

ST. LAWRENCE COUNTY BOARD OF HEALTH MEETING

March 17, 2020

The St. Lawrence County Board of Health (hereafter known as SLCBOH) met on Tuesday, March 17, 2020, in the Large Conference Room (via teleconference), Human Services Center, Canton, New York 13617.

MEMBERS PRESENT: (via teleconference) Kevin Acres, Dr. Gregory Healey, Nancy Potter, Dr. Jessica Scillieri Smith Dr. Kathleen Terrence, Dr. Andrew Williams

MEMBERS ABSENT: Jessica Rafter

OTHERS PRESENT: Dana Olzenak McGuire, Director; Shannon Beldock, Administrative Assistant; Jolene Munger, Deputy Director of PH; Jenesse Watson, Emergency Preparedness Coordinator; Alivia Sheffield, PH Sanitarian.

CALL TO ORDER

Dr. Andrew Williams, President, called the meeting to order at 6:08 pm.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Upon motion by N. Potter, and seconded by J. Scillieri Smith, the minutes from the February 12, 2020 (rescheduled from February 18, 2020) meeting were approved.

PUBLIC COMMENT

No Public Comment.

Action Items from February 12, 2019:

Show NYIIS information on the large screen for members. (from January 21, 2020)

- This is postponed for now.

Draft Isolation and Quarantine Plan

- A draft was sent to members via email for review and feedback. Dana worked with Stephen Button, County Attorney and Mary Farley, Judge on this plan.

There was a discussion on how some providers who are putting patients in quarantine on their own. Dana noted this is problematic. Providers are not testing, but asking patients to self-isolate. This is causing a lot of anxiety for all involved. We are not sure how to address this issue. Dr. Williams suggested drafting a clear statement of what the provider's role is. This information can be disseminated to the medical society mailing list. Dana noted the county is responsible for quarantine of individuals who have traveled and/or who have been potentially exposed. Mandated quarantine is for individuals who have tested positive or have been in contact with someone who is positive due to travel to specific countries. We are still using this criteria for determining whether to test. Providers can make this decision, this may be where they are asking individuals to self-isolate.

Dr. Healey discussed a patient with a low likelihood of having the virus, but has underlying conditions and wanted to be tested. Her place of employment has instructed her not to return to work until she is cleared for the coronavirus. Noted her son, who doesn't live with her, and who

works for the county, was sent home. Her daughter, who works for the school board, was sent home also. Dr. Williams shared any case finding, any testing being done, needs to be reported to Public Health. Any issues of isolation and quarantine needs to be reviewed with Public Health also. Noted self-isolation can be suggested, but is not mandated. Dr. Healey noted his patients who are most susceptible he does tell them to self-isolate.

What is happening inside State prisons regarding vaccinations?

2019 novel Coronavirus: Dana Olzenak McGuire

Since the meeting last month, we continue to quarantine individuals due to travel activity. We have some students who are in abroad programs and people traveling back here. We currently have (12) in quarantine, (9) tested through Wadsworth Lab. We know of (31) tests being done on the provider's side that have gone to LabCorp. Noted not all CHMC's numbers are in yet – should be online tomorrow. It was noted that the media calls Public Health daily wanting to know the number of individuals in quarantine and number tested. They are told it has become more difficult to get accurate numbers.

Public Health has changed the outgoing department message to have an option to receive an update on the coronavirus and what they need to do. This message also provides the number for the New York State Department of Health Novel Coronavirus Hotline. At the end of the message there is an option to speak with someone in the department if they have more questions. Several press releases have gone out and our Facebook is constantly posting/reposting information.

Dana and Dr. Williams met last Wednesday with school superintendents and then met again on Saturday to discuss the closing of the schools. She and Dr. Williams also met with the administrators of the four colleges which have now turned to online classes.

She has a weekly call with Town Supervisors, Mayors, Law Enforcement, Legislators and County Department Heads to provide a weekly update.

Information that was put out was regarding social distancing. This information was sent to Town Supervisors. After this information went out, there was an article noting (4) towns had closed down. Rodney Votra who is the Supervisor for the Town of Parishville, was asked to provide his notes to other towns. He has received responses from other towns that they were thankful for his information and in knowing what to do.

The County COVID Work Group meets daily and includes employees, the Judge who will provide the orders for quarantine, Dr. Williams, (2) Legislators, CHMC staff and EMS staff. Noted border activity has closed down. We have received one call from the port authority. We are currently discussing processes surrounding the lack of PPE and ordering. A survey was done of first responders, law enforcement, hospitals, nursing homes, IRAs, and home health agencies. This information was given to the emergency services department. We recently received a shipment of hand sanitizer from New York State.

We are moving our focus to look at where we would be able to place alternate testing sites (drive thru/tent), should they be near hospitals. We are looking at the bed capacity of the area hospitals and ICU should it be necessary, and checking resources and supplies.

Dr. Williams noted that Dana is working very hard and so is her department. The key here is to make sure the health care system is coordinating with Public Health. Social distancing is the real method to control and epidemic. We need these Public Health interventions early to prevent

health care systems from being overwhelmed. More work needs to be done, but lots of work has been done so far.

Jessica S. mentioned having PPE for their jobs (vets) and the state extending expiration dates for N95 masks. Noted inventory is important and we shouldn't discredit what is expired. We need what we have and need to use them sparingly. Current resources might get used up before new inventory gets here. Dana noted the dates on PPE might be modified from the current expiration. Shared most are using expired masks for fit testing. EMS has ordered new testers that have a hood and you take the mask you are tested with.

Nancy noted that St. Lawrence County was very fortunate to have hired Dana with her background and work ethic. Dana noted that everyone is helping out with the response – it is a full department effort and her staff is doing great work.

Kevin also noted that everyone has done a great job! Asked where testing is taking place – hospitals and primary care providers? Asked how limited are they? Dr. Williams noted all providers can collect specimens for testing. The St. Lawrence Health Systems collects specimens and sends them to Wadsworth Lab or LabCorp – turnaround is usually 3-5 days from collection. Kevin asked about hospitals being inundated with individuals coming in waiting to be tested? Dr. Williams shared they have a triage line – individuals are asked specific questions upon arrival. They are testing if needed.

Dr. Healey asked if we are being asked about the closing of bars/restaurants. Dana noted this measure was put in place due to individuals congregating in these places. We are trying to prevent large gatherings. The pharmacies, gas stations, and grocery stores are not restricted. The whole message is for individuals to “stay home.” Dr. Healey felt they could have given them the option to decrease capacity. Dr. Williams noted we are looking at any opportunity to cut down on social gatherings. Kevin shared that Sergi's restaurant in Potsdam has closed down. Dana noted some stores are opening earlier and providing specific times for the elderly to shop.

Nancy shared the NYS Department of Health website link as of March 15th said there were (729) cases. She is unable to get to the link now – states you need to be a provider. Jolene provided the website link <https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/home> (scroll towards the bottom of the page) which shows current cases as (1374) statewide – still no confirmed cases in St. Lawrence County.

Dr. Williams in a discussion with school superintendents it was noted (31) individuals have been tested in a county with a population of 100,000. The possibility in this county is very low. There has been (1) confirmed case at Adirondack Medical – Franklin County (Saranac Lake). Jolene noted there are currently no positive cases showing in Franklin, Essex or Clinton counties.

Dana shared the county jails have stopped allowing visitors into their facilities – the nursing homes have also stopped visitors. One problem we have is with the high-rises, which is more like an apartment – we cannot put up signage.

There was a lengthy discussion regarding news that colleges were allowing students to return to campus. Dana noted all (4) colleges will have students who don't have stable living arrangements returning to live in the dorms. There were questions on whether the colleges were going to provide meals and screening and medical services for these students, along with feelings that these students should be treated as if they were coming from Italy. At this point, there has been no consultation with Public Health.

Dr. Williams suggested Dana draft a letter from the Board of Health to the college Presidents/Administrators inquiring about their plans to relocate students back to the area. We need to come up with a sensible plan for safety of the students, staff and community before it becomes a huge problem. We are working to calm anxieties across the county, not add to them. Jolene noted we would need to coordinate with the NYSDOH before sending a letter regarding quarantine. There are legal ramifications for the colleges if they don't allow students back – it is in their room and board contract. Dana noted SUNY does not have enough rooms with private bathrooms. Dana will provide follow up on information received from the colleges.

Kevin mentioned travel by bus (Trailways/SLC Transportation). Noted the Amish community uses the bus lines – how are they being informed? Dana noted there are signs on the busses and sanitizer and paper towels are available. Jolene shared we have information on the Amish community publications – we will be writing something to be added. Dr. Williams noted he is giving information to his Amish patients each day as well.

Dana shared the Early Intervention and Preschool Programs will be drafting letters to send to families and service providers at schools notifying them of the suspension of services – not entering homes is important right now for the safety of staff members. This letter will be sent to Board of Health members for review. The staff from these programs will be used to help with the coronavirus response.

Introduction of New Sanitarian: Dana Olzenak McGuire

Alivia introduced herself. She started last Tuesday and shared it's been an interesting week. She has previous experience with natural resources. She is excited to be a part of the Public Health team.

Kevin expressed appreciation for the work everyone is doing.

Other Items and Questions: N/A

OTHER BUSINESS

No Other Business.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

No Executive Session.

ADJOURNMENT/NEXT MEETING

Meeting adjourned at 7:35 pm. Next meeting is scheduled for April 21, 2020 at 6:00 pm.
(via teleconference)

ACTIONS ITEMS FOR FOLLOW UP

1. Draft a letter to colleges regarding plans for the return of students to campus.
2. Provide feedback on information received from colleges.
3. Draft a letter for families and service providers for the Early Intervention and Preschool programs.