**Porter County Board of Health**

Tuesday October 6, 2020

Commissioners Chambers

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

**Not in Attendance:** Kathy Lemmon, Dr. Derek Gasper

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

A motion to accept the minutes of the August 4, 2020 meeting was made by Elizabeth Forbes and seconded by Suzanne Phelps. All were in favor. Motion carries.

**Announcements:**

Our next meeting is scheduled for December 1, 2020. We will not have a meeting on November 3, 2020 since it is election day.

**New business:** Legal Services Contract with Dave Hollenbeck. Dave has been the attorney since the inception of the Health Department. The only change was the dates on the contract to reflect the new contract year. This is the 45th one-year contract. There is a fixed fee portion as well as an hourly component for items that are extraordinary in nature. Dr. Patrick Fleming made a motion to approve the contract, motion was seconded by Donna Werner. All in favor. Motion carries

**COVID-19 update**: Up until this week, our numbers have been stable. Dr. Stamp looks at two numbers, the average daily new case total for the week and divides by seven. Numbers to go up and down during the week. Not a lot of tests are done over the weekend and so our numbers tend to go up on Thursdays and Fridays. She also looks at our positivity rate on a weekly average. Our total numbers and positivity rate have both climbed a bit this week. Couple of factors; we do not have any outbreaks in any of our nursing homes. They are doing a great job of screening employees every week with rapid tests. Occasionally they have one or two positives, due to community spread, but they are able to catch it right away. This is keeping our positivity rate low, since a lot of tests are being done at these facilities with mostly negative test results. Our demand for testing is decreasing due to COVID fatigue. It has been around for awhile and most don’t get terribly sick. People are tired of wearing masks, tired of thinking about it, and being concerned about staying home if in contact with someone with COVID. Those that are sick are going to the doctor and COVID tests are being done in the doctor’s office, which brings the positivity rate up. COVID is not gone, we need to continue to wear masks, wash hands and social distance. We have had a low rate of hospitalizations. Age range of cases is across the board. We are not seeing outbreaks in the schools. They have put effective measures in place at the schools to keep numbers down. Every school district is making their own decisions and does have different guidelines per district. We have seen improvements in treatment in the ICU’s. They now know the appropriate time to put someone on a ventilator. They also have protocols in place regarding use of antivirals and steroids. We are looking at testing through the Health Department through a grant from the Indiana State Department of Health. Event monitoring has changed with stage 5 of the back on track plan. State has asked us to start looking at plans for when a COVID vaccine is available. The vaccine will not come all at once. Hospitals will get vaccines first to cover those on the front lines and those at highest risk. Other healthcare providers and those at a higher risk would get it next. We are looking at Fall of 2021 for all to get the vaccine. Until then strongly recommend getting your flu shot. Will be interested in seeing if the flu season is better with the measures in place for COVID.

When the Governor announced that local health departments would review plans for events over 250 we were taken by surprise. We started to get a lot of phone calls, and spoke with the Commissioners who not only wanted us to review the plans they wanted us to monitor large events. We decided to lower that number to 100 to review all events. Make sure they had good sanitation practices, plans for social distancing, masking and signage. We did find that there is a lot going out there that we did not know about. This allowed us to work with the contacts at the venues for future events also. We reviewed over 100 plans for August and September and monitored about 40 events. Health Department staff volunteered to monitor these events to make sure the plans were being carried out as they had documented and that masks were being worn. Now that we are in stage five we need to review plans for over 500. We have worked with the venues and schools and they are doing a great job. We are monitoring higher risk events. High School football games – all groups in sections in the stands uses the same restrooms and food stands. They are also monitoring stands to make sure masks are being worn as directed.

 We are working on opening the two COVID test sites. The Expo Center will be up and running on October 12. The Portage location at Northwest Health 6040 Lute Rd we hope to open one week later. They will have a website for making online appointments. We will be able to give results via email or test message depending on the customer’s preference. We are going to be using some of the staff from Optum as well as a posting on Indeed for additional employees. There was some concern with the Health Department staff working at the test site and also working in the office. North Shore has donated $25,000 to the Health Department to use for COVID testing.

Are we changing the way we follow up with patients? The states contract tracers are doing the first contact. They will flag the file if they do not get a response from the patient. The nurses will follow up on those patients. We have been working with the schools, business & hospitals. Schools and the nurses are doing a fantastic job.

A motion to accept the claims and receipts was made by Suzanne Phelps and seconded by Elizabeth Forbes. All in Favor. Motion carries.

Environmental is still busy. Construction is still happening. They have had some additional issues with tattoo parlors and public pools. Additional signage was required. We did get a lot of phones calls regarding the beaches this summer. We guided these to DNR and to the state for complaints. Staff did volunteer to assist Foods with the event monitoring.

Emergency Preparedness – working on updating the POD plan. Made contacts at all long-term health facilities. Advised to try to get washable gowns while they can. We do have N95 masks, face shields and gowns available if the need arises.

Since March the Health Department has been tasked with a lot of responsibilities. Staff has been great at handling additional duties while maintaining our ongoing work.

Northwest Health Express Cares in Valparaiso, Portage & Chesterton will be handling testing for COVID, Influenza & Strep.

A motion to adjourn made by Elizabeth Forbes and seconded by Suzanne Phelps. All were in favor. Motion carried.