

ALLEGHENY COUNTY BOARD OF HEALTH
MINUTES
March 3, 2021

Present: William Youngblood, Vice Chair
Debra Bogen, MD, Secretary
Anthony Ferraro
Edith Shapira, MD
Donald Burke, MD
Caroline Mitchell
Kotayya Kondaveeti, MD

Absent: Lee Harrison, MD, Chair
Ellen Stewart, MD
Joylette Portlock, PhD

1. Call to Order

Due to the emergency order issued by Governor Wolf in relation to COVID-19, the meeting was held virtually. The meeting was livestreamed online, in order to enable the public to observe the meeting. Public comments were submitted in writing in advance and were read during the meeting by Todd Bogdanovich.

Mr. Youngblood called the meeting to order.

2. Approval of Minutes from January 6, 2021

Mr. Youngblood asked if there were any comments or questions about the minutes. There were none.

Action: Dr. Shapira moved to approve the minutes, Mr. Ferraro seconded the motion.

Motion passed unanimously.

3. Public Comments on Agenda Items

1. Barbara Miller wrote about the need for friendly scheduling.
2. Lorraine Starsky urged greater equity in vaccinations.
3. Jamil Bey suggested reducing the eligible age for Black people to receive the vaccine.
4. Joy Midgley requested that social distancing restrictions be loosened for children.
5. Alison Fujito wrote about the need for greater awareness of vitamin D deficiency.

4. New Business

A. Environmental Health Fund Request: XRF Analyzer Repair

In 2020, ACHD's Housing & Community Environment program requested approval for a \$4,000 expenditure from the Environmental Health Fund. Mr. Brian Kelly, an Environmental Health Administrator explained that ACHD performed 86 lead risk assessments in the homes of children with elevated blood lead levels. The main tool used during those assessments is the portable x-ray Fluorescence (XRF) Niton XLp 300 Analyzer, which is used for non-destructive analysis of painted structural components and consumer goods. In January, field staff began receiving error messages, and the detector is beginning to fail. The return of the analyzer to Niton for repair is necessary to maintain services to County residents. ACHD requested \$4,000 from the Environmental Health Fund to pay for repair costs.

Action: Dr. Burke moved to approve the expenditure of \$4,000 from the Environmental Health Fund for repair of the XRF analyzer. Dr. Shapira seconded the motion.

Motion passed unanimously.

B. Air Permit Fee Schedule

ACHD's Air Quality program requested approval of: 1) a revised permitting fee schedule and 2) proposed changes to permit fee regulations to accommodate new effective dates as well as reassignment of certain fees to the Title V Air Quality Fund.

Mr. Kelly, ACHD Deputy Director for Environmental Health, explained the need for the proposed changes. He reviewed the workforce analysis conducted to understand the extensive amount of personnel time dedicated to each type of permit and that with two exceptions, one for General Permits and one for Minor Sources. He outlined how fee schedule aligns with that of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. He explained that the reassignment of the fees to the Title V Air Quality Fund would keep ACHD compliant with federal regulations.

The board engaged this discussion with some expressing concerns that the fees were increased too much at one time and suggested that the fees be incrementally increased. Others stated that these changes were overdue and simply bringing Allegheny County in line with the other counties as well as the state. After a lively discussion, Mr. Kelly requested on behalf of ACHD support for the two actions.

Action: Dr. Shapira moved to approve the proposed air quality fee amounts. Dr. Burke seconded the motion.

Mr. Youngblood, Dr. Shapira, Dr. Burke, and Ms. Mitchell voted in favor of the motion. Mr. Ferraro and Dr. Kondaveeti voted against the motion.

The motion passed by a vote of 4-2.

Action: Mr. Ferraro moved to approve the proposed permit fee regulation changes, as recommended by Mr. Kelly. Dr. Shapira seconded the motion.

The motion passed unanimously.

C. Clean Air Fund Request: Spend 5% of Fund for Operational Costs

Mr. Kelly requested the Board's approval to expend up to five percent of the Clean Air Funds available on December 31, 2020 for the purposes of operational costs for the Air Quality Program. On December 31, 2020 the ending balance of the CAF was \$11,573,680, five percent of which is \$578,684. Mr. Kelly provided an estimated budget of how the \$578,684 will be spent including that approximately half of this money is expected to be spent on legal support. On behalf of ACHD Mr. Kelly requested approval of the use of funds from the Clean Air Fund.

Action: Mr. Youngblood moved to approve the expenditure of up to \$578,684 from the Clean Air Fund for the Air Quality Program's operational costs, Dr. Kondaveeti seconded the motion.

The motion passed unanimously.

D. Vector Control Presentation

Leah Lamonte, ACHD's Vector Control Program Coordinator, presented a lively update on the Vector Control Program. Ms. Lamonte explained that the program receives grant funding from the Department of Environmental Protection and consists of one full-time employee and two seasonal field staff.

From May through September 2020, the team conducted surveillance of mosquitos for West Nile Virus. She also talked about the Asian Tiger Mosquito and the need for persistent code enforcement to reduce the Asian Tiger Mosquito's breeding grounds. From April to August, the program participated in the second year of a statewide five-year study collecting Ixodes scapularis nymphs. The collections occurred in Highland and Schenley Parks, and the individual nymphs were tested for Lyme, Anaplasma, and Babesia. The tick surveillance efforts discovered the first documented environmental collection of the Asian Longhorned Tick in Western Pennsylvania.

The board thanked Ms. Lamonte for her very informative presentation.

5. **Old Business**

A. COVID-19 Update

Dr. Bogen provided an overview of the phases of the pandemic. During the first phase, March to May 2020, there were many unknowns about the virus, no treatments, a lack of PPE, limited testing, and the first mitigation strategies. The second phase was June – Aug when a summer surge occurred after entering PA's "green phase" of reopening – which led to new mitigation strategies focused on travel and food and beverages, and the building of testing capacity. The third phase was the relatively quiet months of September and October, which entailed learning to live with masks and physical distancing while preparing for an expected winter surge. The fourth phase was in November and December, which saw the largest surge yet, many deaths,

new mitigation strategies, and vaccines appearing on the horizon. January saw the new year, the arrival of vaccines, and of variants of the disease.

Dr. Bogen shared data with the Board from the state's dashboard and the county dashboard. Dr. Bogen indicated that we are not yet out of the woods and not quite ready to remove our masks.

Three vaccines are currently available, and Dr. Bogen stated that all are very effective at preventing severe disease. The Pfizer vaccine was released in early December, the Moderna vaccine was released the following week, and the Jansen vaccine was released last week.

The Pennsylvania Department of Health changed its vaccine distribution phase groups in the middle of January, and ACHD adopted the state plan.

Dr. Bogen reviewed the vaccine distribution to the county from the state and federal programs. ACHD has received approximately 10-12% of Allegheny County's total doses. Challenges for the vaccination campaign include limited supply, limited local control of distribution, the registration system, vaccine hesitancy and equitable distribution. Demand for vaccines has been far greater than supply.

Dr. Bogen thanked Allegheny County Emergency Services and Chief Matt Brown, the United Way's 2-1-1, the Department of Human Services, and all of Allegheny County government. She stated that more people must be vaccinated and urged everyone to please continue with distancing, masking, and limiting gatherings.

6. Public Comments on Non-Agenda Items

1. Cynthia Hebestreit wrote requesting ACHD offer or require TB testing for schools.
2. Danielle Walker wrote about her personal frustration regarding air quality issues.
3. David Bertenthal suggested US Steel be held accountable for polluting our air.
4. Matt Nemeth demanded action to improve air quality.
5. Katie Kulandaivel requested that major polluters be held accountable to Clean Air Standards.
6. Alex Downing urged continued action for attainment of EPA's standards.
7. Walt Haim wrote in support of clean air.
8. Art Thomas requested testing of Clairton resident's health issues as well as continuous monitoring of air quality.
9. Ellen Conrad called for stronger laws to enforce air quality.
10. Gloria Ford wrote calling for more stringent controls should be put on the coke works.
11. Alexis Thompson about her personal concerns regarding air quality.
12. Steven Martinez wrote requesting stronger regulation of coke oven emissions.

13. Angelo Taranto wrote requesting additional air monitoring in the Neville Island area

7. **Adjournment**

Dr. Burke moved to adjourn the meeting, Dr. Kondaveeti seconded the adjournment.