

**Allegheny County Board of Health**  
**September 1, 2021**  
**Minutes**

**Present:** Lee Harrison, M.D., Chair  
Debra Bogen, M.D, Secretary  
Donald Burke, M.D.  
Anthony Ferraro  
Kotayya Kondaveeti, M.D.  
Caroline Mitchell  
Joylette Portlock  
Edith Shapira, M.D.  
Ellen Stewart, M.D.

**Absent:** William Youngblood

**1. Call to Order**

Board Chair Dr. Harrison welcomed everyone to the virtual meeting of the Allegheny County Board of Health

Dr. Harrison announced that the Board of Health held an executive session to discuss matters of personnel and litigation.

**2. Approval of the Minutes from the July 14, 2021 Meeting**

Dr. Harrison asked members if they had any comments regarding the minutes. There were none.

Action: Dr. Shapira moved and Dr. Stewart seconded a motion to approve the minutes as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

**3. Public Comments on Agenda Items**

Dr. Harrison invited those who registered to provide public comment. The following individuals registered and provided public comment on agenda items. All the individuals spoke regarding the proposed revisions to the amendments to Article XV: Plumbing and Building Drainage. Nica Ross, Luca Salerno and Jessie Catenacci spoke in favor of the proposed revisions for single user toilet facilities. Edward Bigley, John Inks and Ron Rieber opposed the proposed revisions to the site work section.

Mr. Dowd summarized for the public the written comments provided directly to the members of the Board of Health. The Board of Health received two written comments supporting revisions to the amendments related to single user bathroom facilities and 111 written comments in opposition to the proposed revisions related to site work.

#### **4. Director's Report**

Dr. Bogen began her report with an update on COVID-19. She presented data showing the trends for the world, across the United States, across the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and here in Allegheny County. All the dashboards are available on the ACHD website.

She reviewed the data from the last three months in Allegheny County looking specifically at cases, individuals tested, hospitalizations and deaths. She looked specifically at the race and ethnicity data pointing out the differences, which is something the Director and team are monitoring closely to target ACHD's outreach efforts.

Dr. Bogen shared data from the Children's Hospital Association and the American Academy of Pediatrics showing by week the number of COVID-19 cases among children. She explained that with the start of school and discussions related to mask mandates, this and related data are important and that she pays close attention to the data every week. As the graph shows, pediatric cases across the U.S are rising significantly.

Looking more specifically at cases in Allegheny County, the Director reported that the percentage of overall cases among children is 11% compared with 14% nationally. In the most recent week, the percentage of weekly cases among children in Allegheny County was 15% whereas nationally it was 22%. While that is encouraging, the percentage increase in the cumulative number of child cases has increased in Allegheny County by 16% where as nationally it has increased only 9%. When comparing hospitalizations, Allegheny County is in the middle range of national rates.

The Director outlined and expressed support for the Commonwealth's recently-announced mask mandate for education settings.

Dr. Bogen shared information on vaccines. Across Allegheny County, 70% of the population is vaccinated, with 63% fully and 6% partially vaccinated.

ACHD recently published its first county specific vaccine report showing vaccination rates by zip codes. The Director had advocated that the state share these data to make this report possible. ACHD continues to work with organizations and community partners to share messaging and to target efforts to improve vaccination rates in communities where the need is greatest.

Dr. Bogen turned to the non-COVID-19 related work of the Allegheny County Health Department.

She announced that Pennsylvania's WIC program withdrew its Request for Application process. As a result, ACHD, which has been the county's WIC provider since 1974, will continue to serve in this capacity for the foreseeable future. The Director emphasized that this development presents the department with the opportunity to enhance the WIC program so that it is the best in the Commonwealth. Enhancements include working in close partnership with healthcare organizations, providing mobile services, reassessing locations and ensuring the continuation of tele-visits.

The Director reminded everyone that ACHD is an accredited Public Health Department and that the department is in the process of seeking reaccreditation. The Director will continue to provide the Board of Health and public updates as that process unfolds.

Board members thanked the Director for her presentation and asked follow-up questions. They asked about ACHD's ability to track COVID-19 variants, to which the Director responded that the Allegheny County Public Health Laboratory currently does not do that. ACHD relies on the state Bureau of Laboratories, private labs and the CDC for this process. Members of the Board said they support having the capability to do genetic sequencing and the Director agreed that this is something we would like our public health lab to perform.

They asked the Director if ACHD had quantitative data on COVID-19 and the Delta variant and its impact on hospitalization and death rates in Allegheny County. The Director explained that ACHD does not have that data but that hospitals presume that current cases here are almost exclusively driven by the Delta variant.

Board members asked about the cause of racial variations in vaccination rates and what the Health Department plans to do to address such variations. Board members also asked about additional targeted messaging. The Director talked about ACHD's messaging efforts and the way messaging has been shared. She explained how ACHD has developed a variety of partnerships and participated in larger outreach efforts. She reiterated that she is eager to hear any suggestions or ideas that people might have about how to improve vaccination rates.

Board members asked about the intersection of COVID, the vaccines and the flu. The Director agreed that this would be an important issue this fall.

The Director introduced Dr. LuAnn Brink, Deputy Director for the Bureau of Data, Reporting and Disease Control, who shared information

on the full-length reports that she and her team produce and the websites and dashboards that they manage.

She shared information from ACHD's mortality report. She noted that data has lagged because of the pandemic and that the most recent data is from 2018. Diseases of the heart and cancer are the leading cause of death in Allegheny County. She reviewed infant mortality rates and highlighted disparities by race and gender.

She discussed the annual Animal Bites Report and the School Immunizations report. Finally, she shared information on the Survey of Adherence to Antibiotic Prophylaxis and Opioid Prescribing Guidelines among Dentists Practicing in Allegheny County. The survey looked at the adherence of dental practices to the American Dental Association and American Heart Association prescribing guidelines.

Dr. Brink introduced Valarie Stallworth, MPH, who is the HIV/STD Program Manager for ACHD. M. Stallworth thanked the Board for the opportunity to present and highlighted the upward trends of STDs and the impact on individuals, their communities and the economy. For gonorrhea and syphilis, the number of cases in Pennsylvania are the highest in 30 years and are on the rise in Allegheny County. She pointed out that they disproportionately impact Black people.

M. Stallworth turned to HIV/AIDS and shared data showing a general reduction of new cases for HIV in Allegheny County but urged caution as there was a slight increase from 2019-2020. She also highlighted cases by race and age and stressed the importance of prevention. Lastly, M. Stallworth talked about ACHD's outreach, partnerships and services.

Board members thanked the team for their presentations and asked about prevention practices. ACHD does not currently prescribe pre-exposure prophylaxis in our clinics but this is possible in the future. There are, however, many providers in the region. They also asked about pediatric immunizations and the explanation for the decrease. Drs. Brink and Bogen responded that this is something ACHD is monitoring and that local pediatric groups and national associations are discussing.

Board members were also interested in and discussed with M. Stallworth messaging efforts related to STD's.

## **5. New Business**

### **A. Revisions to amendments to Article XV: Plumbing & Building Drainage**

Kim Joyce, Deputy Director for the Bureau of Administration, who is currently administratively overseeing the Plumbing and the Wastewater and Solid Waste Management Programs, presented the proposed revisions to the amendments to Article XV: Plumbing and Building Drainage. She highlighted the three proposed revisions which were exactly the same as presented to the Board of Health on May 5, 2021 and which received public comment. The public comment period opened on May 20 and lasted until June 23 with an in person public hearing on June 22. ACHD received 385 comments and prepared a report responding to the comments, which it shared with the Board of Health and the public. ACHD recommended incorporation of the proposed revisions with the amendments to Article XV.

Board members wanted to confirm that with the proposed revisions to the site work section of Article XV the status quo would be maintained. This was confirmed and that policy has been in place since at least 2004.

Board members also asked about the status of the 2018 Plumbing Code. Currently, the Commonwealth is in the process of reviewing and approving the 2018 Plumbing Code.

**Action:** Dr. Shapira moved to give final approval to the proposed revisions to the amendments to Article XV. Dr. Steward seconded the motion. **The motion passed 7-1, with Mr. Ferraro voting No.**

#### **B. Appointment of Edward Bigley to the Allegheny County Plumbing Advisory Board**

Ivo Miller, the Plumbing Program Manager, presented the nomination of Edward Bigley to serve as a member of the Allegheny County Plumbing Advisory Board. Mr. Miller enthusiastically endorsed the nomination and asked the Board of Health to approve the nomination.

**Action:** Dr. Steward moved to approve the nomination of Mr. Bigley. Dr. Shapira seconded the motion. **The motion passed unanimously.**

#### **C. Revisions to Article XXI: Air Pollution Control**

Jayme Graham, Air Quality Program Manager, presented proposed changes to Article XXI related to advertising Air Quality permits. These changes, which the board considered at the beginning of the pandemic, would establish the Air Quality Program's Permitting website as the primary and consistent location for notices of public hearings and public comment periods for draft air quality permits. M.

Graham requested that the Board of Health approve sending these proposed revisions to the public for comment.

**Action:** Dr. Portlock moved to approve the proposed revisions for public comment. Dr. Stewart seconded the motion. **The motion passed unanimously.**

## **6. Public Comment on Non-Agenda Items**

Mr. Dowd summarized written comments to the Board of Health regarding non-agenda items. Board members received 72 written comments in support of mask mandates for educational settings, one written comment in opposition to mandates for vaccines and one regarding issues with the minutes of the Board of Health.

Dr. Harrison invited those who registered to provide public comment on non-agenda items. The following individuals registered and provided public comment on non-agenda items.

Louis Oliverio spoke on contact tracing requirements, Ken Zapinski on Allegheny County Air Quality, Rachel Fillippini on hydrogen sulfide, Angelo Taranto on Metalico, Jay Ting Walker on issues with the Board of Health meeting minutes, Barbara Lee Pace on environmental justice and Daniel Cooper on contact tracing and quarantine requirements.

## **7. Adjournment**

Dr. Harrison entertained a motion to adjourn which members provided. He adjourned the meeting at approximately 2:40PM.