

BOARD OF HEALTH COMMISSION
Meeting Minutes
April 26, 2022, 6:00 pm
Conducted Remotely

Commission Members Present: Judy Carter, Noel Chavez (Chair), Suzanne Feeney, Jennifer Fritz, Abigail Silva

Commission Members Excused: Susan Buchanan

Staff Liaisons Present: Theresa Chapple, Vanessa De La Mora, Cindy Hansen, Sara Semelka

Others Present: Marcella Bondie, Erica Helms

Call to Order. Dr. Chavez called the meeting to order at 6:14 pm.

Agenda Approval. Commissioner Carter moved to approve the agenda as presented. Commissioner Silva seconded. All commissioners present voted in favor.

Approval of the Minutes. Typo on page 2 to be corrected. Commissioner Silva moved to approve the March 22, 2022 minutes as corrected. Commissioner Fritz seconded. All commissioners present voted in favor.

Public Comment. Public comments attached at the end of this document.

Chair Chavez announced that Wynne Lacey has resigned her position and we thank her for her service to the Board of Health. Reminder to please complete your Open Meetings Act training.

Old Business.

IPLAN planning. Ms. Semelka reported that we hired Leading Healthy Futures, the Chicago-based consulting firm that helped us with the 2017 IPLAN. We launched our survey and produced a flyer to post in the community. Link to IPLAN website and survey: <https://www.oak-park.us/village-services/health-department/community-health-strategic-plan>. We have 421 responses to date and we had 1,000 last time. We ask commissioners to share the survey with their networks.

Commissioners will be invited to join larger assessments of the local healthcare system, starting in early June, with the outcome being 3-4 large goals and their corresponding activities. Commissioner Carter suggested putting a notice in *Oak Leaves* and at pharmacies and to provide paper surveys as well as the QR code.

Dr. Chapple added that we are asking residents to take the survey while they are waiting at our vaccination clinics. We promote it at our homebound visits and will promote at the Farmers' Market. Chair Chavez will send more ideas to Ms. Semelka. Commissioner Silva suggested advertising at soccer games along the fences. The survey will be open through May 31.

The survey and focus groups are part of the community themes and strengths assessment and the community health status assessment focuses on data. Leading Healthy Futures is looking at census data and can pull data for our zip codes. Rush Hospital just did their community health needs assessment and are willing to share their data. The Oak Park Township Community Mental Health Board will share the results of their survey. Our focus groups and community meetings will ensure that what we find in our data matches what the community thinks and feels.

Staffing update. Dr. Chapple announced that our environmental health supervisor, Rida Naqvi, has started and we now have a Farmers' Market Manager, Erica Helms. We are still recruiting for one more sanitarian, a COVID-19 epidemiologist, and a public health nurse.

We're starting a COVID testing program to offer PCR nasal and saliva tests with a 24-hour turnaround time. We need at least two staff to do that. Commissioner Carter asked what requirements they need and Dr. Chapple responded that no experience is necessary, we will train them. The swabs will be self-collected and the staff person will watch to ensure it's done correctly.

COVID-19 update. Dr. Chapple reported that we're in a very high spread right now, comparable to mid-January when we include self-reported home tests. Our case rate increased last week to over 300 per 100,000. The only other place rising as quickly as us is Skokie. Cook County expects to be in the yellow zone this week, which we believe is a function of testing and test availability. With PCR testing being less available and requiring insurance, it's making certain areas of the county have higher rates along the lines of income and insurance status.

Hospitalizations in our area have increased 50% in the last seven days so we are at the watch and educate stage so hopefully people who are high risk will participate in the test to treat program so they don't end up in the hospitals and our hospitalizations and case counts will start to decline.

We're seeing outbreaks almost everywhere and in places that we hadn't seen them in some time, including outdoor areas and in schools again at all levels. 8.6% of Julian Middle School's population had COVID in the past week. We're involving the state and ISBE to help push for mitigations, which have been a challenge to put back in place.

Now that we are in yellow, it is recommended that we be more concerned about our vulnerable populations. We can wear a mask and test before we go places where high risk people are. This variant has a five-week timeframe from cases rise before hospitalizations rise, but we're working with a 2.5-week timeframe and hospitalizations are rising quickly so there's definitely a need to be more proactive. Dr. Chapple will try to learn from the state what populations are being hospitalized.

We're doing vaccination clinics through April and they are well attended. Dr. Chapple wonders if the reason there are so many middle school cases is if they're not boosted. She has requested that data from the schools. We have access to ICARE which includes ages but not by school.

A Day in Our Village event. Ms. Semelka said A Day in Our Village is Sunday, June 5 from 11 am to 4 pm. The health department will have a booth and Board of Health commissioners are welcome to join us. Our goal is to give some information that we have health department and what we offer to the community in addition to COVID services.

New Business:

Oak Park Climate Plan. Marcella Bondie led a discussion with commissioners to get feedback on the Village of Oak Park's Climate Plan: <http://www.oak-park.us/climateplan>. There will be a follow-up meeting May 12 with all of the commissions to review the draft strategies. Chair Chavez will attend to represent the Board of Health.

Adjourn. Commissioner Silva moved to adjourn. Commissioner Fritz seconded. All commissioners present voted in favor. Chair Chavez adjourned the meeting at 7:32 pm.

Public Comment:

Rich Fobes:

Board of Health, Having a vaccine passport in place in Oak Park, even for a short period of time, was a low point in the history of the village. It is a stain on this community that I will never forget. Between this and the cruel unscientific mitigations you've put in place for the school districts, you have made us feel unwelcomed and you've made us consider moving out of the community. We withdrew our son from school due in part to your overreaching draconian mitigations. Most egregious were forced masking outside, not allowing children to play with each other freely outside, and 15-minute quiet lunches to name a few. I will contend to say these policies saved exactly zero lives. They did, however, cause great harm among the children. With your vaccine passport, knowing that you ignored naturally acquired immunity and that you admitted the vaccines do not stop the spread of COVID, yet you still put this draconian, unlawful, overreaching, and discriminatory policy in place is nothing short of appalling. It saddens me to feel ostracized in my own community here in Oak Park, not because of my unwillingness to comply, but because you think this is okay. It is not okay. This policy was not based on any real science or data, certainly nothing that you have put forth for the public. Dr. Chapple-McGruder, you stated that you wanted to implement this policy because you didn't want to be a safe haven for the unvaccinated, implying that unvaccinated individuals are somehow criminal or inferior to vaccinated individuals. How appalling is the sentiment? How is this standing up now? Over 60% of deaths in Illinois in the weeks of March 9th and March 16th were fully vaccinated individuals. Are you aware of this fact? Here are the sources (web link). The COVID vaccines are by far the most dangerous vaccines of all time according to the data, yet you obsessively push for them as a single strategy to mitigate infection. You coerced people to get them by requiring vaccine cards in park districts, movie theaters, restaurants. You do not ever talk about eating healthy, exercise, vitamin D early treatment protocols that physicians have been using successfully, or the significance in naturally acquired immunity. According the CDC operated their system, as of 3-11-22, there were 25,641 reported deaths from the COVID vaccine (source link). This is more than double the number of deaths associated with all other vaccines combined since the year 1990. These are not anti-vax sentiments. They are simply statements of fact.

Jennifer Gorski:

To District 97, District 97 School Board, Dr. Teresa Chapple-McGruder, I am the mother of two District 97 students. Back in February I wrote twice about our district's need to have a proactive and longer term plan to address the day-to-day management of COVID-19 in our schools. I requested more transparency around the decision-making process and contingency plans to support parents and their management of expectations. I wanted more information and data to inform healthy equity efforts, collaboration with our local health department around vaccination and booster outreach. At the time, I had concerns around prematurely rolling back the mitigations, the ones that made more sense, particularly without clearly defined dial-up and dial-down contingencies. Establishing all of these things takes quite a bit of problem solving and communication. My comment today is coming from a place of frustration. First, I have not heard much information regarding the points I raised in February outside of polite responses to my Let's Talk inquiries and enthusiastic remarks around our vaccination statistics, the return of hot lunch, which my children certainly appreciate, certain after-school programs, field trips, and parent volunteers. All of these things are wonderful and appreciated. However, it is now late in April and I am still not clear on the specifics around our district's plan moving forward. I would like more information around the structure for decision-making and communication, contingencies, decisions around indoor masks, and discussion planning around air monitoring and ventilation improvements. I continue to worry about the impact optional masking has had and will continue to have on disabled and chronically ill students, teachers, staff, and family members during times of higher transmission such as now. School is not an optional place for students, teachers, and staff. Time goes by very quickly. Before we know it, it will be the

2022-2023 school year. If we do not plan our response during the calmer times, we will be stuck in a cycle of reactivity. I believe we have the local resources and guidance to do much better. Thanks for your time and dedication, I truly appreciate it.