

**KITSAP PUBLIC HEALTH BOARD
MEETING MINUTES
Regular Meeting
April 6, 2021**

The meeting was called to order by Board Chair, Commissioner Charlotte Garrido at 10:33 a.m.

REVIEW AND APPROVE AGENDA

There were no changes to the agenda.

BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Commissioner Robert Gelder moved and Commissioner Ed Wolfe seconded the motion to approve the minutes for the March 2, 2021, regular meeting. The motion was approved unanimously.

Mayor Robert Putaansuu moved and Commissioner Gelder seconded the motion to approve the minutes for the March 31, 2021 special meeting minutes. The motion was approved unanimously.

CONSENT AGENDA

The April consent agenda included the following contracts:

- 1749 Amendment 20 (2153), *Washington State Department of Health, Consolidated Contract*
- 2116 Amendment 2 (2150), *Kitsap County, CARES Relief Funding*
- 2131 Amendment 1 (2151), *Kitsap County, Nurse Family Partnership*
- 2155, *Olympic Community of Health, COVID-19 Recovery Funding*

Commissioner Gelder moved and Mayor Putaansuu seconded the motion to approve the consent agenda, including the Contracts Update and Warrant and Electronic Funds Transfer Registers. The motion was approved unanimously.

CHAIR COMMENT

Commissioner Garrido said the Kitsap County Department of Emergency Management puts out regular situation reports that are very valuable for keeping up with COVID activities in the county. She also said the board is thankful for the Health District's regular reports. Lastly, she thanked the staff and Board for all the work that continues to go on around the pandemic.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

HEALTH OFFICER/ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

Health Officer Update:

Dr. Gib Morrow, Health Officer, deferred his update until the Covid-19 update later in the meeting.

Administrator Update:

Mr. Keith Grellner, Administrator, informed the Board that Governor Inslee proclaimed this week is National Public Health Week in Washington State. For those who would like to learn more about Public Health visit NPHW.org/NPHW-2021 or the Kitsap Public Health webpage. Mr. Grellner thanked all the public health colleagues and staff, Emergency Operations staff, health care staff and EMS staff who are working on COVID-19.

Next, Mr. Grellner provided a legislative update. The state legislature remains convened until April 25th.

He said Substitute HB 1152 (regionalization of local public health) was approved by the house in early March and has been amended twice, by Senate Health and Long-term care and the Committee on Ways and Means. The Health District does not actively support this bill, but no longer actively opposes it. There are four provisions the Health District has concerns about:

- It adds new state level infrastructure by creating comprehensive health districts - 4 new added regional models that would employ new employees for the state. This would add a cost of \$2.7 million to the public health system which remains under funded.
- The bill stipulates when certain funding thresholds are met that 65% of the remaining funds must be allocated to shared services between the counties in region. Currently this happens organically between counties when the shared services.
- It requires local boards to add a suite of non-elected officials to the board which would double the size of the board. This is more of a board concern but is still a staffing and workload concern.
- Lastly, it requires counties to shoulder the expenses to enforce any proclamations from the governor during a public health emergency. Currently the state has had to shoulder those burdens, but this bill would require the county to shoulder the bill.

Commissioner Garrido would like to see this bill in writing. Mr. Grellner said he will email a link to the bill to the Board.

Commissioner Wolf asked for confirmation that this was an unfunded mandate. Mr. Grellner and Commissioner Garrido confirmed.

Commissioner Gelder stated that not only is it an unfunded mandate it is the desire of the legislature to control how or what local public health looks like and controls the funding and how it is spent.

Deputy Mayor Kirsten Hytopoulos asked Mr. Grellner why he was not actively opposing the mandate given some of the ramifications. Mr. Grellner said the Health District is not actively opposing this bill because staff have received signals that indicate opposing this bill, on any level, could impact our ability to get foundational public health services (FPHS) funding later. The Health District has been signing as "other" and working with Washington Association of Local Public Health Officials (WSALPHO) and Washington State Association of Counties (WSAC) on bill changes. If the bill passes, the Health District could live with it, but it is not ideal.

Mayor Wheeler said it appears the options from the state are defund totally or offer this bill as an alternative. Mr. Grellner agreed but noted there is nothing in the bill about defunding.

Next, Mr. Grellner discussed the biennium budget and highlighted the following attributes:

- The senate budget provides \$178 million in a base amount of public health services funding on an ongoing basis. This is the Health District's top choice.
- The house budget provides \$128 Million and is one-time funding. It is a heavy lift every year and every legislative session to request the funding on an ongoing basis.

Next, Mr. Grellner reminded the Board that last month he reported \$4.7 million in COVID vaccination funding was earmarked for Kitsap Public Health. Most of this funding was on today's consent agenda through the Washington Department of Health Consolidated Contract. However, the Health District just found out that \$1.5 million of the funding we earmarked for vaccine administration and contracting with other providers and EMS (to help offset their expenses) has been restricted by the state and the funds are not available for giving shots. Instead, the state is forcing everyone who wants vaccination administration funding to request funding through a state incident management organization format through the emergency operation center on a regional basis to request FEMA mass vaccination funding. Mr. Grellner said that, while the Health District does not totally disagree with this idea, it places a heavy burden on the local jurisdiction as the point agency.

Healthcare providers, per the state plan, are doing most of the work but there is no reimbursement from the federal government. Due to the concerns for supporting healthcare partners (who are doing 70-80% of the work in our county), Kitsap, Jefferson, and Clallam have decided to work together to submit that request to the state. There is some financial liability for local jurisdictions because we need to subcontract and reimburse healthcare first and then submit to the state for reimbursement. We also must request (and hopefully get) financial and contractual help from this program, or we will have to hire staff to process invoices and contracts.

Commissioner Gellner commented that the state created a vaccine distribution structure reliant on healthcare but did not follow through with planning to make that healthcare system whole.

Mayor Erickson agreed this is not the time to dismantle and reassemble a public health system in the middle of a pandemic. She said we are being diligent at the local level by following the states rules during the pandemic and yet the state is not recognizing or supporting local jurisdictions.

Commissioner Wolfe agreed with Mayor Erickson and Commissioner Gelder and added that this is outrageous.

Commissioner Garrido asked how the Board can educate our legislators about this. Mr. Grellner suggested reaching out to our senate members. He recognized Senator Rolfes for speaking out against this bill previously. He recommended Board members reach out to the Senate members to work on this bill before it is brought to the floor.

Mr. Grellner said he will email the Board members some high-level talking points on this matter.

Mayor Wheeler added that our talking points should include how Kitsap is different from other jurisdictions and why we should not combine our health system in this way.

Mr. Grellner introduced Tad Sooter, Public Information Officer, who walked the board through the new website with outreach materials. He spoke about the Outreach Toolkit with fact sheets on different aspects of COVID vaccination designed using feedback from the community and Kitsap County Vaccine Equity Collaborative.

Mayor Erickson asked to have the fact sheets translated into Tagalog. Mr. Sooter said he has already ordered these in Tagalog as well as Spanish.

Commissioner Gelder said the website is a great presentation and appreciates the hard work.

There was no further comment.

COVID-19 UPDATE

Dr. Gib Morrow, Health Officer, noted this is National Public Health Week and said today is focused on advancing racial equity. He thanked the hardworking professionals at the Health District for their efforts in this regard.

He provided a brief presentation on current COVID data, vaccine work and variants in Kitsap County. Case rates are increasing in Kitsap and South Kitsap is a current hot spot. Deaths continue to occur, and Dr. Morrow noted deaths have occurred in individuals as young as their thirties. He said Kitsap is doing well on vaccination efforts, comparatively to other counties, with 19.67% of residents fully vaccinated. The only other county in the state with a higher rate of vaccinated residents than Kitsap is Skagit, which has a population about half the size of Kitsap.

Dr. Morrow said some of us have been more impacted by this pandemic and its collateral than others. He asked everyone, as we climb out of this disaster gradually, to do it with kindness, generosity, and compassion.

Commissioner Gelder referenced the slide that indicated a spike in case in communities of color earlier in the pandemic. He asked what caused these levels to decrease and even out with the rest of the population Dr. Morrow explained that this graph indicates the way that COVID spreads in faster in marginalized groups and noted the Hispanic/Latinx population was hit harder than other populations at the beginning of the pandemic. Commissioner Gelder asked if the case rates are normalizing because the disease has already spread through that cohort. Dr. Morrow said he thinks we have not reached an immunity in any population to stop this from happening again. He added the Vaccine Equity Collaborative is working toward getting these populations vaccinated.

Commissioner Wolfe asked Dr. Morrow to confirm that numbers are still going in the wrong direction and asked what else we can do as a community. Dr. Morrow said, in addition to getting vaccinated, people should continue mitigation efforts such as masking, hand washing and avoiding group gatherings.

There was no further comment.

COVID-19 VACCINE EQUITY WORK STATUS UPDATE

Siri Kushner, Community Health Assistant Director, and Holly Bolstad, COVID Community Outreach Specialist, shared a presentation on the COVID-19 vaccine equity work status.

Ms. Kushner reminded the Board of the equity approach across all vaccine delivery models, which includes increasing access to hard-to-reach populations and using data and community input to inform the process. She also shared the rate of initiated vaccination by race and ethnicity, which shows much higher rates of white people receiving the first dose of vaccine, compared to a very low rate of black people receiving the first dose. She noted the Kitsap American Indian/Alaskan Native community has done a great job of getting their tribal members vaccinated.

Ms. Kushner said the Health District provides vaccine registration support and sets aside equity appointments for individuals with barriers to accessing vaccinations. Additionally, the Health District provides support to providers and community partners through vaccine information and appointment needs.

Ms. Bolstad provided an update on the Vaccine Equity Collaborative. The collaborative is made up of individuals across various sectors and fields including disability justice, mental health service providers, immigrant support organizations, Kitsap Equity Race and Community Engagement (ERACE) coalition, health care providers and culturally specific groups and community leaders.

Ms. Bolstad reminded the Board of goals of the collaborative and shared the three pillars:

1. Identify gaps in vaccine access (and strategies to address gaps)
2. Communication channel
3. Provide space for community to gather and share opportunities, successes and obstacles.

Ms. Bolstad shared the process through which the draft resolution, “Declaring Racism a Public Health Crisis”, was created. She said, consistent with Dr. Morrow and Ms. Kushner’s presentations, the vaccine rollout has not been equitable at a national or local level to date, furthering gaps for communities of color who have been most impacted by COVID cases, hospitalizations and deaths. This, coupled with the recent hate crimes in this country, led to a call to action from the Kitsap community for the Health Board to declare racism a public health crisis. This call to action led to Health District staff creating a draft resolution, which was then circulated around the community to collect feedback. The draft presented to the Board today, includes feedback from community input as well as the Health Board Policy Committee.

Ms. Bolstad thanked the board members for their engagement. The Health District will be creating a new draft with the Board’s feedback, which will be shared with the community again for additional input and will be brought back to the Board at the May 4 board meeting.

Mayor Erickson commented that she is concerned that this does not speak to gender discrimination in women. She would like to see stronger language regarding sexism and gender discrimination and noted women have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic.

Commissioner Gelder said the Policy Committee met last week to review and discuss the draft resolution and noted the first two paragraphs addressed some of the committee's concerns. He said the first paragraph addresses the caste structure, though does not call it out, which he feels may be needed. The second paragraph addresses the compounding factors of gender, race and class that exacerbate what people experience in our community.

Commissioner Wolfe requested a draft that shows comments and input from community members.

Deputy Mayor Hytopoulos said she appreciates Mayor Erickson's concern; however, she feels that this either is a declaration about racism or a broader declaration about caste and posed the question to the board: what are we trying to address?

Mayor Wheeler said Dr. Lillian Lockett Robertson gave a very informational presentation at the Professional Women of Color conference on how racism is affecting the public health response. He suggested inviting Dr. Robertson to providing a presentation to the Board to help clarify some of the concerns on this topic. Mayor Wheeler said there is a very distinct disadvantage for people of color during this pandemic right now, but noted it is not his role to explain this and said it should come from Dr. Robertson.

Commissioner Wolfe said he is conflicted about prioritizing the word caste because it complicates the issue at hand. He said, if the Board is addressing racism, he hates to see it watered down with other language, unless the Board wants to change the intention of the resolution.

The decision was made to have this conversation carried over for a more robust conversation. Mayor Erickson and Commissioner Gelder would like to carry this over. Commissioner Garrido suggested a workshop to look at this resolution. Commissioner Gelder stated that the policy committee did look at this and the board has reviewed the draft. Would like Ms. Bolstad and Ms. Kushner to update the draft and writing before we provide refined draft to go to the policy committee in advance of the next board meeting in May.

The Board agreed no decision would be made today. The Policy Committee will meet before the May 4 Board meeting to workshop the resolution and provide more time for community input.

Mr. Grellner said he will pursue inviting Dr. Robertson to the May meeting.

Mayor Erickson asked for clarification on the vaccine data Ms. Kushner presented. Ms. Kushner confirmed the data were on number of individuals by place of residence receiving vaccine. Additionally, she said the breakdown of data and percentages is available on the Health District website.

Commissioner Gelder said he would like to look for a location for a South Kitsap vaccination site. Mr. Grellner said the Health District is pursuing options and will let the Board know when a site has been confirmed.

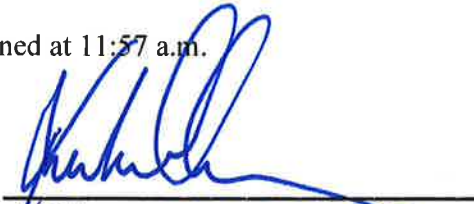
There was no further comment.

ADJOURN

There was no further business; the meeting adjourned at 11:57 a.m.



Charlotte Garrido
Kitsap Public Health Board



Keith Grellner
Administrator

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

Board Members Absent: *None.*

Community Members Present: *See Attached.*

Staff Present: *Amy Anderson, Public Health Educator, Public Health Emergency Preparedness and Response; Angie Berger, Administrative Assistant, Administration; Holly Bolstad, COVID Community Outreach Specialist, Public Health Emergency Preparedness and Response; April Fisk, Program Coordinator 2, Communicable Disease; Yolanda Fong, Director, Community Health Division; Keith Grellner, Administrator; Karen Holt, Program Manager, Human Resources; Jill Guerrero, Community Liaison, Chronic Disease Prevention; Siri Kushner, Assistant Director, Community Health Division; Melissa Laird, Manager, Accounting and Finance; Megan Moore, Community Liaison, Chronic Disease Prevention; Dr. Gib Morrow, Health Officer, Administration; Suzanne Plemmons, COVID-19 Community Testing Coordinator; Betti Ridge, Social Worker 3, Communicable Disease; Tad Sooter, Communications Coordinator and Public Information Officer.*