

**LEWIS AND CLARK CITY-COUNTY
BOARD OF HEALTH – MINUTES
1930 9th AVE, HELENA, MONTANA 59601
Zoom Meeting, 1:00 p.m.
August 27, 2020**

Members Present by Zoom

Mayor Wilmot Collins
Brie McLaurin
Kammy Johnson
Dr. Mikael Bedell
Jenny Eck
Raymond Berg
Tyler Ream

Staff Present by Zoom

Drenda Niemann Sarah Sandau
Jolene Helgersen Mary Pierce
Jacqueline Isaly Franchesca Talbot
Eric Merchant
Kathy Moore
Heather Parmer

Members Absent

Justin Murgel, chair
Commissioner Andy Hunthausen, vice chair

Guests Present by Zoom

Nicho Hash, Deputy County Attorney
Kim Beatty
Courtney McAdams
Elena Hagen
Sean Logan

Kammy Johnson, acting chair, called the meeting to order at 1:03 p.m. A quorum was established. Introductions of board members were made. Ms. Johnson read the protocols for today’s meeting.

REVIEW OF AGENDA

No additions were made.

MINUTES

Ms. Johnson asked if there were any corrections or additions to the July 23, 2020, minutes. There being none, the Board approved the minutes as written.

ACTION ITEM

Active Wayfinding Resolution: Sarah Sandau, Prevention Programs Supervisor, discussed the Active Wayfinding system (see Attachment “A”) and presented a Resolution of the Lewis and Clark City-County Board of Health in support of the City of Helena, City of East Helena, and Lewis and Clark County in adopting the Active Living Wayfinding Plan (on page 7 of the board packet). In answer to a question from Raymond Berg, Ms. Sandau noted that the city/county is seeing very little vandalism to the wayfinding signs. Raymond Berg made a motion to approve Resolution of the Lewis and Clark City-County Board of Health in support of the City of Helena, City of East Helena, and Lewis and Clark County in adopting the Active Living Wayfinding Plan. Mayor Collins seconded the motion. The motion carried 6-0. No public comment was given.

BOARD MEMBER DISCUSSION

Year End Financial Report for FY20: Heather Parmer, Finance Coordinator, referenced the FY20 comparison to budget and cash flow for July 2019 through July 2020 (pages 9-10 of the board packet). Ms. Parmer noted that the department is 100% of the way through its fiscal year. Total revenue to date is \$2,331,401, or 99% of the amount budgeted; actual expenditures are \$2,327,563 or 89% of the amount

budgeted. Revenues are over expenditures by \$3,838; total ending cash is \$967,313. No public comment was given.

Home Visiting Update: Mary Pierce, Home Visiting Supervisor, gave an update on work her team has accomplished this year, their challenges, successes, and their future goals (see Attachment “B”). No public comment was given.

2019 CHIP Annual Progress Report: Drenda Niemann, Health Officer, provided review of the 2019 CHIP Annual Progress Report (on pages 11-57). Ms. Niemann highlighted each of the 3 priority’s goals, objectives, progress and status. No public comment was given.

HEALTH OFFICER’S REPORT

Ms. Niemann highlighted the COVID-19 Dashboard and the State of Montana COVID-19 map of current numbers of confirmed, active, and recovered cases, and the number of hospitalizations and deaths. Ms. Niemann announced that Public Health has hired additional PRNs and contact tracers.

Ms. Niemann provided a summary on the discussions between the Montana Public Health Association, the Governor of Montana, Montana High School Association, and AA School Districts regarding the reopening of public schools and the possibility of having spectators at sporting events. In answer to a question from Jenny Eck, Ms. Niemann said Public Health would collaborate with the school districts to evaluate how the schools are doing upon reopening based on data, number of active cases, and the Public Health workload in their decision to include spectators at sporting events. In answer to questions from Mr. Berg, Ms. Niemann said the county attorney and law enforcement have decided not to alter the enforcement process for Phase Two and mask mandates. Ms. Niemann also added that if a student were to contract COVID during a sporting event they traveled to, we would categorize that case as travel-related on our Dashboard. No public comment was given.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Kim Beatty, a parent of a Helena athlete, announced that after hearing that spectators would not allowed at the sporting events, she and others spoke to elected officials, the School Board, the Montana High School Association (MHSA) and the athletic director to find out why. They reviewed the governor’s and the Public Health July directives in order to develop a way for a limited number of parents to attend sporting events. Their request was not to open the event up to large number of people but to keep it to a limited number of household members of the participating players in the sporting event. Small groups of parents have created a plan to address the concerns by the governor and Public Health’s directive. The group of parents met with Ms. Niemann and Mayor Collins to discuss their spectator plan. They also provided a copy of a signed statewide petition seeking to allow parents at sporting events. At the meeting, it was made clear that Public Health was interpreting the governor’s directive much differently. We believe those directives are misunderstood by Public Health. This morning, I submitted a letter to the Board of Health detailing each of the concerns they had in the areas they believe were the governor’s directive were being misconstrued and misapplied. The purpose of my comments today, I understand that the board elected not to include a discussion of my letter on their agenda; I would like to make sure that each board member did receive my submission. I would also like to ask that each of you take some time to read it and think about it. I would like to know when I would receive a response to that letter.

Courtney McAdams, a parent in the Helena School District, said this is important issue to our community, the health of our kids, and to the safety of our athletes. My freshmen son is playing his first high school soccer game at Carroll College’s venue, which holds 7,000 people. We have requested to Mr. McMahon that 72 parents all from Helena be allowed to attend. He said there was no point in submitting a plan

because it will not be approved due to the health officer order 10-2020 that is currently standing from July. As a parent, I feel that it is unsafe that I am not allowed to be at this game. It is a huge disservice to the parents who support our athletes through their sporting careers. I am asking the Board to consider revoking this order that the health department has come up with as soon as possible. The order if not revoked will expire December 31, which means we will miss all of the fall sports season. I feel there is a lot of miscommunication between the health department and the school district. I have been in touch with the superintendent, the school board, and the athletic director asking why spectator plans have not been submitted, which allow for social distancing, I have been told that it is because of the punitive language that is in the health officer order 10-2020 stating that all people must social distance including the athletes. That is not the intent of the governor's directive. The Office of Public Instruction (OPI) and MHSAA have both recommended that parents be allowed to be at these athletic events for safety, especially football players both out of town and in town. Double A schools like Kalispell, Butte, Great Falls, Gallatin and Bozeman all have spectator plans in place that allow parents or guardians to be at those games. Missoula and Lewis and Clark County are the only two that do not have those plans in place. Soccer and Cross Country start this weekend. Football in a couple of weeks. We need to come up with a plan that allows parents to be at these events.

Elena Hagen, a parent of a student at East Helena High School, said our athletic director for East Helena High School, principal, and superintendent have a plan in place for spectators at their new facility. It is within the guidelines and presented by the East Helena School Board. Drenda, you said that you have been in contact with the school superintendents and athletic directors, did that include Mr. Whitmoyer and Mr. Murgel from East Helena (EH) or was that the local Helena high schools? If that discussion or communication did occur [to] EH officials, how was that communication conducted?

Sean Logan, a citizen and parent of a student athlete, said I am imploring that the Board and Public Health reconsider this decision. There are a number of compromises out there that will address significant public concerns that are out there about this issue. Throughout COVID, there has been an attempt or sentiment to minimize the importance of sports and athletics. I would urge caution. These events are important to the kids and to their growth. It is also important that the parents are present in their lives. Many things have been curtailed because of COVID. These things matter. I hope you would reconsider and make some kind of compromise.

Zoom comments by chat (see Attachment "C").

Ms. Niemann announced that further public comment could be made at publichealth@lccountymt.gov.

Ms. Eck and Mr. Collins requested that we allow or further public comment or set up an additional meeting for public discussion. Ms. Niemann announced that she would schedule a special board meeting to address additional public comment. All board members will receive a copy of all comments made to our public health email account and other public comment documents.

The meeting adjourned at 3:05 p.m.

Justin Murgel, Chair

Drenda Niemann, Secretary