

MINUTES AND MEMORANDA
ST. JOSEPH COUNTY BOARD OF HEALTH

September 15, 2021
Regular Meeting

Present at the Meeting:

St. Joseph County Board of Health Members:

Heidi Beidinger-Burnett, PhD, MPH	President – in person
Jason Marker, MD	Vice President – in person
Ilana T. Kirsch, M.D., FACOG	Member – via Zoom
Michelle Migliore, D.O.	Member – in person
Jamie Shoemaker, M.D.	Member – via zoom
John Linn	Member – in person

Also Present at the Meeting:

Robert M. Einterz, M.D.	Health Officer
Mark D. Fox, MD, PhD, MPH	Deputy Health Officer
Jennifer S. Parcell	Executive Administrative Asst.
Amy Ruppe	Administrator
Robin Vida	Director Health Outreach Promotion and Education (HOPE) – via zoom
Carolyn Smith	Director - Food Services
Mark Espich	Director - Environmental Health
Cassy White	Director - Health Equity, Epidemiology, and Data (HEED)
Brett Davis	Asst. Director – Environmental Health
Harry Gilbride	Congregate Living Outreach Coordinator
Karen Flanigan	Asst. Director – Environmental Health – via zoom
Neiko Rust	Director of Nursing, Immunization – via zoom
Frank Spesia	ND Fellow – via zoom
Kristen Sachman	Health Promotion Specialist – via zoom
Renata Williams	Food Services Administrative Assistant – via zoom
Ericka Tijerina	Director - Vital Records
Sally Dixon	FIMR Coordinator
Taylor Martin	HEED Social Worker
Josiah Hartman	Environmental Health Specialist
Marcellus Lebbin	Department of Health Attorney

I. CALL TO ORDER & ROLL CALL

Board President, Dr. Burnett, called the September 15, 2021 regular Board of Health meeting to order at 4:36 p.m.

II. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

On motion made by Dr. Marker, seconded by Dr. Migliore, and unanimously approved, the agenda for the September 15, 2021 regular meeting of the Board of Health was adopted.

III. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

On motion made by Dr. Marker, seconded by Dr. Migliore, and unanimously approved, the minutes of the August 18, 2021 regular meeting of the Board of Health were approved.

IV. BOARD PRESIDENT ANNOUNCEMENTS

No announcements.

V. HEALTH OFFICER PRESENTATION AND REPORT

Dr. Einterz presented his report to the Board opening by asking if the Members had any questions with regard to the written report submitted to the Board. Seeing none Dr. Einterz noted the efforts of the HEED unit, which resulted in additional funding.

Dr. Marker then asked about preparations for the fall influenza season. Dr. Einterz stated that preparations are underway and that there is a concern that this coming season maybe more severe than last season. The Department of Health rolling out a pilot program at Washington High School where the COVID and flu vaccines are given at the same time. Washington High School is the South Bend Community School Corporation health magnet school, and they approached the Department of Health about the program. There are some logistical and registration issues that are being considered and worked through.

Mr. Linn then inquired about how the West Nile cases were in the County. Dr. Einterz stated there is a high infection rate for mosquitos in the County and that mitigation efforts are ongoing.

Dr. Migliore then asked about instances of equine encephalitis. Dr. Einterz responded that there have been no confirmed cases in the County.

Dr. Burnett asked how the electronic medical records program was coming. Dr. Einterz said that it was moving forward, and the hope was it would go live in October.

Dr. Burnett moved the conversation to Vaxcare. Dr. Fox noted that registration is complicated as COVID vaccinations run through the State system and the County's other vaccinations are logged in Vaxcare. The Department of Health is currently asking to have Vaxcare integrated with the new electronic record's system.

Mr. Linn asked about the meetings of the Water Resources Advisory Board and the Wastewater Advisory Board. Dr. Einterz said they both had met and are moving forward.

VI. DEPUTY HEALTH OFFICER PRESENTATION

COVID-19 Update

Dr. Fox gave the August COVID report. He noted that returning to school was the major issue facing the community in the face of the delta variant. Many school systems started the school year with no mask requirements, but as quarantine requirements increased mask mandates were implemented. With the quarantine requirements being relaxed by the State under a program started in North Carolina less students will be subject to the mandatory quarantine requirements. Under the new program students need not quarantine if they are wearing a mask and have not been within three (3) feet of an individual who tested positive. This study was done pre delta variant, so there is still some caution as to the as to this new policy. The Universities are testing unvaccinated members of their communities and so far, no outbreaks have been seen.

Dr. Fox noted that access to testing is becoming a problem as it is now two to three days before some individuals can even get a test. In response the State is contracting to place popup testing sites around the State. St. Joseph County should be getting one of these sites. Dr. Shoemaker noted there are no rapid tests available at the Emergency Rooms and students are having difficulties getting tests to return to school. Dr. Einterz noted that COVID is putting strain on the hospital resources available for adults. These stresses are starting to manifest in staff and adults should avoid the emergency rooms unless such a visit is really necessary.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

Mrs. Smith gave a presentation on the food services unit. After the presentation the floor was opened for questions. Mr. Linn asked about inspection numbers and the trends seen by the food services unit. Mrs. Smith noted that 2020 was an anomaly given the status of things due to the pandemic in 2020 but noted that things are now starting to return to normal and the training of a new inspector will help in the future. Mr. Linn followed up by asking how the staffing shortages in restaurants is affecting the food service industry. Mrs. Smith noted the difficulties and explained the education and instruction her staff provides.

At this time Dr. Kirsch left the meeting.

VIII. OLD BUSINESS

The mandatory vaccine policy for employees in patient settings was again discussed. Dr. Einterz noted that, after reviewing the policy in detail, it does not provide for any opportunity for accommodations based upon special circumstances.

Mr. Linn then asked where the mandated vaccines on the list come from. Dr. Einterz responded that they are all communicable diseases for which the County is looking to reduce the risk of spreading to patients entering the Department of Health's clinics. Mr. Linn then asked if COVID was a vaccine preventable disease. Dr. Einterz answered in the affirmative stating that the vaccine reduces the spread and risk of infection. Mr. Linn questioned if religious exceptions should be granted, and Dr. Shoemaker asked if the policy complied with the law if it did not

allow for any exemptions. The policy will be reviewed, and potential changes will be available to the Board at the next meeting.

IX. BOARD NOTIFICATIONS

1. Hirings: None.
2. Resignations: None.
3. Retirements: None.
4. Terminations: None.

X. PUBLIC COMMENT

Taylor Martin spoke in favor of the parental leave policy noting the positive impact on mental health and infant mortality rate.

Jennifer Talboom spoke in favor of the parental leave policy noting SIDS concerns, which decrease after four (4) months.

Matt Cotes spoke in favor of the parental leave policy.

Josiah Hartman spoke in favor of the parental leave policy saying the current policy leaves insufficient time to care for newborn if they become ill.

Brett Davis spoke in favor of the parental leave policy noting that Department of Health employees are at the lower end of the pay scale when compared to their peers, this fact makes it difficult for them to have families. A parental leave policy would help employees have families and that directors could plan for absences with the amount of notice that would be given.

Sally Dixon spoke in favor of the parental leave policy saying such a policy would help infant health and mortality rates.

Erica Tijerina spoke in favor of the parental leave policy saying that after having four (4) children while working at the Department of Health it is fiscally beneficial to quit and stay home than work for the Department of Health. Childcare costs and time off required for child illness outweigh the compensation paid to employees.

Nimbi Cushing spoke in favor of the parental leave policy.

Rosalind Clark showed her appreciation for Dr. Einterz and his helping the County through the difficult times presented by COVID and the day-to-day outreach done by the Department of Health.

Amy Drake commented that the vaccine status request as a bar to employment would be a violation of the anti-passport law and that the EEOC requires exemptions to vaccination mandates. Ms. Drake also noted that a parental leave policy of the duration being discussed would be expensive.

Lisa Tychonievich spoke against mandated vaccination stating that natural immunity is superior.

Jennifer Brown spoke in favor of the parental leave policy.

XI. TIME AND PLACE OF NEXT REGULAR MEETING

The next regular meeting of the St. Joseph County Board of Health is scheduled for Wednesday, October 20, 2021 at 4:30 p.m., at the County-City Building.

XII. ADJOURNMENT

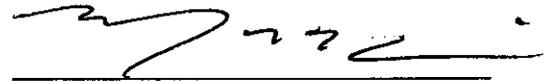
The meeting was adjourned at 6:09 p.m.

ATTEST:



Robert M. Einterz, M.D.
St. Joseph County Health Officer

Respectfully submitted,



Marcellus Lebbin, Esq.
Department of Health Attorney