

**MONTVILLE TOWNSHIP BOARD OF HEALTH
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
February 8, 2021 at 7:45pm**

Members Present

Mr. Charles Perry
Dr. Arnold Pallay
Dr. Sunil Shah
Dr. Steven Tuckman
Dr. Nisha Jani

Members Absent:

Ms. Betty Bowers
Dr. Sachin Shah

Others Present:

Aimee Puluso, Health Officer
Amanda Rizzo, BOH Secretary
David Pennella, BOH Attorney
Dr. Matthew Kayne, Twp. Committee Member
Dr. Steven Marcus

Call to Order and Roll Call

With a quorum present, Mr. Charles Perry called the meeting to order at 7:50p.m.

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 7:45 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.

Ms. Rizzo took a roll call of members present.

Approval of Minutes

MOTION: A motion was made by Dr. Pallay, to approve the minutes of the Board of Health meeting held on December 14, 2020. Seconded by Dr. Sunil Shah. Dr. Jani and Dr. Tuckman abstained. Motion passed.

New Board Members

Ms. Puluso welcomed two new members of the Board of Health: Dr. Steven Tuckman is a Clifton dentist, a resident of Montville for 27 years, and a coach of Montville travel and recreation basketball teams aged 8-13. Dr. Nisha Jani works for the Department of Veterans Affairs as an epidemiologist and research scientist, and is also an Adjunct Professor with Rutgers University, School of Public Health. Her extensive resume includes several prior public health positions, including as an NJDOH epidemiologist for the City of Newark. She was a resident of Montville from 1986 to 1997, and recently relocated back to Montville with her family. Dr. Shah noted that is also a graduate of Montville High School.

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.

Ms. Puluso read some questions and comments that were received via email from member of the public Dr. Steven Marcus of 9 Jesse Court in Montville, as he was having technical difficulties connecting to the meeting. The questions and answers are as follows:

Question: Are contact tracers suggesting specific treatments or speaking to physicians regarding different therapies?

Answer: Contact tracers do not suggest any medical treatments or therapies as they have no medical training. The standard protocol for all cases is to advise each individual who tests positive to contact a healthcare provider for guidance, if they have not already (unless they themselves are a medical professional).

Comment: The terminology in the COVID summary refers to under treatments as being “Approved” and the correct terminology should be noted as issuing an “Emergency Use Authorization” or an (E.U.A.).

Answer: The wording going forward will be changed to “Emergency Use Authorization” rather than “Approved”.

Comment: Regarding the subject of Therapies. Only one treatment was included in the COVID summary report and that there were other treatments available including Baricitinib, a monoclonal antibody treatment, there is also convalescent plasma, and a steroid Dexamethasone.

Answer: Additional therapies that have been issued emergency use authorization will be reflected in the next COVID summary report that is presented to the Board in the March meeting. **Discussion:** Dr. Pallay asked if they would be specified by class or medication name? Dr. Pallay recommends that they are listed by class, as he believes the concept of therapy is more important than the actual drug itself. Dr. Jani and Dr. Shah stated perhaps we include both. Ms. Puluso stated she will include the information in that format going forward.

Question: On the data of page 5 of the COVID summary report, of the breakdown of ages, is it cumulative or only for a certain period?

Answer: It is cumulative.

Question: Is the lowering of the average ages of cases because of increase in absolute numbers of those under age 60, or the decrease in those older?

Answer: Probably both. At the same time, there has been a consistent decrease in the number of cases among residents of 60+, and at that same time, an increase in cases occurring in age 18 and younger. Because of that we have had that significant decrease of the average age of cases, and that is continuing.

Question: Given the fact that testing of younger children is probably unusual, is the percent positive of younger age groups higher than the older age groups?

Answer: I'm not aware that testing of younger children being especially unusual. The Health Department has seen testing results coming in over a wide range of age groups. But to answer the question regarding percent positivity for specific age groups, to further break down percent positivity rates by age groups would require opening each of the hundreds of the negative results that we receive each week, noting the age and then calculating the data. That is too cumbersome of a project for our department to accomplish at this time. Once the actual "event" passes, it may be possible we may be able to do a lot more with this data, but for right now that is not something we can do and maintain doing consistently each week with the amount of work that we have presently.

Comment: Mr. Perry stated that with such a small population of Montville residents, any increase or decrease is dramatic. With respect to get information, you can access the CDC website with the COVID tracker and get a good idea of what is going on down to the county level by going on to that site. Ms. Puluso stated that it does get difficult when you get to the municipal level of data, as you are right that it is a small amount of data compared to what is going in the rest of the county and state and difficult to say to what degree of accuracy you can attribute to some of this analysis. Mr. Perry stated that the small changes could amplify the results dealing with a small population.

Question: The ratio of percent positivity in Montville compared to the rest of Morris County and the State has varied a bit, but unfortunately seems to be higher, particularly if one were to remove Montville from the rest of the county. Has there been any attempt to explain why this might be?

Answer: Ms. Puluso stated there has not been an attempt to explain this. However, on one of the daily calls with the State Dept. of Health, Health Officers were advised that municipalities should not be calculating and publishing percent positivity rates. We started doing it and so we are continuing to do it. The State indicated that the data would not be meaningful on that small of a scale. Ms. Puluso asked Dr. Jani to weigh in on the matter.

Comment: Dr. Jani stated that small fluctuations can make one misinterpret the reality of what is going on, especially if you are especially looking during short time periods. I agree in the decreased value in breaking down the percent of positivity into subgroups for Montville.

Question: Relating to Chelsea Senior Living. On page 10 of the Monthly Report it indicated there was daily oversight of a recent outbreak of 10 residents and 10 staff. Was the root cause of this outbreak identified and corrected?

Answer: No. As with the vast majority of these cases that we have seen from the beginning of the pandemic the index case was not determined nor was a specific cause. The facility is following all of the recommended

procedures and guidelines including separating residents into cohorts, quarantining new and incoming patients, even patients who have left to go to doctor's appointments, are quarantining upon return. Weekly testing is being conducted, they have regular in-service training for staff. We receive their information and line lists with any new cases and updates, and we provide guidance and suggestions. We do oversee what they are doing in response to the outbreak, even though we are not regulatory agency, as that is the Department of Health Facilities at the State. We do get involved whenever there is an outbreak of any communicable disease. They seem to be doing everything that they should be, but they just happen to be one of the 417 long-term care facilities in the State which are currently experiencing an active outbreak. As was noted on the January 2021 Monthly Report, the outbreak is limited to 10 residents and 10 staff, however monitoring continues.

Question/Comment: The cited pdf for long-term care facilities did not produce the information the member of the public was looking for in regards to The Chelsea, and they had to go to a different document that was accessed on February 7th with the number of confirmed residents at 10 and staff at 6. The page says that the concluded outbreaks is not included. Do I assume the numbers on page 5 (of the COVID-19 Monthly Summary dated February 05, 2021) is cumulative for the pandemic?

Answer: No it is not cumulative for the pandemic. As the state document referenced states, concluded outbreaks are no included in that data set. The information on page 5 of the COVID-19 Summary Report dated February 5 reflect only the data from the initial outbreak that occurred in the spring and the data from the current active outbreak is not included in this month's COVID summary report, but will be included in future summaries going forward. It should been included and was not, my apologies.

Ms. Puluso stated that was the conclusion of those remarks. For the record these questions and comments were received by Dr. Steven Marcus prior to the start of the meeting via email.

Ms. Puluso stated that the public portion of the meeting is still open and asked if there were any further questions. There were none.

MOTION: A motion was made by Dr. Pallay to close the meeting to public comments from any citizen wishing to speak before the Montville Township Board of Health. Seconded by Dr. Sunil Shah, all in favor.

Reports

Health Officer Aimee Puluso presented, and the Board reviewed the December 2020 Monthly Report, and asked if there were any questions. They have been posted online for the Board's and the public's review prior to the meeting.

Question: Mr. Perry asked for a status update on Bjorn Lass Kennels. Ms. Puluso responded that the property is still up for sale, the vast majority of the conditions that were observed in the beginning have been abated. The Registered Environmental Specialist and the Animal Control Officer are still working with that facility for a permanent solution to some of the issues. Right now they are still prevented from taking in any new animals. The dogs that are in the kennel presently belong to the owner. Mr. Perry stated that hopefully the property will sell and all issues will resolve.

Health Officer Aimee Puluso presented, and the Board reviewed the January 2021 Monthly Report, and asked if there were any questions.

Question: Mr. Perry asked about “Planted Eats” and a kitchen in the basement? Ms. Puluso stated that they had a kitchen and preparation area on the main level, but we learned that they had installed an additional kitchen in the basement, without knowledge of, permits or approvals from any Township department. Our inspector went out and conducted an inspection and found that behind a locked door was a fully stocked and ready to go kitchen with a three bay sink, stove, plumbing, and refrigeration, food products raw and finished food products. They were immediately ordered to cease and desist since we had no prior knowledge of this kitchen. The person who owns the facility also owns a wholesale business and they indicated that they were using the kitchen only for their wholesale division operation which was supposed to be conducted at another location. They are in the middle now trying to get the proper zoning and construction department permits. In the meantime, they are prohibited from using that space, and were issued summons to municipal court.

Comment: Ms. Puluso brought to attention that on the January 2021 Monthly Report, under the communicable disease report on page 9, the total numbers for the COVID cases does not include the 2020 cases. The numbers are starting fresh from January 2021.

Question: Dr. Pally asked about the acronym for the organization that provided the webinar that was attended by the health inspectors on marijuana as noted on the January 2021 Monthly Report, and Ms. Puluso confirmed that it was the Association for Food Protection.

Health Officer Aimee Puluso presented, and the Board reviewed, the COVID-19 Monthly Summary dated February 8, 2021.

Comment: Ms. Puluso noted that any changes from the previous report to the Board were highlighted in yellow.

Comment/Question: Mr. Perry stated that Ms. Puluso did a nice job on explaining the vaccine process and distribution. He noted that the report has some data on cases, such as those that required hospitalization, and asked if there was a way to differentiate between moderate and severe cases?

Answer: Ms. Puluso responded that it would be difficult at this time with the large number of cases coming in each day. Each requires an initial contact within 24 hours for contact tracing, and it has been all the department can do to keep up with that, even at the sacrifice of not closing out some of the older cases. Also, the main contact tracer for our office was out sick and that contributed further to the backlog. The department requested, and was assigned, two new contact tracers from the state corps of contact tracers, who will be assisting. Hopefully, with the new contact tracers coming aboard within the next week or two, the department will be able to clear out a lot of those older cases that have been resolved, and the number of current cases will come down shortly. Mr. Perry noted that he was looking at the numbers and wondering why the Montville numbers were still higher when the rest of the county was dropping. Ms. Puluso said the department had to prioritize, and do what the state required as the large number of cases came in.

Question: Mr. Perry asked how contact tracing was going all along. Ms. Puluso stated that the department is experiencing the same resistance to contact tracing efforts that has been experienced throughout the county and state. With the large number of cases received at the same time, the department was not able to issue as many letters as in the past to cases did not respond to phone contact attempts. Triage was required, and as per the state-issued protocol, cases over the age of 60, under the age of 18, and in any dwelling with multiple cases were prioritized. Ms. Puluso further noted that it did seem that after any holiday or celebration (Thanksgiving, Christmas, Superbowl, etc.) that there is a following bump in cases, but hopefully things will start to slow down, and the number of current cases will only reflect those that are currently still active cases, and the small amount of those cases with severe outcomes that remain open.

Question: Dr. Pallay asked if the proliferation of rapid testing was causing a nuisance for the contact tracers.

Answer: Ms. Puluso stated it doesn't seem to be more of the rapid testing as opposed to the PCR testing. We are seeing roughly the same amount of positives and receiving them all at the same time.

Comment: Dr. Pallay clarified that he was asking if our department was receiving these reports, as he was not convinced that all facilities conducting rapid testing in their offices were reporting their results to the state and the Township contact tracers in the same expeditious manner that the laboratories do.

Answer: Ms. Puluso stated that yes, we probably don't receive all reports as we are supposed to. Some physicians, healthcare, urgent care offices are supposed to report all rapid results to the state Communicable Disease Reporting and Surveillance System (CDRSS) system, and some facilities either apparently do not, or they don't do it correctly, or as quickly as they are supposed to. Ms. Puluso stated that sometimes the department receives calls from cases who state they were waiting for a call from the contact tracers. Ms. Puluso stated that upon investigation in CDRSS, we learn they are not entered to the system by the facility who did the testing. Without that reporting, we are not aware that these cases exist or that they need to be contacted. We then contact the facility and ensure they are aware of the reporting requirements.

Ms. Puluso asked if there were any other questions regarding the COVID Summary. There were no further questions.

Unfinished Business

Mr. Perry read Resolution 2021-04 Encouraging Residents to Receive COVID-19 Vaccination.

MOTION: A motion was made by Dr. Sunil Shah.

Dr. Pallay had a comment regarding the first paragraph bold heading "The COVID-19 Vaccination." Dr. Pallay stated that it is not one single vaccine. His concern is that he wants members of the public to get the appropriate vaccine as made available and not wait for different vaccines to come out. Dr. Pallay said in the last paragraph, change "the COVID-19 vaccination" to "receive approved and available COVID-19

vaccination” Ms. Puluso stated the new wording of the Resolution will state “encourage all Montville Township residents to receive an approved COVID-19 vaccination as soon as one is available to them.”

Mr. Pennella asked if the mover of motion accepts the amendment.

MOTION as amended accepted by Dr. Sunil Shah. Seconded by Mr. Perry. All in favor. Motion passes.

New Business

Ms. Puluso stated for the record that all of the documents under New Business have been posted to the Montville Township Board of Health page for the public’s view. Board of Health Attorney David Pennella confirmed that if the documents were available for public review in that manner, then the entire resolution did not need to be read, and only the caption has to be read.

Mr. Perry read caption of Resolution 2021-01 - *“Resolution of the Montville Township Board of Health, County of Morris and State of New Jersey, Establishing Meeting Schedules for the Montville Township Board of Health during 2021.”*

MOTION: A motion was made by Dr. Sunil Shah. Seconded by Dr. Pallay, all in favor. Motion passes.

Ms. Puluso read caption of Resolution 2021-02 - *“Resolution of the Montville Township Board of Health, County of Morris and State of New Jersey, Authorizing the Award of Contract for Non-Fair and Open Contract for Board of Health Attorney 2021”*

MOTION: A motion was made by Dr. Pallay. Seconded by Mr. Perry, all in favor. Motion approved.

Ms. Puluso read caption heading Resolution 2021-03 - *“Resolution of the Board of Health of the Township of Montville, County of Morris, and State of New Jersey authorizing the execution of an Inter-Local Services Agreement between the Board of Health of the Township of Montville and the Board of Health of the Township of Boonton for the provision of Public Health Clinic Services”*

Comment: Ms. Puluso noted that Resolution 2021-03 in in regards to the same agreement that the Board had passed in previous years, and which allows Boonton Township residents to attend health clinics held by Montville Township.

Point of Order: Dr. Pallay asked if the \$500 administrative fee was the amount we have used each year? Ms. Puluso stated yes. Dr. Pallay asked if this amount was “a lot” or “customary”? Ms. Puluso stated that it was a reasonable amount, as there are usually only a small number of Boonton Township residents that attend our clinics, and those residents do pay the same fees as all others to attend them. The \$500 is a administrative fee from the Boonton Township to the Township of Montville.

A motion was made by Dr. Pallay. Seconded by Mr. Perry, all in favor. Motion approved.

Correspondence

None.

General Comment

Mr. Perry talked with Dr. Kayne about getting more information on COVID-19 to the children in our community, for instance, the middle school and high school kids. Ms. Puluso stated that she is in frequent contact with the superintendent of schools and has been informed that they are actively educating the staff, students, and parents on an ongoing basis, including a lot of communication coming from the school to the parents and communication during school to the children. Mr. Perry stated that it seemed the schools were doing their part to provide that information to children and their parents.

Adjournment

MOTION: There being no further business to come before the Board, a motion was made by Dr. Sunil Shah, seconded by Dr. Tuckman, all in favor, to adjourn the meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 8:40 p.m.