

LARIMER COUNTY | HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT

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Director Tom Gonzales, MPH

BOARD OF HEALTH

Jennifer Lee, President
Bernard Birnbaum, MD
Janna West Kowalski, MS
Teri Olson, RN, MSN
Brian DelGrosso

Department of Health and Environment Mission:

Our mission is to promote a healthy community and reduce unnecessary suffering caused by preventable disease, disability, or death.

This mission is accomplished by providing community health and environmental health services, communicable disease control, health education, vital records management, health data assessment, development of policies that advance the public's health, and advocacy for community-based services that provide needed health care.

LARIMER COUNTY BOARD OF HEALTH – April 18, 2019

The Larimer County Board of Health (BOH) convened its regular meeting at 6 p.m. in the Carter Lake Conference Room in the Larimer County Courthouse 200 W. Oak, Fort Collins, Colorado.

Members Present:

Jennifer Lee
Janna West Kowalski
Teri Olson
Brian DelGrosso
Dr. Bernard Birnbaum

Executive Secretary: Tom Gonzales

County Staff: Thomas Butts, Andrea Clement-Johnson, Leslie Ellis, Lisa Laake, Kelsey Lyon, Kim Meyer Lee, Dr. Chris Nevin-Woods, Katie O'Donnell, Sara Rhoten, Lea Schneider, Averil Strand, Lorenda Volker, Kori Wilford

Community Members: Karen Artell, Tony J. Van Goor, Alyson Williams

1. **Call to Order** - Jennifer Lee, board president, called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m.
2. **Approval of the Minutes**

ACTION: Janna West Kowalski made a motion to approve the March 2019 minutes; it was seconded by Teri Olson.

The motion was unanimously approved.

3. **Public Comment** – There was no public comment.
4. **Financial Report** – Tom Gonzales presented the financials. Intergovernmental revenue, grants and contracts from the Colorado Department of Health and Environment, always come in a few months behind. Retail Food Establishment licenses expire on December 31 of each year and are required by statute to be renewed by January 1, thus a majority of environmental health fees, nearly 72% were paid in the first quarter. Mr. Gonzales said the financials are looking to be where the department should be at this time of year.



5. **Mental Health Awareness Month Proclamation** – Ms. Lee read a proclamation in support of declaring May 2019 as Mental Health Awareness Month. This proclamation is in partnership with the Larimer County Behavioral Health Services Department.

ACTION: Brian DelGrosso made a motion to approve the proclamation; it was seconded by Dr. Bernard Birnbaum.

The motion was unanimously approved.

6. **Oil and Gas Regulation Task Force Charter** – Lesli Ellis, Director of Community Development for Larimer County, presented to the BOH about a task force being put together by the Larimer County Board of Commissioners (BOCC) to examine the development of oil and gas regulations in Larimer County. The task force will be looking at the impacts of oil and gas relating to land use, public health, and industry issues. The task force will be composed of 15 members including community members, health experts, land owners, environmental representatives, and oil and gas representatives. The task force will also include non-voting members. The BOCC would like a BOH representative to be a non-voting member. There will be five meetings, starting late May and through early October.

The specific dates and times for the meetings hasn't been determined. The commissioners will go through the applications to identify additional members. Mr. DelGrosso asked if all of the appointees from other boards are non-voting members? The Environmental and Science Advisory Board is the only voting member that's been asked to serve on the task force. Dr. Birnbaum asked who was representing health care on the task force? Ms. Ellis said if someone has applied from health care, the BOCC will be reviewing the applications and will make the final selections.

The BOH discussed which member could attend the task force meetings. Ms. Ellis said the BOCC will be making a decision on the 15 task force members by May 15. Ms. Ellis said that sending an alternate to the meetings is OK if they're a non-voting member. The BOH could divide the meetings between BOH members based on who was available to attend. They agreed it was important to have a BOH member attend the meetings because this is a health issue. Ms. Lee said she would be the primary member to attend the meetings as long as there's back up support or an alternate to attend meetings. She said it was good that the Environmental and Science Advisory Board is a voting member on the task force. Mr. Gonzales said that staff will also be involved, and mentioned his role on the Air Quality Control Commission.

7. **Medical Director Update** – Mr. Gonzales handed out a monthly communicable disease update to the BOH and said this will be an ongoing monthly report for the BOH and the public. Dr. Chris Nevin-Woods also gave handouts to the BOH and asked them to consider what information they would like to receive and how often they would like to receive it.

Dr. Nevin-Woods said that rates of gonorrhea and syphilis have increased and that it's unusual. There is also an increase in the number of whooping cough (pertussis) cases which could be from an anti-vaccination mentality that can lead to an increase in vaccine preventable disease. There have been three reported salmonella cases, and two potential foodborne illness outbreaks. Cases of influenza should see a decrease in April. Mr. DelGrosso said he would like to see how this year's numbers compare to last year. Dr. Birnbaum said the medical community is not great in remembering to do sexually transmitted infection (STI) testing so seeing the numbers supports the argument that the medical community should be doing more testing. Mr. Gonzales said that 36 cases of syphilis is alarming.

There have been 26 cases of rabies in animals, and the department is working closely with the Department of Agriculture – state veterinarians on a rabies case involving a steer.

Dr. Birnbaum said he would like the BOH to have a larger conversation about how to get information out to the medical community, how messaging is prioritized, and determine if the information is getting to the right people. Ms. West Kowalski said this is the third meeting where the BOH has talked about the need to have better communication with the provider community. Ms. Lee said this could be a future topic to brainstorm, including considering the possibility of bringing in people from the medical community to have a larger conversation.

8. **Education vs. Advocacy** – Ms. Lee said that she's been having conversations with Mr. Gonzales regarding the department's role in education and advocacy and how to develop some guidelines to better define their role. Mr. Gonzales said specifically around dollars for tobacco prevention and Amendment 35, in the state constitution it is very clear that the department is not allowed to lobby. CDPHE has given good guidance on not lobbying. However there is local control on how far communities would like to go with advocacy. Mr. Gonzales would like to develop an understanding of where the department could cross the line from providing education to advocacy. Where does the BOH feel comfortable with policy and public health, and where does the BOH and Larimer County feel comfortable?

Lisa Laake, supervisor for the department's Tobacco Prevention program and Communities that Care program, said that both programs work with coalitions to build community support on tobacco prevention. Depending on the community, each may have a different way that they want to approach information about tobacco prevention. Ms. Laake shared examples of how staff have provided education within the community, including providing, public comment at a council meeting. In one case, a mayor asked LCDHE staff whether they should support a policy. Ms. Laake said staff respond with messages like, "we support evidence-based strategies such as..." Additionally, community members have asked staff how they can get more involved, how to contact local leaders and how to provide education on strategies. One time, they were providing education to city staff and the city said they wanted to hear from local community members instead of staff. Ms. Laake said in that instance, they stopped working with council and worked with the community to build up community support to help promote the evidence-based strategies.

Dr. Birnbaum said the department should advocate around evidence. When there are good evidence-based strategies to reduce harm, we should advocate in addition to educating. He indicated he feels very strongly about that. It's the role of the public health department, when there is very strong evidence, to advocate. He noted not to get afoot on any regulations, but it's up to the program to understand the regulations. Ms. Laake said that CDPHE has provided guidance on what they consider as lobbying and the list of strategies that have been provided all have evidence behind them.

Ms. Olson asked for an example of when the program didn't know what to do and why they didn't know what to do. Ms. Laake said there has been push back in the past in including local leaders' information in education materials and there was concern on what that would do to the department's relationships with local municipalities. Mr. Gonzales said that's where his concern comes from and that he wants to get clear direction from the BOH. Mr. DelGrosso said if someone is asking how to get involved, then information can be given out, local leader information is all available to the public. The message should be what do we need to do, how do we get involved, as opposed to calling people together and asking them to contact their local leaders. There's a difference between if we're organizing, versus community driven activities. Ms. West Kowalski said policy is a core thing for public health and that there are proven strategies for sustainable impact. She said there is a role for the department to do organizing, but that it shouldn't be what's been presented. There's a whole process that goes with organizing, it's about building a movement. Our role is to build the support and we do it by organized education campaigns to build support and then it comes from the community, not Larimer County. Ms. West Kowalski said she doesn't think that the department should be out telling people to contact council members, that could be dangerous. Ms. Lee said it sounds like the BOH members are

saying the same thing, that if there are times when there's strong evidence to support something then the department might become that catalyst in the community and serve as an organizer in a convener role and provide education to the community.

Ms. West Kowalski asked for more clarification from Mr. DelGrosso on a previous statement he made that the department shouldn't be organizing. He said he struggles with a county department organizing for policy change, because he doesn't want the department to be seen as political. He said even though there's evidence, there's always another side and he would hate to lose support from other sectors because we're seen as political. He said it's appropriate to show up to meetings and say the evidence supports this but cautions against trying to find people to lobby and get people at a council meeting. Dr. Birnbaum said he agreed with that, and that the department isn't allowed to lobby and directly getting people to go to a meeting to support a specific issue is inappropriate; but the department can organize and educate people around an issue. As policy is set, it is the job of the BOH to come to terms with the policy and then it is the responsibility of the department to advocate. Ms. Laake read the guidelines from the Colorado Department of Health and Environment (CDPHE) around lobbying on a state and local level. Dr. Birnbaum asked why the BOH couldn't just adopt the guidelines from CDPHE, what is the ask for the BOH? Ms. West Kowalski said there are process questions.

Lorenda Volker said she and Mr. Gonzales talked about how to avoid situations that pit the health department against public policy makers as opposed to being a partner. She asked what the line was for the BOH, what's their philosophy around advocacy? Each time there is a turnover in the BOH there might be a different definition or philosophy around what is advocacy. Ms. West Kowalski said that if, through the process of advocacy, you get a leader who wants to sponsor something, then it can come to the BOH to pass a resolution to give support and provide cover around the issue. Dr. Birnbaum advised to follow the CDPHE guidelines for the most part, and if there's an issue about possibly crossing a line then it can come to the BOH after going through leadership within the department.

Mr. Gonzales said he advised that an item in the draft tobacco education materials be excluded because it was a call to action to contact local elected officials. He said he was not comfortable with that coming from the department and there could be some consequences that would pit the department against another elected body. Mr. DelGrosso said he doesn't think that there's anything wrong with having the information and providing it if people ask how to contact their local leaders. Ms. Lee agreed that the information shouldn't be included on the flyer, but if staff are asked verbally or in a one-on-one conversation, staff can provide information if people are asking who they should contact. Mr. Gonzales said what he disagreed with was the specific call to action on the materials. The BOH agreed that a call to action shouldn't be included on written materials. Ms. West Kowalski said that if there's a time and the interest comes up within the department to provide advocacy to contact a local official, then it should come to the BOH where they could pass a resolution. Dr. Birnbaum said that if there's strong evidence to support an issue then the BOH should tell people to talk with community leaders and legislators. Mr. Gonzales said there's already been some precedent set with the BOH voting on two letters of support for recent state bills that the community finds important.

Mr. Gonzales said he appreciated the thoughtful conversation to get clear direction and guidance. Dr. Birnbaum said he would like to have these discussions on an informed and higher level and that the process should be that they go through Mr. Gonzales before coming to the BOH. Ms. West Kowalski said that when it does come to the BOH, it should come with a package of here's the evidence, here's how the problem looks in the community, the policy being suggested, where it's been passed in other communities, and information about the impact. The package should also include the amount of education that's been done to support the issue. Ms. Lee also advised that if something comes up that needs a quick response from the BOH, then staff need to talk with Mr. Gonzales. Ms. West Kowalski said that she's seen that advocates are getting lazy and

just want the policy. What's more important is an educated community that feels passionate and supportive of the public health issue.

9. **Director's Report** - Mr. Gonzales highlighted activities the department hosted for Public Health Week.

The department is working with BerryDunn consultants who are doing site visits at all three offices to assess for HIPAA updates. They will be issuing a report in the next few weeks.

Mr. Gonzales said he is participating in a group called Connect First Leadership, led by the Bohemian Foundation, to talk about three key indicators in the community, looking at kindergarten readiness, third grade reading, and graduation rates. There are inequities within the data and the group is coming together to talk through the inequities the data is highlighting.

The Consumer Protection Program hosted a food safety collaboration meeting and had 29 industry members attend with a lot of good questions asked. The Built Environment Team hosted social determinants of health speaking sessions.

The county budget office sent out a budget timeline. The budget is due August 16 and the budget hearing with the BOCC is September 22, 2019.

The BOH agreed to cancel the June and August meetings, and hold their yearly joint meeting with the BOCC on July 17 from 6 p.m. to 7 p.m. The regular BOH meeting will be from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. The BOH will review a draft budget at the July 17 meeting.

10. **Legislative Update** – Ms. Strand provided an update on several bills related to public health and whether or not the Colorado Association of Local Public Health Officials supported or opposed the bills.

11. **Board Member Updates** – Ms. Lee reminded the BOH of Dr. LeBailly's retirement party on April 24. She also shared information about the National Association of Local Boards of Health conference from Aug. 14-16 in Denver. The department has offered to send a BOH member. Dr. Birnbaum said it would be great to have BOH members attend regional public health meetings once a year.

Kelsey Lyon said she would send the BOH members invitations for an upcoming meeting, on May 6, hosted by the Community Health Improvement Plan team, regarding a hospital systems meeting to discuss behavioral health.

12. The meeting adjourned at 7:58 p.m.