



MONTGOMERY COUNTY COMMISSION ON HEALTH
Virtual Meeting via Zoom
March 17, 2022
Meeting Minutes

Members Present: Jonathan Arias, Alana Aronin, Dr. James Bridgers, Christopher Burt, Marcela Campoli, Desiree de la Torre, Crystal DeVance-Wilson, Susan Emery, Cara Grant, Sam Greenfeld, Kendra Harris, Jessica Kronstadt, Gabriela Lemus, Adam Lustig, Essie McGuire, Rosemary Payne

Members Absent: Brent Berger, Elliott Brown, Sarah Emami, Amy Gyau-Moyer

Staff Present: Felicia Hugee, and Christopher Rogers

Guests:

AGENDA ITEMS/PRESENTER	ACTION ITEMS /RESPONSIBLE PARTY
<p>Meeting call to Order and Officer Report – Jessica Kronstadt and Crystal DeVance-Wilson</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The meeting was called to order at 6:02 p.m. The COH Chair welcomed members and asked the commissioners and staff in attendance to introduce themselves Upcoming meetings are April 21st and May 19th. The April meeting will take place virtually via Zoom. The Chair will work with staff to plan for an in-person meeting for May 19th and will provide additional details when available The Chair announced that a new member orientation is scheduled for April 7th and will be held virtually. She noted that it is primarily for new members but encouraged anyone who wanted to participate <p><u>A MOTION</u> was made by the Vice-Chair Crystal DeVance-Wilson to approve the February 17, 2022 minutes with the proposed edits to turn off track changes and replace the term Co-Chair with Vice Chair. The motion was seconded by Alana Aronin. The minutes were unanimously approved</p>	<p>Add March's minutes to April's agenda for approval- <i>COH Staff</i></p> <p>Work with staff to plan for an in-person meeting for May 19th – <i>COH Chair</i></p>
<p>MCDHHS Health Officer's Report –Dr. James Bridgers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dr. Bridgers provided an update on the County's COVID-19 status and noted that case rate, test positivity, hospitalization, and acute care-based usage, continue to be monitored based on CDCs previous primary and secondary indicators as well as the community levels per the most recent CDCs guidelines regarding the stress and strain of hospitalization. He pointed out that the County continues to maintain a low level of community transmission and noted that as of today, the case rate 7-day average was 34 cases per 100K residents, and the test positivity remains the lowest of the state at 1.41% Dr. Bridgers announced that the State of Maryland is moving to a test-to-treat model, with antivirals being available and FDA approved. Availability of the antivirals will not be limited to the hospitals, they will be available at Community based centers as well 	<p>N/A</p>

- There are plans for a long-covid care unit for those who may still suffer from respiratory illnesses, chronic illnesses as a result of contracting COVID-19, memory fog and mental challenges among others. More information is to come regarding what this alternative care site will offer
- Dr. Bridgers noted the following:
 - Montgomery County continues to maintain the highest vaccination rate for a County with more than 300k residents
 - Booster percentage is about 54% and the County continues to recommend and encourage them
 - 68% of the 5–11-year-old population have received the initial series and about 57% are fully vaccinated
 - 95% of total population have received at least one dose, 86% have received at least 2 doses, and 53% are fully vaccinated by receiving a booster/additional dose
- Dr. Bridgers pointed out that with the decline of cases and the lower level of transmission, there has been a decrease in testing as well as vaccinations
- He pointed out that the 6-month-old-4-year-old are still vulnerable and noted that early childcare settings are experiencing some outbreaks
- Dr. Bridgers mentioned that 2,144,000 rapid tests have been acquired by the County and more than 1.6M kits have been distributed along with 1,011,327 masks. He also pointed out the COVID-19 PCR Test drop boxes located throughout the County for pick-up and drop-off for self-completed PCR tests
- The County is working with WSSC and the University of Maryland on a pilot study to detect not only COVID-19 in the sewer system but also PCR and rapid antigen test

Discussion:

- Jonathan Arias wanted clarification on the detection of the BA.2 subvariant in the County and if it was increasing. Dr. Bridgers responded that the department has not specifically been notified that the BA.2 subvariant was in the County, he further explained that the sequencing has been done at the Maryland Department of Health at the University of Maryland lab and there is no specific geographic information, but the data is continuously being monitored.
- Jonathan Arias also wanted to know if there was any information regarding a second booster shot. Dr. Bridgers explained that there is no information available regarding additional booster shots but noted that the County is prepared to provide them when and if recommended. He also explained that the County is prepared to provide the pediatric vaccine for the 6-month – 4-year-old population when approved
- Crystal DeVance-Wilson pointed out that the COVID-19 PCR Test drop boxes were a great idea and wanted to know if there were plans to expand and cover other areas of the County. Dr. Bridgers explained that they first looked at the under vaccinated areas to determine the pilot boxes locations and added that they do plan on expanding
- Gabriela Lemus wanted to know if there was any information available about the “Deltacron” variant. Dr. Bridgers explained that there is no information about it but noted that all subvariants are being monitored

<p>Overview of County Council Budget Process – Essie McGuire</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Essie McGuire provided an overview of the County Council budget process and how the COH may want to interact with the County Council during this process. She explained the County Government structure and provided a summary of the 3 independent branches of Montgomery County Government • Essie McGuire also provided an overview of the different options available to the COH to reach the Council and pointed out that this year, the public hearings will be held April 19th, 20th, and 21st. She explained that testimony could be sent in before hand or could be provided verbally during a public hearing. She pointed out that a sign-up is required to do it verbally and registration opens March 24th • She also pointed out that COVID has resulted in year-round budget actions and noted that all information is available online. She explained that OMB's website has budget information, recommended and approved; and the Council's website has all the staff reports to committees and Council <p><u>Discussion:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Chair wanted to know how external sources of funding were handled and what the role the County Council was. Essie McGuire explained that the result of all external sources of funding is that they must come through the County Council for appropriation, she explained that even if it isn't County dollars, if a department wants to spend it, the Council needs to appropriate it. She pointed out that the process begins with the Executive department and explained that the entire public health team looks for those external sources. She explained that in terms of advocating, the COH providing awareness to these types of opportunities ensures that they are not missed. The public health team working with their management and budget would be the ones responsible for putting a packet together to apply for it and the County Council and staff would work on processing it. She also pointed out that while the budget is set in bulk for the year, the Council takes action all year if something does come up that is off budget cycle as it often the case with external funding • The Chair pointed out that a very specific request had been put forth in a letter to the County Executive in the fall regarding additional staff to do epidemiology and evaluation work. She explained that it did not appear to have been added to the budget and asked if this was something the commission wanted to revisit and submit as testimony or if there was anything else they wanted to advocate for. She explained that an email vote would need to take place to be able to get the written testimony in on time. Jonathan Arias, Gabriela Lemus, and Adam Lustig agreed that it would be good to submit it as testimony. Jonathan also suggested meeting with Council President Gabe Albornoz • The Chair also suggested working on getting a meeting scheduled with Council President Gabe Albornoz to take place after next month's meeting and to take time at the next COH meeting to go over talking points to prepare • The Chair asked for volunteers to review the letter as well as volunteers for the meeting with Council President Gabe Albornoz. Desiree de la Torre volunteered to review the letter and provide feedback 	<p>The COH Chair will review the letter to be submitted to the County Council as testimony and will send it to all Commissioners for review before next month's meeting for a vote</p>
<p>Preparing Public Health Infrastructure for the Next Emergency – All members</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Chair mentioned that Jonathan Arias and Brent Berger were joining her to think of the long-term questions on what is needed to prepare Public Health infrastructure for the next emergency 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • She explained that some of the discussion was based around how the COH could more effectively help to advocate to strengthen the Health Department • She asked for Jonathan Arias to help prepare for the conversation that the COH will have next month in anticipation of the meeting with Council President Gabe Albornoz 	
<p>Violence as a Public Health Issue – All Members</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desiree noted that she will need to follow up with Rosemary Payne and Chris Burt to discuss the issue. She also asked that if anyone had any ideas or suggestions on what the COH should focus on to please email her directly and she would take it back to the team • Jonathan Arias, Susan Emery, the Vice-Chair, and Adam Lustig provided links to suggested articles and resources for review on the topic • Alana Aronin suggested that another issue to consider is the role of social determinants of health as role in health outcomes • The Chair asked for new member participation on the workgroup and reminded all that it is expected that all commissioners participate in at least one workgroup and noted that there are four standing workgroups • Adam Lustig suggested adding the violence prevention concerns into the budget testimony letter 	Ad hoc groups will discuss potential COH steps related to violence as a public health issue, and future public health infrastructure needs
<p>Workgroup Updates – Chair/Workgroup Leads</p> <p>Equity Workgroup – Marcela Campoli No update</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Chair mentioned that one of the roles the equity workgroup has it to look at all the COH’s work through and equity lens <p>School Health Workgroup – Desiree de la Torre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desiree mentioned that what is important for the workgroup to work on which lines up with the ad hoc groups is looking at violence in youth, end violence, and relating it to the school. She will discuss with the team. • The Chair suggested the workgroup follow up with Cara Grant <p>Communicable Diseases Workgroup – Rosemary Payne No update</p> <p>Governance Workgroup –Jessica Kronstadt</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Chair mentioned that a request for materials had been made to public health services. She noted that some of the materials were just received including the strategic plan and other documents. She explained that the workgroup will review them and then shared them with all commissioners 	NA
<p>COH Liaison Updates – Chair • BCC Liaisons Updates</p> <p>Latino Health Initiative Steering Committee – Marcela Campoli</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marcela Campoli mentioned that she had met with the Latino Health Initiative Steering Committee and informed the Commissioners that they are starting their 	NA

advocacy process. She pointed out that they are coordinating with other minority groups and are seeking funding to continue work on community engagement, vaccine hesitancy, and community health in general. She noted that they are focused on advocacy efforts and understanding the budget

African American Health Program – Crystal DeVance-Wilson

- Crystal DeVance-Wilson informed explained that the program is working on their annual Community Day event. She noted that the event will be held in May, and it is possible that it will be a hybrid event.
- Testing and vaccinations continue through the lab physicians network
- Crystal DeVance-Wilson pointed out that the health initiatives had been invited by the County Executive to petition for funding. She noted that once the funds are received, she would like to inquire about how the funds are being used and what the health outcomes are for oversight purposes

Veterans Administration – Rosemary Payne

No report

School Health Council – Alana Aronin

No report

Age Friendly Health and Wellness Group – Susan Emery

- Susan Emery mentioned a major emphasis of the group is mental health. Crystal DeVance-Wilson agreed and noted that the County is trying to put more funding behind mental health

Healthy Montgomery – Crystal DeVance-Wilson

- Crystal DeVance-Wilson mentioned that she had received an email from Dr. Rogers noting that a Co-Chair had been identified. Dr. Rogers clarified that an “interim” Co-Chair had been identified. He noted that Leslie Graham volunteered to serve as the interim Co-Chair. He also pointed out that the hope is to have a steering committee meeting in May

Discussion:

- Crystal DeVance-Wilson asked Essie McGuire to if she could discuss the process of providing testimony. Essie McGuire summarized the process and explained that public testimony is associated with an action of the Council or part of a discussion that a committee is having.
- The Chair provided clarification regarding the letter that the COH plans on submitting as testimony. She explained that the letter had been previously sent to the County Executive and not the County Council
- The Chair asked Essie McGuire if there was a difference between submitting written testimony that becomes part of the packet vs. signing up to speak at the public hearing and is there an advantage to doing both. In response, Essie McGuire explained that there is no difference or preference and noted that Council staff look at all the communications whether is email, hard mail, or written testimony.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jonathan Arias pointed out that the level of communication in obtaining data, especially on measurable outcomes from public health service in the County is inadequate. He noted that the strategic plan included 19 pages of actions and expected outcomes and only 1 ½ pages on how it would be measured. Susan Emery and Crystal DeVance-Wilson supported Jonathan Arias' comment and added that Healthy Montgomery has some data available on their website, but it is not enough to help make informed decisions Susan Emery asked how the HHS budget helps make the County greener. Dr. Rogers explained that he has not had a chance to fully go over the 800-page document of the County Executive recommended budget which provides a list of items that speak to a greener County. He also added that the Dennis Avenue health center is a green energy efficient building that offers green space and a green house on the top floor among other features. Susan Emery wanted clarification about making HHS or the County greener. Dr. Rogers explained that he was not prepared to speak to that and offered to have a response by next meeting Desiree de la Torre asked Dr. Rogers if there was an update on the community health needs assessment. Dr. Rogers explained that the staff continues to make progress on the CHNA and anticipate the report to be available in the later part of May to bring it to the Healthy Montgomery Steering Committee for review. He pointed out that this would be contingent upon WESTAT and their timeline and that he should have more accurate information within the next two weeks. He also stated that the report will be published publicly and the final draft of the CHNA is released to the Steering Committee and the COH's representative from the Steering Committee can share the document once it is made available Gabriela Lemus wanted to know if the Commission had examined the intersection between environmental justice and public health equity as one of the social determinants of health. The Chair explained that that it has not been a theme of the COH in recent years. She pointed out that once a year the COH comes up with what the non-ad hoc workgroups are and stated that this was a great suggestion for a potential topic 	
Announcements NA	N/A
Adjournment The meeting was adjourned at 7:59 p.m.	N/A