

**MONTVILLE TOWNSHIP BOARD OF HEALTH
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
May 13, 2021 at 7:30 pm**

Members Present

Mr. Charles Perry
Dr. Arnold Pallay
Ms. Betty Bowers
Dr. Sunil Shah
Dr. Steven Tuckman*

Members Absent:

Dr. Sachin Shah
Dr. Nisha Jani

Others Present:

Aimee Puluso, Health Officer
Amanda Rizzo, BOH Secretary
David Pennella, Esq., BOH Attorney

Call to Order and Roll Call

With a quorum present, Mr. Perry called the meeting to order at 7:30pm.

As required by the Open Public Meetings Act (a.k.a. "Sunshine Law"), adequate notice of this meeting was provided. The notice specified the meeting was to be held at 7:30 p.m., in the Health Department at the Montville Township Municipal Building, 195 Changebridge Road. Legal notice of this meeting emailed to The Daily Record Newspaper, posted on the public bulletin board in the lobby of the Municipal Building, posted with the agenda on the Montville Township website at www.montvillenj.org, filed with the Montville Township Clerk.

Mr. Perry took a roll call of members present.

Approval of Minutes

MOTION: A motion was made by Dr. Pallay, to approve the Regular Minutes of the Board of Health Regular Meeting held on April 12, 2021. Seconded by Mr. Perry.

Ms. Rizzo took a roll call of members present. All members voted yes. Motion passed.

Public Comments

MOTION: A motion was made by Mr. Perry to open the meeting to public comments from any citizen wishing to speak before the Montville Township Board of Health. Seconded by Dr. Pallay.

Ms. Rizzo took a roll call of members present. All members voted yes. Motion passed.

Mr. Perry asked if there were any questions or comments for items on the agenda.

Ms. Puluso stated for the record that there were no members of the public present.

There were no questions or comments.

Mr. Perry asked if there were any questions for items not on the agenda.

There were no questions or comments.

MOTION: A motion was made by Mr. Perry to close the meeting to public comments from any citizen wishing to speak before the Montville Township Board of Health. Seconded by Dr. Pallay.

Ms. Rizzo took a roll call of members present. All members voted yes. Motion passed.

Unfinished Business

Mr. Perry asked Ms. Puluso to give an update on the COVID-19 lab reporting errors. These 300-plus cases had the lab address in Montville instead of the patient address, and thus, artificially inflated county and state reporting of case count for Montville Township.

SiParadigm Diagnostic Informatics

Ms. Puluso has been checking on these cases regularly. As there were only about 25 cases from this lab, the majority of these reporting errors have been resolved.

P4 Clinical

Ms. Puluso followed up with Dr. Patel, P4 Medical Director, numerous times to indicate that there had not yet been a significant decrease in cases with the incorrect address. It appeared after review that the lab attempted a technological solution that “pushed” the correct residential address into the record, but that did not change the primary address, and the cases still showed up in county/state case counts. Dr. Patel’s office put Ms. Puluso into contact with the Vice President of Marketing and Sales, and shortly afterwards, approximately 200 of the 300 cases within 2 days which reflected in the county records as well. Ms. Puluso forwarded on Friday the list of the remaining 100 that still need to be addressed. She will continue to follow up and hopefully they will be corrected swiftly, and have the county and state case numbers for the Township being closer to accurate.

Ms. Puluso asked if there were any questions or comments.

Dr. Pallay requested clarification on whether or not the labs have complied to her satisfaction.

Ms. Puluso stated that SiParadigm Diagnostic Informatics had complied satisfactorily.

Ms. Puluso stated P4 Clinical had not complied satisfactorily. The lab still needs to correct about 100 records. Ms. Puluso has been following up regularly with the lab, and was informed that employees have been dedicated to manually updating and adjusting these records. Ms. Puluso stated that she will continue following up until the work is completed, and that the possibility of legal action on the part of the Health

Department was enough to prompt the appropriate actions. Hopefully the cases will be resolved by the end of the week.

Dr. Pally asked that the Board be emailed about the final results before the next meeting.

Ms. Puluso said absolutely. It will be included in her weekly updates to the Board.

Dr. Pally asked, is there any reason to believe that this could happen again?

Ms. Puluso had stated that probably not to that extent. There may be an occasional incorrect case going forward, but the “data dump” of 300 cases at one time seemed to be an isolated problem due to a technology issue, and hopefully won’t be repeated.

Mr. Perry asked about the burden of the workload for resolving this issue.

Ms. Puluso stated that the lab was doing the actual correcting, but the Health Department was still tasked with following up until the situation was resolved.

Mr. Perry asked what the cost was for PCR testing.

Ms. Puluso responded that she was not sure what the cost was to facilities conducted testing or the labs processing the samples, but that for those tested, while insurance information is usually collected, there does not appear to be any direct costs to the patient such as a co-pay.

Dr. Pally stated that \$150 was the going rate for a PCR test, and the rapid test costs about \$30.

New Business

Ms. Puluso asked if there was any new business, as she had not received any emails regarding new business.

Dr. Pally stated that his office was one of the first private offices in the Township to receive the COVID-19: Johnson & Johnson and Moderna vaccines.

*Dr. Steven Tuckman joined the meeting at 7:45 p.m.

Mr. Perry referred to the “Weekly Reports” which mentioned that many health departments may be sites for vaccination once doses are available. Mr. Perry asked if Montville Township Health Department has considered this and wondered if in fact they were set up for this purpose.

Ms. Puluso stated the Township is an approved COVID-19 vaccine provider. She had reached out to the State of New Jersey regarding vaccines, and they were only willing to send doses for the homebound at this time. Montville has less than 50 homebound citizens, who for the most part have already been vaccinated. At this time Ms. Puluso felt it was not necessary to get the vaccine for that purpose alone. It is possible that

It is her belief that the Health Department will be administering booster shots in the fall. Ms. Puluso believes that at some point the vaccine will be available to everyone and will most likely be annual like the flu shot. As of right now, to name a few, CVS, Walgreens, and Shoprite all have COVID-19 vaccines available.

Dr. Tuckman asked if the Health Department had to pay for the vaccines.

Ms. Puluso stated no, but for the ancillary supplies yes. Ms. Puluso stated that she applied for a grant of \$25,000, and if approved those monies would go towards the costs of supplies in preparing for that effort.

Dr. Pallay asked if the vaccination message was still being displayed and if so, a minor verbiage change with a slogan possibly displayed about vaccination. Ms. Puluso stated she could talk to Administration about the signage.

Mr. Perry asked Ms. Puluso if she could prepare in the future an "After Action Report" as an honest review and assessment of what happened, what went wrong, what went right etc. during the COVID-19 pandemic. Dr. Pallay agreed with Mr. Perry and added what to do in the next pandemic, i.e. "we need to be much better prepared" etc.

Ms. Puluso was in agreement. She stated that it's perplexing how in the past the State of New Jersey spent millions of dollars on mandatory pandemic response plans and local health department were conducting exercises on these type of events, and then when the pandemic hit, these plans were not followed or even mentioned by the state. Of course real-time conditions may require changes to plans and responses, however, it seemed odd for the state to spend millions of dollars on a new computer system and a contact tracing corps, but not include local health departments directly in the response outside of contact tracing, especially in regards to vaccinations.

Mr. Perry mentioned his conversation at the beginning of the pandemic with Ms. Puluso and asked about PPE supplies and her stating that her department couldn't get any.

Ms. Puluso stated that they couldn't get any and she had to think out of the box. Ms. Puluso reached out to the local pool operators in the township (because she knew that they had first aid kits with mask, gloves, and gowns. Ms. Puluso asked if those companies were willing to donate their supplies, and they did.

Mr. Perry stated that maybe for the future the Township could set up and maintain a small fund for a stockpile of PPE.

Ms. Puluso stated she would check with Administration to see if they are willing to do that. She also stated that the department does maintain a small stockpile, however, there are challenges to keeping some items on hand, especially those with materials that can degrade over time. For example, there were N95 masks in the basement that had been there for a few years, and the elastic had disintegrated. Due to the scarcity of supplies, the HD staples string to the masks so they could still be worn and not thrown away.

Dr. Pallay requested that the after-action report also includes input from physicians providing healthcare within the Township, and long-term care facilities. He noted that there is still a few months left of primary

vaccination efforts, and that booster vaccination efforts are likely. He stated that physician's experiences during the pandemic caring for sick patients and signing death certificates being included in the after-action report may help persuade those persons that understate the severity of, or deny the reality of, the pandemic.

Ms. Puluso discussed this phenomena, noting that one of her own family members has made similar statements, even after her discussing her own experiences over the last 14-months, and the loss, and illness, and long-term effects that this disease has had on residents.

MOTION: A motion was made by Mr. Perry for the Health Officer to prepare an after-action report when pandemic ends. Ms. Puluso noted that it may not be something that ever truly "ends", but with a high enough level of vaccination, it may move into the background to a manageable level, similar to influenza, perhaps towards the fall. She noted that the COVID-19 report presented to the Board each month includes a lot of the cumulative data that would be included in an after-action report, and some details on the response from the federal, state, and local level, but it could certainly be added to, with additional input from area physicians and long-term care facilities.

Seconded by Dr. Pallay.

Dr. Shah asked if the number of Montville residents who died could be posted on the electric signs in town with messages to encourage vaccination. Ms. Puluso stated she can check with administration to see if they would be willing to do that. Dr. Pallay stated that it was a slightly morose thing to put on the electric signs. Ms. Bowers stated that this topic is outside of the scope of the motion that is currently on the table.

Ms. Rizzo took a roll call of members present. All members voted yes. Motion passed.

Reports

Ms. Puluso stated for the record that all documents were posted to the Montville Township Board of Health page for the Board of Health and the public's review.

Ms. Puluso presented the April 2021 Health Department's Monthly Activity Report and asked if there were any questions. There were no questions.

Ms. Puluso presented the COVID-19 Summary as of May 7, 2021. Ms. Puluso asked if there were any questions. There were no questions.

Correspondence

Ms. Puluso stated there was no correspondence to report.

Adjournment

Mr. Perry asked if there was any further business to come before the Board.

There was no further business.

MOTION: There being no further business to come before the Board, a motion was made by Mr. Perry to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Dr. Pallay. Ms. Rizzo took a roll call of members present. All members voted yes. Motion passed.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:12 pm.

The next meeting is scheduled for June 14, 2021 at 7:30 pm.