**Porter County Board of Health**

Tuesday September 7, 2021

Room 102A

**In Attendance:** Attorney Dave Hollenbeck, Chairman Martin Moeller, Health Officer Dr. Maria Stamp, Dr. Derek Gasper, Kathy Lemmon, and Terry Wuletich, Dr. Patrick Fleming and Suzanne Phelps.

**Not In Attendance:** Donna Werner

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

Suzanne Phelps made a motion to accept the minutes of the August 3, 2021 meeting, seconded by Dr. Derek Gasper. All were in favor. Motion carries.

**Announcements:**

Our next meeting is scheduled for October 5, 2021.

**New Business:**

**COVID update:** Schools – COVID cases are climbing significantly since July. Twenty-five percent of total cases are from schools. We are graphing for all schools. As of today, Portage schools were hit hard. Valparaiso schools are a big player also. The School Superintendents felt their hands were tied for requiring masks. Thought they needed Dr. Stamp’s directive to do that. By law she no longer has the authority. The decision to masks falls onto the schools. Dr. Stamp spoke at the Commissioners meeting explaining the responsibility of the school corporations on to implement the rules. She also had a conference call on Friday with the School Superintendents. The larger school districts decided to mask students and staff to keep everyone safe. Hebron is requiring the masking of K – 6 school children. Union and East Porter County townships have stated masks as optional. Governor amended the guidance to state, “if masks are worn consistently, and someone is a close contact with someone else got covid they do not need to isolate, just self-monitor. Schools are getting a lot of push back from parents not happy about the masking. East Porter County schools are mask and quarantine optional. If child is a close contact, they are leaving it up to the family to decide if the child will go to school or not. This is a violation of the State of Indiana’s infectious disease code. The Governor has delegated the schools with the responsibility to provide covid 19 protocols. We can only provide guidance publicly and privately with the Superintendents, but we cannot legally force schools to mandate mask wearing. The Health Department has been keeping records so that we can be apprised on the stats of positive cases of students and the school.

The Porter County Commissioners have decided that masks will be required in county buildings when we go to orange or red. The color code is based on the positivity rate. Positivity has to average over 10% for a week to go to orange. This does not always include home tests. Now not everyone wants to be tested. Hospital is testing unvaccinated employees every two weeks. We had our first death of a vaccinated resident this week. We had two deaths in August and two so far in September. We are getting better at treating it, which means sick individuals should be tested.

Testing at the Expo 4-H building will start on Monday 9/13/21. Effective 9/13/21 vaccines at the Health Department offices will increase from one day a week to three days.

Contract Agreement for John Pisowicz for the Emergency Public Health Preparedness Coordinator has been submitted. This position is paid entirely with State Department of Health dollars. Based on the grant, the funds for this year will be less. Dave recommended approval of John’s contract to be retroactive to 7/1/21. John has been working without a contract since then.

Dr. Patrick made a motion to approve the contract, seconded by Terry Wuletich. All in favor. Motion carries.

Kathy Lemmon made a motion to accept the claims and receipts for July 2021. Motion seconded by Suzanne Phelps. All in favor. Motion carries.

Question posed by Dr. Derek Gasper to the current state of requirements for any businesses. There is nothing in place as of this time. Since the new law was enacted this would have to be designated by the Governor, or delegated to local government to handle.

Update on Axe St. City of Valparaiso will be posting a vacate order. The building which is a garage, has fire damage and does not have access to water. Owner denied that anyone is living there since the fire occurred. Environmental is also working on another dwelling that was not fit for habitation. In this case, homeowner is cooperating. Owner hired Freedom Cleaning to clean the home and is having repairs done.

As of today, Porter County is still in yellow.

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