ms. Barr reported that we have had a severe and early flu season this year. These have been the highest levels recorded in the past decade. The number of cases came to a peak in February & March. The State flu surveillance website number show that we are now in a decline. The peak of flu cases ended on approximately December 29. The report showed that 9% of outpatient clinic visits for that week and ending January 12 had decreased to a percentage of 3.8 which was still above the baseline of 2.3%. The state is still recommending that people 6 months and above get a flu shot. Our agency had 2,050 vaccines, of which 200 were high dose. It has been suggested that we order more of the high dose next year. The effectiveness of the flu vaccine this year was approximately 62%. We have been promoting the high dose to the elderly because they don't experience as high a rate of effectiveness with the regular dose.

### **New Business**

**Accreditation:** Ms. McGaha reported that we have started the re-accreditation process and Ellen Shope will be here at the agency to review our documentation. We are required to have our proof documentation complete by June 19, 2013 and will be notified of our state site visit by the beginning of June. Mr. Bruckner told the board that last year the state funding for accreditation was stopped. Our agency decided to pay a \$2,500 fee to continue with the accreditation process. Mr. Bruckner told the board that we were asked if we wanted to go through the federal accreditation at the same time we are doing the state and we adamantly told them no due to the cost. Ms. McGaha mentioned that there is some sharing of tools between counties that are being used to help with the accreditation process.

**Budget FY 2014:** Ms. Keezer reported that we have begun the process of gathering information for the next budget year. So far this year the county has not asked for any mid-year documentation relative to the current budget year. Generally we are asked to present the next year's budget in mid to late April. Each of the Section Administrators has been given the task of getting their FY13 year-end projections and requested FY14 budgets turned in to Mr. Bruckner by the end of January. Mr. Winecoff asked if they had gotten any indication from the County as to what their economic health is. Ms. Keezer said we have not. She indicated that several staff have inquired as to whether or not there is going to be any adjustments to salaries based on last year's salary survey. She stated that we have been told that the County is still working on this process and no decision has been made at this time. Mr. Bruckner told the board that the majority of our staff approx. 77% have some form of college degree in their respective field. He noted that our salaries are below that of many other similar size counties for these positions and that we have lost employees to these counties in the last year or so. Until our county brings their salaries in line with the other counties this will continue to occur.

**Program Review/Discussion (Program Prioritization):** Ms. Keezer reminded the Board that they had asked the agency last year to review the programs and services and determine a program/service ranking and prioritization in anticipation of budget cuts. Programs were categorized at three levels: Core Services (those mandated by NC General Statutes), Essential to Core (non-mandated by required by NC General Statues for health departments to assure the service is available in the community) and, Enhancement to Core (non-mandated services that if eliminates would diminish mandated and/or essential public health services). Services were ranked and prioritized based on those three levels as well as cost of the program and revenue sources. She informed the Board that we have begun the annual review of this document and provided an overview of the current process and ranking of programs. A copy of the PowerPoint presentation is attached to these notes. A motion was made by Ms. Swank and seconded by Dr. Silverstein to approve the program rankings as submitted. The motion passed unanimously.

**Board Member Involvement on Community Boards, Task Forces, Committees Related to Health Priorities:** Mr. Bruckner asked if each of the board members would email him a list of community boards, committees and task forces they serve on relative to public health priorities.

**Legislative Update:** Mr. Bruckner noted that the county regional health directors had a meeting with Senator Davis last week to discuss seven issues they wanted his support on. The health directors asked for Senator Davis' support for the increase in Food & Lodging's inspection fees, which are currently \$45.00 for a new establishment. They asked for restored funding for the mandated accreditation process, opposition to legislative amendments that rescind or weaken the tobacco free restaurant policy. These three are also supported by counties and commissioners. They asked him to support the recommendation to raise the state tobacco tax to the national average (NC is currently the lowest in the nation); to reinstate the master settlement dollars for tobacco free education, and oppose Medicaid program cuts relative to non-Medicaid covered services. The last item is support for federal block grants and public health aid to county dollars. MCPH receives approx. \$83,000 annually in Aid to County funds which goes mainly to fund the salary for a health educator position.

**Board Training and Information**

Mr. Bruckner referred the board members to handouts in their packets and asked them to please take the time to review them. The first was the annual NACCHO - (Research Brief) related to PH infrastructure and funding changes and the second was a Wall Street Journal article called "National Report NC Ranks last in Protecting Kids from Tobacco".

**Announcements:**

**Next Meeting Date:** February 26, 2013

**Motion to Adjourn:** A motion was made by Mr. Winecoff and seconded by Dr. Killian to adjourn the meeting at 7:55. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Charlene Bellavance

These minutes were approved on February 26, 2013 with a motion by Ms. Phillips and seconded by Dr. Killian. The motion passed unanimously.