

**KITSAP PUBLIC HEALTH BOARD**  
**MEETING MINUTES**  
**Special Meeting**  
**March 17, 2020**

The meeting was called to order by Board Chair, Mayor Rob Putaansuu at 9:02 a.m.

Mayor Putaansuu noted that the room was set up in accordance with Governor Jay Inslee's proclamation requiring social distancing during gatherings. He added that anyone older in age or who has a compromised immune system should consider leaving the meeting for their own safety.

**REVIEW AND APPROVE AGENDA**

There were no changes to the agenda.

**COVID-19 UPDATE AND DISCUSSION**

Mr. Grellner, Administrator, said the main purpose of this meeting is to present the current COVID-19 situation in the state and Kitsap county, and to seek comments and direction from the Board.

Dr. Susan Turner, Health Officer, provided a presentation regarding COVID-19. The situation is changing rapidly in all areas of the state, including Kitsap. The majority of cases are located in King and Snohomish counties.

The statewide emergency surveillance system added COVID Like Illness (CLI) as a syndrome in the reporting database. She said emergency department visits for CLI are elevated dramatically across the state, especially among individuals aged 18-64. She said influenza activity is also still elevated.

There are seven positive COVID-19 cases in Kitsap county as of 8:00 a.m. on March 17. Because of the geographical location of cases throughout Kitsap, community transmission is likely. The Health District is urging individuals to practice isolation and social distancing.

The goals of Kitsap Public Health's COVID-19 emergency response are to slow the spread of COVID-19, reduce the risk for high-risk populations and slow the incidence of COVID-19 in our community so that our healthcare system is not overwhelmed. The Health District activated its emergency command system and is pulling more staff into the response. Some staff have been part of the response since the beginning of February.

As of March 13, 30 Health District employees have participated in COVID-19 response efforts, totaling over 2500 hours and a cost of \$175,000 to the District. The Health District response team is coordinating with the Kitsap County Department of Emergency Management (DEM) as part of a county-wide "Unified Command". The DEM also activated its Emergency Operations Center (EOC).

Mr. Grellner said the Health District closed to the public on March 16 for the safety of the public and staff and to minimize staff shortages for illness. Many services are available online and by

phone. Additionally, he reminded the Board that most of the 30 employees on the emergency response team are having to put their regular work on hold to do COVID-19 related work.

Kitsap jurisdictions have each declared states of emergency which should free up emergency funding, services and supplies. Mr. Grellner said that there are rumors and news reports of available funding, additional testing options and additional supplies. He said they should be in the pipeline but they have not been received yet by local jurisdictions.

Mr. Grellner emphasized the importance of people staying home if they're ill. He reminded the public that if they are ill they *can not* go to work, the grocery store, etc. and need to find someone to help run errands for them. He said these non-pharmaceutical interventions (NPI) are the best tool we have to protect the spread of COVID-19 in our community.

Dr. Turner shared models from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to show the phases of a pandemic if NPI are not implemented early enough. According to the models, Kitsap county is at the start of a steep slope of increasing numbers of COVID-19 cases. However, with NPI in place, we should be able to slow the spread and flatten the curve so as to not overwhelm our healthcare system. This prevents the risk of having to ration scarce healthcare resources and make difficult decisions in providing lifesaving care.

Mr. Grellner said Governor Inslee enacted almost a dozen proclamations regarding COVID-19 in Washington State. Violating the proclamations is punishable as criminal offenses. Per the proclamations, gatherings of 50 or more are prohibited. Gatherings of 49 or less are prohibited unless NPI are implemented (screen people for illness, encourage at risk groups not to attend, rigid sanitization practices). Because of this, Mr. Grellner said the next Board meeting will need to be done by phone or web conference.

The statewide public health system is recommending unity. Mr. Grellner noted that no country in the world has found a way to combat this disease. He said several health jurisdictions spoke on the phone yesterday and agreed that unity in messaging will be important across the state. Mr. Grellner said this public health issue will affect more than just health, such as the economy, and it will take a collaborative effort across all sectors in Kitsap to balance and get through this.

The expertise of the Washington State Department of Health and Seattle King Public Health are informing Kitsap Public Health's efforts to response to COVID-19.

Dr. Turner noted several statewide challenges and gaps related to COVID-19:

- Limited testing capabilities
- Shortages of personal protective equipment and supplies
- Hospital capacity
- School closures creating parental challenges, especially for healthcare workers.
- Behavioral health impacts of fear and isolation
- No funding for response efforts (yet)

She also noted challenges facing Kitsap Public Health:

- Cases continue to rise—Case investigation capacity
- Physician reporting improving (slow or incomplete reporting)
- Labs report electronically, sometimes without patient contact information (slow or incomplete reporting)
- Partner/Public information demands continue to rise
- Misinformation or incomplete information
- Some staff working long weekdays and Saturdays and Sundays with minimal breaks

Mr. Grellner said that, at some point, Kitsap Public Health may reach out to our local jurisdictions to help staff the EOC, help amplify public health messaging, and be good role models of NPI, such as social distancing.

Dr. Turner added that she sees emerging behavioral health issues related to isolation and asked jurisdictions to encourage communities to help each other. She encouraged promoting “Social distancing NOT social isolation”.

Mayor Becky Erickson asked what the local public inquiry line for Kitsap County is. Mr. Grellner introduced Liz Klute, director for the DEM. Ms. Klute said the DEM has worked with the county and 2-1-1 to stand up call centers for the public. Individuals can call “2-1-1” to be directed to the call centers. Lastly, she added that the workflow developed by the Health District, DEM, and 2-1-1 is being adopted statewide.

Mayor Erickson noted concerns about the legality of excluding people from an open public meeting to adhere to the Governor’s proclamation. Therefore, she said the City of Poulsbo council meeting are canceled until further notice. Mayor Putansuu agreed with Mayor Erickson and said, starting tonight, the Port Orchard city council will ensure social distancing measures are met and will avoid putting controversial items on agenda during this time. Mayor Greg Wheeler added that the City of Bremerton is researching the Washington Open Public Meetings Act. He believes that, if the hosting agency makes a reasonable accommodation for those who are ill or at risk, the meetings can continue. He gave an example of setting up computers in the lobby for those individuals to participate remotely.

Mayor Wheeler also said the City of Bremerton will be shutting down most of its parks, due to the intense level of involvement by employees and supply shortages.

Commissioner Charlotte Garrido said the Board of Commissioners is compiling a chart of what other agencies and partners are doing to maintain social distancing.

Commissioner Rob Gelder said the Board of Commissioners accepted a contract with the Department of Commerce to fund \$750,000 toward setting up homeless and isolation and quarantine centers.

Commissioner Ed Wolfe said the Health Board has great confidence in Kitsap Public Health District and the public should too. He added that he is really impressed with the teamwork in Kitsap County between elected officials, agencies and partners.

Mayor Erickson encouraged the Board and Health District staff to start promoting messaging to the public of what they *can* do: what's allowed and what they can do to help their neighbors and their community. She said the public shouldn't be afraid. They should be prepared and proactive, but not afraid.

Mayor Wheeler said that the Salvation Army will be ground zero if there is an outbreak of COVID-19 in Bremerton. He said the shelter is scheduled to close in 14 days and hopes he can work with the county's quarantine and isolation efforts to ensure the shelter will be kept open.

There was no further comment.

#### **HEALTH OFFICER INTERVIEWS SCHEDULED FOR MARCH 27, 2020**

Mr. Grellner said Health Officers interviews were scheduled for March 27. This is being re-evaluated and may be done electronically.

There was no further comment.

#### **RESOLUTION 2020-02 APPROVING TEMPORARY EXEMPTION TO ADMINISTRATIVE TIME CAP FOR EXEMPT EMPLOYEES**

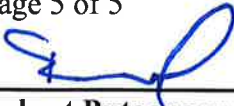
Mr. Grellner said about 25 percent of staff are exempt employees: managers, supervisors and directors. He explained that the District has a hybrid payroll system for exempt employees. Exempt employees are only paid for the hours they work. The District has always capped the amount of administrative time exempt staff can accrue at 40 hours. However, the District is asking the Board to consider allowing the District administrator to use his discretion to determine which senior leadership can exceed the 40-hour cap. He said some exempt employees have worked beyond this cap on COVID-19 related work already.

Mayor Erickson moved and Commissioner Gelder seconded the motion to approve Resolution 2020-02 Approving Temporary Exemption to Administrative Time Cap for Exempt Employees. The motion was approved unanimously.

There was no further comment.

#### **ADJOURN**

There was no further business; the meeting adjourned at 10:03 a.m.



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**Robert Putaansuu**  
**Kitsap Public Health Board**



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**Keith Grellner**  
**Administrator**

**Board Members Present:** *Mayor* Becky Erickson; *Commissioner* Charlotte Garrido; *Commissioner* Robert Gelder; *Mayor* Robert Putaansuu; *Mayor* Greg Wheeler; *Commissioner* Ed Wolfe.

**Board Members Absent:** *Councilmember* Kol Medina.

**Community Members Present:** Charles DeCosta, *Self*; Mike Riley, *City of Bremerton*; Caroline Tompson, *City of Bremerton*; Lance Walters, *Salvation Army*.

**Staff Present:** Angie Berger, *Administrative Assistant, Administration*; Yolanda Fong, *Director, Community Health Division*; Keith Grellner, *Administrator*; Karen Holt, *Program Manager, Human Resources*; John Kiess, *Director, Environmental Health Division*; Susan Turner, MD, *Health Officer*.