

**Foothills Health District
 District Board of Health OPEN SESSION
 Meeting Minutes
 McDowell County Health Department
 December 14, 2021**

Board of Health Members Present:

Rutherford County Representatives [9]	McDowell County Representatives [6]
Kim Warner Dr. Jerald DeLaGarza Greg Lovelace, County Commissioner [by remote] Dr. Christopher Buchanan [by remote] Gina Harrill [by remote]	Dr. James M. Gaskill [by remote] Chris Allison, Commissioner

Board of Health Members Absent:

Neil Perry Amy Jenkins Susie Bostic Vacancy	Carol Wolfenbarger Julie Harris Vacancy Vacancy, Optometrist
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Foothills Health District Staff/Guests/Counsel Present:

HD Staff:

**Karen Powell, Health Director
 Nancy Marshall, Finance Director
 Jason Masters, Environmental Health Director
 Miranda Smith, Public Health Educator II**

Board of Health Legal Counsel

Sharon Parker, Board Attorney

Auditor Presenters

**Marcus q. Elliot, CPA
 Tammy M. Grice, CPA**

AGENDA ITEM	BOARD ACTION	REFERENCE DOCUMENTS
<p>CALL TO ORDER: Chairperson, Dr. Jerald DeLaGarza called the meeting to order at 6:37 pm and announced that a quorum was present with the in-person Board members and four members attending remotely since the Foothills BOH currently has three vacancies.</p>	<p>Dr. Jerald DeLaGarza, Chairman</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD: No Public members were present.</p>	<p>Dr. Jerald DeLaGarza, Chairman</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p><u>ACTION ITEMS</u></p>		
<p>APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM October 12th, 2021</p> <p>The October 12th, 2021, BOH minutes were emailed to the BOH prior to the Board meeting.</p>	<p>Dr. Jerald DeLaGarza, Chairman</p> <p>Kim Warner moved to approve the October 12th, 2021, minutes as presented, with a second by James Gaskill. The motion was approved with remotes votes from Gina Harrill, Greg Lovelace, Christopher Buchanan and in person votes by Jerald DeLaGarza, and Chris Allison</p>	<p>Documents on file</p>

<p>2020/ 2021 Audit Presentation</p> <p>The Audit report was emailed to the BOH prior to the Board Meeting. Auditors Marcus Elliot and Tammy Grice Presented the Audit and advised the BOH that they had not difficulties obtaining information needed or completing the Audit on time.</p> <p>The auditors presented only one finding related to the initial unbalanced draft budget as funding amounts were not known at the time the draft budget was first adopted.</p> <p>In previous years, the State has sent letters for the audit findings, but this year they have asked for the board to respond to the findings.</p> <p>The letter regarding the findings of the unbalanced budget was reviewed and read by the Board and states the methods used for that budget would not be used again.</p> <p>After the BOH approved the proposed response letter to the State, the present BOH members signed the document and the document will be sent to all other BOH members for their signatures as well.</p> <p>Mrs. Powell congratulated Nancy Marshall and Dottie Wilson on doing a great job with the audit and working well with the auditors.</p>	<p>Marcus Q. Elliot, CPA and Tammy M. Grice, CPA</p> <p>Chris Allison made a motion to approve the audit as presented with a second from Kim Warner. The motion was approved with remote votes from Gina Harrill, Greg Lovelace, Christopher Buchanan, James Gaskill and in person votes by Jerald DeLaGarza.</p> <p>Kim Warner made a motion to approve the Response Letter to the State as drafted, with a second from Chris Allison. The motion was approved with remote votes from Gina Harrill, Greg Lovelace, Christopher Buchanan, James Gaskill and in person votes by Jerald DeLaGarza.</p>	<p>Audit Documents on File</p> <p>Response Letter to the State on File</p>
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HEALTH DIRECTORS REPORT

COVID-19 Update

Covid Numbers were steady until Thanksgiving holiday and now cases are rising each day. School numbers are watched closely and were steady in the past month but are now on the rise.

The mask mandate in the schools is decided on by the school boards as based off the counties' CDC and DHHS designation. When the counties are in the orange CDC/DHHS mask parameters, masks will be optional. When the counties are in red CDC/DHHS parameters mask will be required. As of 12/14 McDowell was in the orange CDC/DHHS parameters and Rutherford was in the red CDC/DHHS parameters.

Free testing is being offered in both counties every day. The COVID vaccine is also still being offered by appointment or drive through clinic at the health departments. The vaccination numbers rose before Thanksgiving and booster appointments are being made. There has also been an increase in the number of FLU vaccines given this year compared to last.

The health district is still taking measures to try to assure that barriers for not receiving the vaccine is being countered by drive through clinics, appointments, home based visits, nursing home visits, etc. Anyone who is wanting the vaccine should not face any barriers. If someone does face a barrier, they are welcomed to call the health departments and that issue will be solved.

School vaccine numbers are still low since the 5-11 vaccine became available. We are trying to educate the community on the importance of the vaccine. If a child is vaccinated and is in school their chance of getting quarantined is highly reduced unless they themselves test positive to help keep kids in school. At this time, a child can develop COVID with 5-7 days after exposure.

Kim Warner asked if there was a way for us to know how many of the COVID cases have tested positive from in school exposure and Mrs. Powell informed us that we could look at that data, but

Karen Powell, Health Director

some students may become sick but do not get tested or inform the health departments.

Dr. DeLaGarza took a moment to talk about exposures and the new Omicron variant. With the new variant, some parents may bring in their child to the doctor's office but do not want them tested.

Mrs. Powell mentioned that cases may be under reported since some people are not getting tested unless it is required and most at home kits positive test results are not reported to the health departments.

The health department does have some free at home rapid test kits that have a scan code that to be used by phone to get the results, which are then immediately sent to the health department. These kits are welcome to anyone.

The vaccine mandate that is in federal court is not expected to move forward anytime soon. If the mandate is upheld, it will not be in effect for the health departments as we have less than 100 employees. We have 73 employees and of those 7 are unvaccinated.

Salary Study Discussion

Mrs. Powell has ordered an internal salary study looking at comparable health departments, especially for Nurses. There have been several job openings where all candidates were already receiving at their other job salaries higher than we are able to fill.

Other Departmental Updates

All doors are open, and all services are being offered by appointment to our communities.

There has been ARPA dollars for the region that will be used for work force recovery. A team will be reviewing a plan on what can be done to rebuild the workforce after COVID.

<p>Mrs. Powell reminded us that both counties have high numbers of Syphilis cases. The health department is educating within our communities on signs, symptoms, and prevention methods.</p> <p>As an agency we are looking at how to get the health districts name out in the community through advertising for services other than immunizations and COVID.</p>		
<p>FINANCE REPORT</p> <p><u>Update on Financial Reports and other audit related matters</u></p> <p>Clinic income is well over budget as we are still receiving COVID vaccine revenue. Clinic income is trending under budget for private pay and near budget for Medicaid.</p> <p>\$6,400 has been received from the Uninsured HRSA program.</p> <p>CMARC & CMHRP revenue for the period was under budget due to the Medicaid transformation which went into effect on 7/1.</p> <p>County allocations and rent have been received for the period.</p> <p>Environmental Health is on target for the period at 99% of the budget.</p> <p>There is no new grant activity in the period.</p> <p>The annual Medicaid Cost Settlement is submitted in the spring each year so that activity will not be reported until late in the fiscal year.</p> <p>State aid to county funds are on target and have been received.</p> <p>State funds have been received on schedule and are slightly over budget for the period.</p>	<p>Nancy Marshall, CFO Karen Powell, Health Director</p>	<p>Documents on file</p>

Automobile expenses, insurance expense, professional fees, and supplies are over budget for the period but within the annual budget.

The increase in professional services is due to temporary employees who are assisting with the COVID response. The overage in supplies is due to ordering so many immunizations in the summer for back to school.

All other expenses for this period are running at 108% compared to budget.

Net position for the period is \$36,000

Funding sources for the storage building and bariatric exam table are from COVID-19 funds and the McDowell Endowment/Community Foundation of WNC grant that was received in the prior fiscal year.

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS:

**ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH [EH]
REPORT**

Jason Masters, EH Director

On Site

For July through November, the EH department has brought in \$220,265 between the two counties. Last year during the same time frame we were at \$201,437. That is almost 19K more than what was brought in last year. As of 12/14/2021, just in December, we have brought in \$21,325 dollar where December of 2020 saw \$19,775 for the whole month.

Environmental Health recently completed two consecutive septic sweeps, one in each county, and worked on about 15 applications per county. However, during those two days, we brought in almost the same number of applications that we closed. Environmental Health is about 200 applications ahead of where they stood last year. There are no open septic system complaints in the district right now.

Food and Lodging

We are coming into the end of the 2nd quarter of the fiscal year and will be completing all required inspections as usual. The end of December will mark 6 months since using our new software, and it has helped tremendously in bringing everyone together and allowing the supervisor and Jason to see exactly what is going on with each inspector. The public portal shows the entire inspection report of each establishment in the district.

Inspectors have completed the required continuing education necessary to maintain their status as Registered Environmental Health Specialists, and we will be sending that documentation to the state hopefully by the end of the week for renewal for 2022.

Regional Infection Prevention Support [RIPS]

Team

With the Regional Infection Prevention Support Team, a group of people who know and understand the basic principles of infection control go into Long Term Care facilities, which include places like Assisted living, skilled nursing, family home care and mental/behavioral

facilities, with the goal of educating the staff and assessing very specific infection control protocols. Some basic protocols are handwashing procedures and personal protective equipment (PPE) all the way through actual infection prevention policies and vaccination rates of residents and employees. Additionally, they look over blood borne pathogen exposure plans, injection safety, and general environmental cleaning procedures. After their assessment, they generally fill out an Infection Control Assessment and Response Form, which is submitted to the state. These visits usually last about 1.5 to 2 hours, and all information is discussed with the director of the facility or their designee. So far, Regional Infection Prevention Support Team has completed about 140 visits out of 417 facilities in Region 2. The team can assist with fit testing for PPE, and also can provide and administer covid vaccines.

Closed Session

CLOSED SESSION

At 7:51, Kim Warner moved to go into Closed Session, which was requested for discussion of information that is privileged, confidential or not a public record under NC General Statute 143-318.11(a)(1) and NC Gen Stat 130A-42 and to consult with the Board Attorney regarding specialized Legal Counsel to be retained by the Board and to discuss confidential legal matters pursuant to NC General Statute 143-318.11(a)(3).

The Board went into Closed Session with Karen Powell at 7:53 pm and returned from Closed Session at 8:03 pm

At 7:51, Kim Warner moved to go into a Closed Session for discussion of information that is privileged, confidential or not a public record under NC General Statute 143-318.11(a)(1) and NC Gen Stat 130A-42 and to consult with the Board Attorney regarding specialized Legal Counsel to be retained by the Board and to discuss confidential legal matters pursuant to NC General Statute 143-318.11(a)(3). The motion was seconded by Chris Allison. The motion was approved with remote votes from Gina Harrill, Greg Lovelace, Christopher Buchanan, James Gaskill and in person votes by Jerald DeLaGarza.

In Open Session, Kim Warner moved to authorize Karen Powell, in her official capacity, to retain legal counsel to represent the Foothills District Health Department and the Foothills District Health Director, in her official capacity, in any records requests, claims, inquiries, research, complaints, legal actions or Complaints or litigation regarding their Covid 19 response, including but not limited to the District's coordination with NC DHHS, the CDC,

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	<p>local School Systems and other governmental agencies or health care providers pertaining to, but not limited to, staffing assignments, delegation of duties to staff or affiliated agencies, testing procedures and policies, vaccination procedures and policies and isolation or quarantine orders. The motion was seconded by Dr. Gaskill. The motion was approved with remote votes from Gina Harrill, Greg Lovelace, Christopher Buchanan, and in person votes by Jerald DeLaGarza and Chris Allison.</p>	
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ADJOURNMENT: At 8:09 pm, made a motion was made by Kim Warner to adjourn, seconded by Chris Allison. The motion was approved with remote votes from Gina Harrill, Greg Lovelace, Christopher Buchanan, James Gaskill and in person votes by Jerald DeLaGarza.

SIGNATURES: _____
Karen Powell, Foothills District Health Director

Dr. Jerald DeLaGarza, Chair of the Foothills Board of Health

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