

Wheeling-Ohio County Board of Health

Minutes of July 13, 2021 regular meeting

The Wheeling - Ohio County Board of Health met on July 13, 2021 at 12:00pm in the City/County Building, City Council Chambers, Wheeling West Virginia.

Board members present were Dr. John Holloway, Elisabeth Slater, Dr. Mathew Wood, Laura Chapman, and Chad Thalman. Staff present included Howard Gamble, Administrator of the Wheeling-Ohio County Health Department and County Health Officer Dr. William S. Przybysz.

The meeting was called to order by Board of Health Chairman Dr. John Holloway.

William S. Przybysz, MD, Health Officer for Ohio County was sworn in by Michael Kelly, Clerk of Ohio County.

Minutes of the May 5, 2021 Board of Health meeting were distributed to members prior to the meeting. Minutes were approved.

The Health Officer gave a short update on COVID-19, including the department's vaccination efforts and an update on Project HOPE and issue with the area's homeless population.

The administrator gave a report of department programs and services.

An update on the department's Harm Reduction/Needle Exchange Program. Throughout the Spring the department was in contact with the State Health Department concerning the new legislation on Needle Exchange Programs. There are draft rules, which have not been finalized by OHFLAC. State Health Department plans to have a workshop to go over the rules and how health department will meet them. According to the State Health Department, no one is required to come into alignment with the new regulations until 1/1/2022. A federal judge in Huntington is continuing to temporarily block the new bill for syringe service programs that was supposed to take effect July 9, 2021. As long as the block remains in effect, state health officials are barred from enforcing provisions in Senate Bill 334 that would require programs offering syringe exchanges to host a number of other harm reduction services, force them to deny clean needles to those who don't return with their used needles and require them to only serve clients with state IDs. During an evidentiary hearing Thursday, attorney Loree Stark with the West Virginia chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union — representing several syringe exchange providers — said her clients are confused by what language in the bill means for them, requirement- and penalty-wise. According to the bill as signed by Gov. Jim Justice, existing providers who don't offer a full host of harm reduction services including vaccinations, birth control, HIV screening and overdose prevention supplies, "shall cease and desist offering all needle exchange services." Had the law taken effect Friday, Stark said many programs across the state would be operating illegally and maybe unaware, facing civil penalties as high as

\$10,000. Although these harm reduction services are helpful, she said, not all exchange programs have the resources to offer their clients everything. However, the bill gives more leeway to new providers, giving them until Jan. 1, 2022, to build up these programs and enter compliance. Attorneys for the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources, named as defendants in the ACLU's lawsuit, said the case was just an excuse to delay or strike legislation that the ACLU disagrees with based on policy, not the state constitution. Attorney Mike Carey, representing DHHR, said the legislation addressed issues that lawmakers said they heard from their communities regarding drug use, including syringes that some lawmakers complained are being improperly disposed of in public places.

The Board was presented with the 2021 IRS mileage rate. The IRS rate, beginning January 1, 2021, was 56 cents per mile. The rate was approved by the Board.

The administrator presented to the Board information on the City of Wheeling's Water Treatment COVID-19 waste water testing program. This kind of program is being conducted across the country and can give cities an early warning on COVID-19 infection spikes. Sampling wastewater for SARS-CoV-2 as it enters a treatment plant (referred to as untreated influent) is used to evaluate trends in infection within the community contributing water to the sewer system.

The Board was presented with the department's organization chart for review and approval. The Board approved the chart.

Wheeling will host a Farmers Market training program tonight at WVNCC from 6-8pm.

An update on COVID activities in Ohio County.

- At least 53% of the population in Ohio County has received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine (49% are fully vaccinated). In the 65yrs and older group at least 88.8% of the population is vaccinated. Over all cases we have had over 4316 confirmed and probable cases including 87 deaths related to the COVID-19 virus.
- No new information on booster vaccinations or vaccinations for individuals younger than 12yrs of age. We have scheduled clinics with WVNCC and WU for back to school clinics.
- Variants are up in WV. As of 7/12/21 there were 2393 cases of the UK variant in WV, 84 in Ohio County. Cases of the India variant also increased to 17, no reports of this variant in Ohio County.
- Statewide: at least one dose 58%, fully vaccinated 48%.
- Vaccination clinics are held daily at the health department as well as Wheeling Health Right, and some local pharmacies.
- The department has scheduled some upcoming special clinics:
 - July 27th WVNCC vaccine clinic 1-3pm at Wheeling Campus, B & O Building
 - Aug 7th Whlg Hospital picnic 12-1pm at Sonnebourn Shelter/Wheeling Park
 - Aug 25th Whlg University vaccine clinic 9am-2pm, location TBA

- September 1st West Liberty University vaccine clinic 9am-2pm at WLU (Blatnik Gym)

In New Business the department is finalizing the WOCHD FY 22 Budget and will begin on the WIC FY22 budget shortly. It is the administrator's plan to offer a 5% salary increase for all staff (LHD and WIC) for the coming FY. This will be a across the board pay raise for all classified employees. This would not start until October 1, 2021. The FY22 WIC budget cycle begins October 1, 2021. The Board approved the salary increase.

A financial report was presented to the Board, which included the department's general ledger, May and June payroll and accounts payable. The Board accepted the presented financial report.

The Board was presented with the department's FY 22 Budget. The Budget shows the 5% proposed increase, which will not take place until October of 2021. There are also a number of larger COVID-19 grants and project funding from FEMA. The Board approved the new budget.

The Board was provided information on WV 64CSR30, which are rules for fees for public health department permits. In 2020 new rules were introduced that were part of the West Virginia Legislature action in 2019. The new rules allow local health departments to charge adjusted rates to already set fees for permits. In short, the legislation allows us to change an additional \$10 on most fees. The Board approved the new fee rates. A public notice will be posted for 30 days.

The no other business was before the Board and they moved for adjournment. The next regular Board of Health meeting is scheduled for September 14, 2021.

SUBMITTED BY

William S. Przybysz, MD, Health Officer
September 14, 2021

APPROVED BY

John D Holloway, MD, Board Chairman
September 14, 2021