**Porter County Board of Health**

Tuesday May 5, 2020

Teleconference

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

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

A motion to accept the minutes of the April 7, 2020 meeting was made by Dr. Derek Gasper and seconded by Donna Werner. All were in favor. Motion carried.

**Announcements:**

Next meeting is scheduled for June 2, 2020. Executive order extended through June 4th so we may use Zoom for the June meeting also.

**COVID-19 update**:

Dr. Patrick Fleming appreciates the ability to do Tele-visits. Number of COVID patients is increasing. A lot of questions about tests for antibodies. Patients good at quarantining, social distancing and wearing masks. Every week there is a new stress. Appreciative of support, reports and updates.

Dr. Derek Gasper feels that the Health Department is doing a great job. Quick to respond to phone calls. He is pleased with County also, very slow linear climb. Nervous about nursing homes since he has a lot of patients which are becoming more depressed. Tough for the residents, employees and their families. His office is keeping sick people in the parking lot and doing the test outside instead of coming into the office.

Dr. Maria Stamp the month of April was consumed by the Health Department with COVID-19. First case in Porter County was 3/23/20. On 4/7/20 last board meeting, we had 78 cases. On 5/5/20 we were up to 285 cases. The daily new case count has average of 5 or 6 cases per day, but today we had 18. Yesterday 2 deaths one on ventilator since middle of April and the other was an elderly nursing home patient. We have had 9 deaths in Porter County, 3 were in long term facilities. Of the 18 new patients 12 were in Miller Manor nursing home. We are seeing quite a few cases for correctional facility in Westville. We have 178 recovered cases. We have been running about 100 active cases per day.

Most cases are health care workers, prison or jail related, nursing homes or someone who was in contact with one of the prior listed. Porter Regional resumed elective surgeries this week. ISDH has a strike team that will go into affected buildings. The state has been in Lake County doing drive through testing for most of April. They were in Merrillville, Gary and in East Chicago this week. They test high risk individuals, those that were symptomatic and essential workers. They did COVID testing and Antibody testing at IVY tech and a mobile unit in District 1 which includes the counties of Lake, Porter, LaPorte, Newton & Jasper. They spent a day in each county. Together testing about 500 randomly selected residents of District 1. They will be doing this monthly to track long term. Changes are coming to testing. ISDH has contracted with OptumServ who will start doing testing at the National Guard armory in Valparaiso tomorrow for anyone with symptoms. You do have to register online. They do accept insurance, but will not turn away due to ability to pay or insurance. We will continue to see the results from all test sites. In the next few weeks the State will have a centralized contract tracing unit. They will get a text message, followed by a phone call if they do not respond. If still no response it will be forwarded to the Health Department for follow up. This will start in Porter County on 5/18/20. We will continue to handle until the state takes over. Jess has been a superstar. She is a wiz on the computer and has learned the systems inside and out to get the answers we need. She works with Curt to update the dashboard and keeps track of positive cases. We are super thankful and proud of her. PPE procurement continues to be problematic. We have received from the stockpile twice, MACC district coordination center and from donations. They were distributed to first responders, long term care facilities, nursing homes and other clinics. We would like to thank United Way, the school districts, career center, and Ivy Tech. Becky Childress has been making masks for the dept. Animal Shelter & EMA. As opening up getting requests from dental offices and other clinics and right now we don’t have a lot to offer. We are looking into a District order through the MACC to see if we could obtain for our partners at cost. Complaints about businesses and parks. Being open or too close together. Most are referred to law enforcement. Connie did visit Lake Cable there were a few positive cases that did not reside in Porter County so we were not aware of them. She toured the building to see what they were doing to keep employees safe and reviewed sick policies and got a good sense that they were doing what they needed to keep employees safe. Letty visited the state park this weekend after getting calls regarding people relieving themselves in public and not social distancing. The facilities were not open. We do not have jurisdiction over the state park, but Letty went out and spoke to the Park Rangers that were monitoring the situation.

Outside of COVID 19 other thing are still happening on April 8th we had a POD exercise. We would set up if a vaccine needed to be administered to all in PC or med had to be dispensed. John P did as a deliverable for the Emergency Preparedness Grant. HD staff participated along with other employees in the building that assisted. This helped us to prepare in the event this happened in the future.

The Foods Division continuing to do plan reviews and new openings. Staff has also represented the HD at the EMA office daily. Helpful for communication and coordination. Working with event coordinators for farmers market.

Environmental continues to do site plans and inspections. They are also assisting with calls & complaints.

Nursing continues to distribute Antabuse and we have 4 active TB cases that we make daily contact with. Dogs are still biting and we have to investigate. Also doing STD test. Resume immunizations later this week starting in the Portage office.

**Will this be the location that this will always be held if there is an emergency?**

We have a number of locations available for the POD, it will vary depending on what we need to do and the time allotted. We have MOU’s in place with organizations in case we need to mobilize. Used the Administration building for this exercise, but it wouldn’t be effective for a large number of people.

**If a vaccine became available for COVID how would they be dispersed?**

No degree of certainty. Would think it would go through CVS, Walgreens or primary care physician. In case of H1N1 we delivered thousands of vaccines, but also facilitated getting vaccine to long term facilities and private practices. Pharmacies were not doing vaccines at that time. POD is to get a lot of people through to get vaccines in a short amount of time. Would depend on the number of doses we receive at a time. We were the gatekeeper for 40,500 for H1N1 vaccines.

**Any reports of elective surgeries having COVID tests prior to surgery?**

There are facilities that are requiring all elective procedures to have a COVID test 2-3 days prior to surgery including LaPorte Hospital. Not sure about Porter Hospital. If you don’t have symptoms and you are infected the false negative rate is high. They are doing the best they can to keep everyone safe. Doctor offices don’t have access to test which makes it hard. Health Department is working through Alverno for our tests. Initially we received 5 swabs and tubes. In the past two weeks we have been able to get more. We have been able to test, but we are having to pay for the tests out of our budget. Getting test results back within 36 hours. Porter Hospital did loosen the criteria last week for testing. LaPorte Hospital has the Abbott system with a rapid turnaround. Franciscan did run out of tests a few weeks ago. Dr. Fleming sent a patient to Great Lakes Lab and results were received in a few hours. We are familiar with Great Lakes Lab and they have done some work with the County. We were in contact with them early on, but they weren’t ready to test at that time.

**Can we share information on the Armory testing with patients?** Yes, you do not need a doctor’s order to be tested, but you have to register online. The Armory’s in LaPorte and Gary will also be used for testing. Website is up and running.

Elizabeth Forbes stated that the Hospital is very protective of their workers. She hasn’t had any issues with not having the appropriate PPE. She has worked with some COVID patients when they are in the recovery phase. It has been hard for the families of patients since they are not allowed to visit. They have purchased an IPAD which they use to allow the patients to interact with family members.

Suzanne Phelps is teaching her nursing classes from home the best that she can. She hasn’t gone back to nursing home at this point. Appreciates all that the Health Department are doing to keep them updated.

Donna Werner provided update on Pleasant Township which was the last township to report a COVID case. There were four positive cases this week, but none had to be hospitalized.

Questions on why the Health Department is not testing. We were just able to get the viral media a few weeks ago and there is a cost associated with it. Looking at the antibody tests we have found Cellex Inc. First FDA approved test. Cost of $42.40 per tests, but minimum order is 1025 tests and we must pay for all upfront. Looking at being able to share the cost with someone. Still questions on how accurate tests are also.

Dave Hollenbeck - We have entered stage 2 of the reopening plan was started yesterday. This included the opening of restaurants. Lots of questions from restaurants on what they need to do to meet guidelines. Increased time by Foods Division. Farmer’s market season is also starting. First market will be tomorrow. Implementing and establishing rules and regulations is a priority of the Foods Division also.

Sheila Paul working with Market Masters who coordinate the Farmers markets. Valparaiso, Chesterton and Coffee Creek market plans have been received. Placing booths farther apart and flow. Limit to vendors and customers. Staging that prevents bottlenecks due to social distancing requirements. Offer hand sanitizer throughout. Vendors that are selling food that is not prepackaged need to wear masks. Separate person handling food and money. Very supportive of our efforts to keep it as safe as possible. We are not the enforcers of the Governors orders, but we are the observers and will document and forward any concerns.

Two components – you can open up, but will anybody come? Need to raise the confidence level of customers so they feel comfortable.

A motion to accept the claims and receipts was made by Elizabeth Forbes and seconded by Kathy Lemmon. All were in favor. Motion carried.

Environmental is still carrying on. In reference to the 49 landfill. We are still waiting for the results. Still keeping busy with inspections.

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