**Porter County Board of Health**

Tuesday December 6, 2020

Room 102A

**In Attendance:** Health Officer Dr. Maria Stamp, Attorney Dave Hollenbeck, Chairman Martin Moeller, Dr. Patrick Fleming , Dr. Derek Gasper, Elizabeth Forbes and Administrator Letty Zepeda.

**Not in Attendance:** Kathy Lemmon, Suzanne Phelps & Donna Werner

Chairman Moeller called the meeting to order and opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Elizabeth Forbes made a motion to accept the minutes of the October 6, 2020 meeting and seconded by Dr. Derek Gasper. All were in favor. Motion carries.

**Announcements:**

Our next meeting is scheduled for January 5, 2021. Happy New Year!

**New business:** Elizabeth Forbes is retiring from the Board of Health after 14 years of service. Dave Hollenbeck gave her a plaque of our appreciation. There are two years remaining on her term so we will start looking for a replacement in January.

MOU Expo Center – John has been updating our POD plan. The last revision was in 2004 and it is quite dated. With the potential for distribution of the COVID vaccine, we need to have a current clinic agreement. We have changed the wording from infectious disease threats to all hazards. Our other sites have already signed off on the agreements. The state has advised us to plan for administering the vaccine. CVS and Walgreens have agreed to immune the long-term care facilities. First level of vaccine is for highest risk employees – hospital workers, followed by long-term care facilities and high-risk individuals. Commission Good asked that the MOU for the Expo to be approved by the Board of Health prior to their review and approval. We will continue to test until there is no need. We may be doing testing and immunizations at the same time.

Dr. Patrick Fleming made a motion to approve the MOU and seconded by Dr. Derek Gasper. All in favor. Motion carries.

POD plan approval – The last strategic stockpile plan was completed in 2009 with an update in 2013. We are behind since the POD plan should be updated every year, with a major rewrite done every five years. We went to all long-term care facilities and gave them sustainable PPE options including respirators and disposable gowns. The state has advised that there are no more disposable gowns available. Updated plan to the most up to date CDC version 11. Four binders have been put together to provide easy access in the event of an incident so that nothing has to be researched on the internet. Plan broken down to when to activate, how to take care of everyone. The binders include guidelines for setup, demobilize, decision tree, state plan, facilities and the points of contact. POD site agreements, MOU for the Sheriff, maps of all sites. Phone trees of the different divisions to mobilize staff. Check in sheets for employees. Check list for setup, facility check list, work flow for each site, communication tools, security plans that have been reviewed by the Sheriff, chain of custody forms for accountability of all supplies and vaccines, inventory management and registration forms, health assessment forms, medical reserve core team for volunteers, action sheets, reference materials. National response framework for FEMA, annexes and support functions, health depart operates under EF8, which is public health but we will be working with other departments. Informational sheets from the CDC.

Dr. Patrick Fleming made a motion to approve the POD plan and seconded by Elizabeth Forbes. All in favor. Motion carries.

**COVID-19 update**: Testing in Porter County. Health Department test site in October. One site is at the Expo Center in Valparaiso, and the other test site is on Lute Rd in Portage. Each location is open 29 hours per week. We alternate between morning and evening hours and are open three Saturdays a month. We have had a good response. We were expecting to test about 100 people per day at each test site. Our Valparaiso site averages about 125 per day and Portage approximately 70. The Portage site is smaller, so it is fine that we are lower than 100. Optum is still running their test site on Scottsdale Rd. We have had some challenges with lines, especially when we first open. This Monday we doubled our staff at the Valparaiso location and now have the north and south sides open. We have a traffic control directing drivers to each side. We have two intakes and two swabbers on each side of the building. We thought that testing would be high due to the Thanksgiving holiday and testing not being available, but we have not seen an increase in testing yet. Commissioners and the Council have been very helpful in providing funding from the CARES Act to help with the increase in staff. All tests go to ISDH and they are using several labs. Turnaround time started out at 2 to 3 days, but have gone up to 7+ days. Labs for tests done on 11/13 took 10 days. Some from 11/12 still have not resulted.

This has been a statewide issue. There was an issue with the lab and they are working on this. OPTUM has also had issues with their test results. The other issue has been the scheduling system. We have no control except to advise the state that we would like to change the number of people that can register for a time block or our hours. There can be delay for implementation.

When last met we were in stage 5 of the Governors reopening plan. After that, our number of COVID cases and the positivity rate has climbed significantly along with the hospital admission rates. The Governor than made restrictions based on the color-coded maps for the counties. Blue being good, than going to yellow, orange and red as numbers increase. Last week we were at red, this week we are at orange. Lake and LaPorte counties did release narrower guidelines than the executive order and we will implement them later this week. We will amend the guidelines by keeping social gatherings and events down to 25 people when we are in the red. We need to stay in red for at least two weeks after we move to orange. We do not want to bounce back and forth between orange and red. The hospital and death rates have been higher over the last two weeks. Restaurants and bars closing time will be 11:00 pm. Table size will be limited to six customers. Entertainment venues and gyms need to social distance also. We will finish the order up this week and get it to the Commissioners, the mayors so they know what is forthcoming.

Enforcement of restrictions. Neighboring counties go on a complaint basis. We would like to be more proactive and we have been going out doing spot checks on restaurants, nightclubs and businesses. We have hired some employees from the Memorial Opera House that were furloughed to do spot checks. We are also using some staff from the Portage YMCA that were going to be laid off. Our numbers have been climbing except for this week, but no testing was done over the Thanksgiving holiday weekend. Hospital admissions remain high. Over 15 deaths in the last two weeks each. About 60% were from long-term care facilities and 40% from the community. Staff has been handling calls and assisting with contact tracing. Contact tracing can always be helpful in finding areas that are not working to protect each other. It does get more complicated with higher numbers and can be less effective. This has been around long enough that people know to stay home if they are sick and to keep their mouth and nose covered with face covering. Church services are exempt, but we have been working on messaging trying to relay best practices.

Long-term care facilities did contribute to our death rate. The nursing homes are testing everyone twice a week, so the positivity rate is down due to the number of tests being done at those facilities.

Community Hospital is one that will receive the new vaccine. They have to have ultra-cold storage in order to receive the vaccine. An informal inquiry was done for a mobile field hospital. This has to be requested through the ISDH but it is handled through Homeland Security. There are only three in the state. It comes with all supplies to run the site, but no staff.

As we made the decision to be more proactive in enforcing the Governors executive order conditions and Dr. Stamps guidelines. Portage Township YMCA was going to furlough employees and we will be using them to inspect facilities and keep compliance into place. They will remain employees of the YMCA and we will be invoiced by the YMCA for their hours worked. Training has already started. Governor’s executive order has a sequence mechanism. First verbal warning, written warning and third is closure of facility that is not in compliance. Hoping the 11 staff member from the YMCA can help with the inspections. Memorandum of agreement with Board of Health and the Portage Township YMCA where the employees will be available to us. We want to have a proactive approach to COVID safety inspections. Our goal is not to close anybody, but to educate them as to why this is important. Dave will work on the Porter County version of the Governor’s executive order. Once we have a completed document we will get it out to all board members.

Elizabeth Forbes made a motion to accept the Memorandum of agreement with the YMCA and seconded by Dr. Derek Gasper. All in Favor. Motion carries.

Dr. Patrick Fleming made a motion to accept the claims and receipts and seconded by Elizabeth Forbes. All in Favor. Motion carries.

A motion to adjourn made by Elizabeth Forbes and seconded by Dr. Patrick Fleming. All were in favor. Motion carried.