

Environmental Health Liaison Meeting
March 13, 2007

Minutes

Members Present: David Hourdequin, Ron Winecoff, Dr. Ron Campbell,
and Dr. Jim Davis

Staff Present: Ken Ring, Barry Patterson, Charles Womack, Larry Ellis,
Alicia Steiert, Pat Muse, Tiffany Mason, Pam Moses,
Harold Faircloth and Sue Blaine

An Environmental Health Liaison luncheon meeting was held as a "Meet the Staff" event. During lunch Liaison members and EH staff introduced themselves and staff told how long they had been employed with MCPHC and/or a little of their background. Mr. David Hourdequin officially opened the meeting at 12:10 p.m. and said that he wished this meeting had occurred two years ago. He expressed his pleasure at finally meeting the staff and gave a history of the Environmental Health Liaison Committee and their purpose. He emphasized the importance of the Onsite-Wastewater Section and its impact on the economy of our county. Mr. Hourdequin invited the staff to offer any ideas and suggestions toward input for solution to the problems of the ongoing backlog in septic permits.

Mr. Ron Winecoff explained that this group has a major impact on the economy of our county. Dr. Jim Davis commented that as a Commissioner, he hears more complaints about EH problems than anything else, with the second number of complaints being animal issues.

Pat Muse shared his thoughts that this is more than a two-year problem - and gave some of the history. We will probably receive 1500 applications this year versus 500 applications ten years ago. Ten years ago it could be seen that more staff were needed. In 1999 there was a manpower study done that recommended adding two staff (which did not get done). Also we have lost some key staff in the past few years, making it difficult to keep enough staff to do the job. The average is still basically one completed permit per day, per staff member.

Barry Patterson reported that our backlog has come from 600 to less than 200. He has hired and trained as approved by the Commissioners and that now we have seven (7) people on board. By the end of April all seven will be authorized.

The EH section should continually be looking for ways to improve, and are asked to look internally to do their best, whether it be tools, etc. Each day staff should challenge themselves: 1) Am I doing my best to get on top of this problem, and 2) work overtime if at all possible.

Staff members shared that applications not being completed are a big problem. Administrative staff that accept these applications need to be accountable to Barry as in-complete applications should not be accepted. Staff expressed that support of the Environmental Health Liaison Committee is needed to back them up when they will not accept applications that are in-complete, should that client complain about it to the Board members.

Ken and Barry are working on solving the personnel issue between Building Inspections and EH so that there will be at least one more position available in the clerical section for EH duties. Barry has made space available for the additional clerical staff.

Another problem shared by staff is that sites are not always ready when they go out to do the permit. Application forms need to reflect that the site must be ready or the permit will go to the back of the backlog pile and there is an \$80 charge for a re-visit. That practice also needs to be supported by the Board when clients call to complain. Staff will need to remind clients to be ready when they call to make the appointment with clients. Barry will write an article for the local newspaper about preparing property for permits.

Staff are asked to review the statutes and make sure they are not doing more than should be done, or are not authorized to be doing. Each staff member carries a copy of the Statutes in their vehicle.

Again, it was emphasized that the EH Liaison Board and the Board of County Commissioners are very supportive in resolving the EH problems and the staff need to keep asking until the issues get resolved.

The meeting adjourned at 1:03 p.m. on motion from Dr. Jim Davis and second by Ron Winecoff.

Respectfully submitted,

Sue Blaine

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