



WHATCOM COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH ADVISORY BOARD MEETING MINUTES

MAY 5, 2022

Present: Steve Bennett (Chair), Leah Wainman, Lindsey Karas, Les Seelye, Sterling Chick
Absent: Barry Buchanan

Topic	Discussion/Outcome
Call to order	Sterling presented a land acknowledgement. Roll call of Public Health Advisory Board (PHAB) Members.
Approve Minutes	Les moved that the minutes from the March meeting be approved as presented, Sterling seconded. The board voted and the motion passed. Ayes: 4, Nays: 0, Abstain: 1
Public Comment	Two public comments were submitted via email and read for the record. They are appended to the end of the minutes.
Health Board/County Council Update	Barry was unable to attend today to give a Health Board/County Council update. Steve noted that this will be a regular segment of PHAB meetings to give a chance for the Health Board's PHAB representative to update PHAB on actions taken by the Health Board or the County that might impact public health.
Health Director/Health Officer Update	<p>Erika Lautenbach turned the floor over to Response Systems Manager Malora Christensen who introduced Lacey McCarley, the new Special Programs Manager in the Response System Division. Lacey is a nurse practitioner who will be working with all the programs in the division.</p> <p>Erika gave updates on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Health Department is entering our biennial budget process and thinking about our needs for the next two years to prepare the budget request for the County Council and the Executive. Kathleen Roy, our assistant director, is leading that process. • Kate Dabe is leading the process of developing our five-year strategic plan and she will talk about that later in this meeting. • We are starting the process of building out documentation for our reaccreditation which is due in June 2023. • We had a great leadership retreat last Thursday afternoon for all the managers and supervisors. We talked about a lot of our big priorities, as well as workforce support and development. • We are planning an all staff retreat for early June. • The Way Station project is coming to the State Street building and is a collaborative project between Unity Care, Opportunity Council, PeaceHealth, the Health Department, and Whatcom County Government. This will require that our staff move out of the State Street building this fall. We will be moving some staff to the Civic Building. • Today is National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women. Erika encouraged everyone to visit the REDress Project Honoring Indigenous Women and People running today through May 15th at the Whatcom Museum Lightcatcher Building in their courtyard. <p>Dr. Harley presented a brief Health Officer update:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Whatcom County COVID dashboard has been updated - https://www.whatcomcounty.us/3427/COVID-19-Data • There have been steady increases in case rates in Whatcom County since the beginning of April. • We know the reported case rates are under detecting true case rates. • There is a significant increase in cases for school age children. Cases in that age group have doubled over the past couple of weeks. • Our percent positivity of cases in the County is also high. • Hospitalizations remain at relatively low rates, though there have been increases there as well. • Severe disease continues to be rare among people who have had a booster dose of the vaccine.
<p>Strategic Plan timeline and PHAB involvement</p>	<p>Kate Dabe will be leading the strategic planning process for the Health Department. At its core, strategic planning asks the questions where are we, where are we going, and how do we get there. The previous strategic plan (2015-2019) is available on our website. What we are working on now is a strategic plan for 2023-2027. This will be a six month process (May – October).</p> <p>Kate discussed the planning process, as well as the focus on engagement with stakeholders and staff. She will be giving PHAB opportunities throughout the process for input and feedback.</p>
<p>PHAB changes, meeting schedule, membership</p>	<p>Steve presented an update on PHAB changes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The three PHAB candidates Shamika Brooks, Therese Horan, and Edna Revey introduced themselves and were welcomed by Steve and the group. • One strategy for our need to expand membership could be to invite a member of each of the Health Department's boards and task forces to become a member of PHAB. This would also be a way to coordinate work among the boards, with PHAB serving as a hub. This would allow PHAB to track and support the work of these other groups without duplicating efforts. <p>Discussion centered on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Steve reviewed the list of other groups – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Child and Family Well Being Task Force ○ Food Systems Committee ○ Housing Advisory Committee ○ Behavioral Health Advisory Committee ○ Development Disabilities Advisory Board ○ Veterans Advisory Board ○ Incarceration Prevention and Reduction Task Force ○ Solid Waste Advisory Board • Other groups that are broader than the Health Department, but that we would like to consider including are - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Healthy Whatcom ○ Generations Forward ○ Whatcom Racial Equity Commission • Have we done any preliminary outreach to see if they want to be added to PHAB? We have talked to some groups, but not all, and have gotten positive feedback. This would help us to meet the new state responsibilities given to PHAB. We want to partner effectively with others already doing this work. This is intended to be an invitation for partnership and cooperation. • This would be a similar group to the one we put together for the racism subcommittee meeting. • Making this change would really help with coordination around all kinds of cross-cutting issues like racial equity, the strategic plan, and the Community Health Improvement Plan. • Some of the boards have a fairly narrow focus and may not want to attend every month if none of the topics being discussed touch on their scope of work, but if you have enough members, you don't need to fight for a quorum every month. • There was general consensus to proceed with adding membership in this way. <p>Steve suggested that PHAB move to a monthly meeting schedule. Discussion centered on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feels necessary to get the work done. • Required per HB 1152.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This may require extra staff support from the Health Department which could be requested through the budget process. <p>Leah moved that PHAB begin a monthly meeting schedule starting next month, Sterling seconded the motion, and the motion carried.</p> <p>Ayes: 5, Nays: 0, Abstain: 0</p> <p>Other discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Misty Flowers asked what the oversight is for Health Department budget requests. The County Council will take that up this fall, as they do with every biennial budget. Misty raised a further question which she was asked to save for the next public comment session. Has there been any movement on whether or not the Health Board will be changing their structure? Discussions are going on, but it sounds like they intend to wait until July to make a decision.
Response Systems Division and new programs	<p>Malora Christensen, Response Systems Manager, shared a presentation on the new Response Systems Division existing programs and new programs that will be added to that division in the near future. More details on the new division can be found at www.respondwhatcom.org and https://whatcomcounty.us/3932/Response-Systems.</p> <p>Discussion centered on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will ART and MCOT be going to calls that involve families? Yes, ART would go to any 911 call that is non-emergent in the city of Bellingham, if they are available to respond. The same is true for MCOT, they would be going to 911 behavioral health calls. The GRACE program works with minors and families, though it is a small percentage of our case load. The LEAD program will be expanding to include service to minors. Erika recognized Adam Fryer, LEAD intensive case manager, for his work with the program. Adam introduced himself to the group and thanked everyone for the support the program has received. The work these programs do primarily happens out in the community with clients, not in an office setting. Malora also introduced Lacey McCarley, a nurse practitioner working in the Response Systems division. Lacey shared about her background and the work she's doing with the new division. Kudos to Malora for the impressive work bringing this new division together. These programs use a platform called Julota to do program evaluation. It builds interfaces with other systems to look at data, share information, and coordinate care for clients.
Meeting evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sterling – exciting to have new members on board Lindsey – exciting to have new members, great to hear about the new diversion programs and their important work Les – with a member not able to be here due to a family issue and seeing the kids on the call, Les wanted to thank everyone for the time they take away from their families to do this work Leah – excited for new members, appreciate Malora's presentation and the work being done by those programs Erika – continued appreciation for your partnership, especially around our strategic plan and our new programs Steve – thanks to everyone, excited about new members and all the exciting changes coming to PHAB
Adjourn	8:26 am
Next Meeting	Next regular meeting to be scheduled in June.

PUBLIC COMMENT #1 submitted via email on 5/2/2022

Dear Public Health Advisory Board Members:

It has been incredibly painful to witness hundreds of people in our own communities here in Whatcom County, be shamed, blamed, shunned, scapegoated, outcasted and completely disenfranchised simply because they have had legitimate questions and concerns about covid vaccine mandates.

We do not have to do it this way. Other public health agencies have made different choices. For instance in Japan.

The Japanese Government Ministry of Health Official Website has this to say:

'We urge the public never to coerce vaccinations and never to treat those who have not received the vaccine in a discriminatory manner.'

'Although we encourage all citizens to receive the covid vaccination, it is not compulsory or mandatory. Please get vaccinated of your own decision. Please do not force anyone in your workplace or those around you to get vaccinated, and do not discriminate against those who have not been vaccinated.'

(reference link below)

I wonder why the government of Japan did not blame their own unvaccinated citizens for the continuing pandemic? Or why they did not deny them social access or fire them from their jobs or convince others to target and ostracize them? Why did Japan do the exact opposite of what we have done here in the United States?

Is it possible that Japanese science is radically different from American science? I don't think so. I believe what we are witnessing in our own country is the politicalization of science.

The toxic fallout from officially sanctioned discrimination against the unvaccinated has created a festering wound; from which families, communities, workplaces and our entire country has suffered enormously.

I am sorry there is no magic bullet for this situation, but let's please stop pretending that there is and return to treating ALL the diverse members of our Whatcom County Communities as equally valued citizens.

Thank You.

Rainbow Medicine-Walker Maple Falls
Enrolled Federally Recognized Cherokee Nation
Grandaughter of Cherokee Admiral JJ Clark
Chief Water Dweller and Chief Thunderbird
Japanese Government Ministry of Health Website Link - (Scroll Down to Consent to Vaccination)
<https://www.mhlw.go.jp/stf/covid-19/vaccine.html>

PUBLIC COMMENT #2 submitted via email on 5/5/2022

Whatcom County Public Health Advisory Board:

CDC VAERS tracking system is flawed. The vaccine injuries and deaths from the the COVID-19 Vaccine (gene therapy injections) are real. Informed consent should be given by every individual who administers these injections. These injections are not safe and effective. The coercion, censorship,, propoganda, and incentives around these gene therapy injections need to stop. I ask for transparency.

You should be ashamed of yourself.

That said, here in Whatcom County (that includes Bellingham) we need to implement our own Vaccine Reaction Tracking System. This has been proposed to the Whatcom County Council Members.

Thank You.

Much Metta,
Karla Rae Ramsey