



TIOGA COUNTY BOARD OF HEALTH

MEETING MINUTES November 16, 2023

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT (All Attended In Person):

W. Simmons, Vice President
R. Kapur-Pado, DO (Arrived at 7:38 a.m.)
T. Leary, FNP
T. Nytech, DVM
J. Raftis, DO, FACEP

ABSENT:

T. Hills, DVM, President
W. Standinger III, Legislator

OTHER(S) PRESENT:

H. Vroman, Public Health Director
A. Reigelman, Secretary

GUESTS:

Susan Medina, Deputy Public Health Director (Departed at 8:28 a.m.)
Denis McCann, Director of Administrative Services (Departed at 8:28 a.m.)
Nicole Whitmore, Director of Dental Health Services (Departed at 8:28 a.m.)
Todd Kopalek, Supervising Public Health Sanitarian (Departed at 8:28 a.m.)
Melanie Miller, Director of Patient Services (Departed at 8:28 a.m.)

CALL TO ORDER: at 7:37 by Mr. Simmons

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS: by Ms. Vroman, who stated that the Public Health Management Team will be sharing program accomplishments from the past year/last six months.

PRESENTATION:

- Ms. Medina shared that she started part way through the year, in May, but the biggest highlights from then on include:
 - Worked with staff to reassign programs and projects, which has not only provided professional development opportunities but has allowed us to reconsider our approach.
 - Have reengaged with community partners, including healthcare providers, coalition work; rebuilding relationships.
 - Public Health Fellowship program-currently have two Fellows which has been a nice to show them what Public Health does, give them opportunity to learn.
- Mr. McCann:
 - Created electronic forms, which are being used as template/pilot for the County.
 - We've received compliments from at least a dozen department heads, especially in assisting with the County's Remote Work pilot program, helping in writing the policy and pushing to get it approved. We are now moving into an additional year of the pilot program.
 - Ms. Vroman added that Public Health took the lead in this pilot program because our staff had experience with it, primarily working from home during COVID.
 - Members and Public Health staff discussed Tioga County's remote work program.
 - Tioga County has New York State Comptroller Audit, Public Health talked to the auditors once and they never had any follow up questions. The processes we have in place allow the department to run smoothly and efficiently, without worry of fraud, waste or abuse.

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- Ms. Whitmore:
 - Added two additional dental van stops for Spencer-Van Etten children as the district installed new electrical hook-ups at the Middle School and Elementary.
 - Had a Dental Fair at Spencer-Van Etten School District with the help of Health Educators, Cornell Cooperative Extension and Casa Trinity. Over 300 students grades PK-4 received education on oral health, nutrition and tobacco as well as a tour of the dental van.
 - October marked the 20th anniversary of the Tioga Smiles program serving the residents and children of Tioga County. We received great feedback from patients of the dental program which were shared on Public Health Facebook page. Ms. Whitmore passed around the complimenting comment cards to the Board.
 - Ms. Vroman encouraged the Board to follow the Public Health Facebook page to be able to see shared messages and highlights.
 - Dr. Kapur-Pado gave a shout out to Ms. Medina, as she initiated the Dental Van program 20 years ago.
 - Dr. Nytch inquired if the dental van reaches northern parts of Tioga / serve the Tioga County Amish communities.
 - Ms. Whitmore stated that the van goes to Newark Valley Schools. Difficult to go into Richford/Berkshire due to lack of accessible electrical hookups. But if appropriate hookups were in place could spend some time there during the summer months. She also stated that some Amish families are seen on the van, but most do not want preventative care.
 - Discussion of the staff that run the van (P/T Dentist, Dental Assistant, two Hygienists, and now have new Office Specialist III); still looking for another P/T Dentist.
 - Ms. Whitmore briefly explained the dental program: all Tioga County residents are welcome to call and schedule, take most insurances. Cost is based on a sliding fee scale.
- Mr. Kopalek:
 - Had 51 enforcements year-to-date: 13 food related, 31 water related, 4 underage sale of tobacco products, 3 miscellaneous.
 - No foodborne outbreaks this year, attributed to food course (enforce that one employee of each establishment take the course every two years). Have had 220 individuals take the food course this year.
 - Awarded \$44,000 for another year of the Wellhead Extension Grant.
 - Dr. Nytch inquired if animal butchering establishments fell under Public Health regulations. Mr. Kopalek replied that they fall under USDA.
- Ms. Miller shared that she is another returning employee, came back in April. Now oversee Early Intervention and Nursing:
 - Early Intervention (EI)- struggle in program because of lack of providers. We have good quality staff who provide great outreach. This year started sending a HIPAA-compliant waitlist to providers to assist in getting children services. Also doing more Quality Assurance. Charts are being reviewed to see what can be done better to streamline.
 - Nursing- have Public Health Nurse who is awesome! Can now complete own communicable disease cases, do COVID and flu tracking, and outreach to providers and nursing homes to let them know Public Health can be a resource. We have revamped the clinic and are back to vaccinating. This year was able to prevent 14 children from being excluded from school. Offer regular clinic hours on Thursdays.
 - Ms. Vroman added that the Board should stop by and see the clinic updates. Now have new swipes on doors, decals on walls to make it a much friendlier space. Also have a Therapy Room downstairs.
 - Ms. Leary stated that EI wasn't always accessible, had more pushback; now it is a lot more accessible.
 - Ms. Miller asked if anyone has outreach ideas to please reach out.
 - Discussion of lead/ lead program, and the recent recall (Weis applesauce).

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Dr. Raftis asked the Public Health Management Team what the biggest roadblock/struggle for each program has been. What is lacking/needed?

- Ms. Medina stated that it is difficult to be a rural county as people look to larger areas for resources. We have low participation for outreach events (ie. Car Seat events). How can we really reach the community?
- Mr. McCann stated that 1.) Not enough hours in a day, and 2.) There is no low hanging fruit anymore, difficult to meet cost needs (in Preschool program and Transportation). In order to expand in some areas, we have to reduce in others.
- Ms. Whitmore stated that people don't value oral health (not just in Tioga County, it's everywhere). We work with kids but the parents are not coming to the appointment to assist in educating. We see tons of decay in kids.
 - Ms. Vroman asked Ms. Whitmore to speak on the percentages of decay.
 - Ms. Whitmore did not have exact amounts, but roughly: saw 87 kids in middle school/high school in Waverly. Under 10 had never had a cavity. Over 100 cavities on the 40 kids who did have decay.
 - Ms. Leary asked if Fluoride helps. Ms. Whitmore stated that yes, it does help (about 40% effective) if applied 4 times a year (which children seen on the van are only seen once). There is stigma in Tioga County that Fluoride is bad for you. Ms. Leary stated that it is about breaking cycles.
 - Dr. Kapur-Pado stated might be worth a presentation on Fluoride effectiveness in water.
- Mr. Kopalek stated that with the resignation of one Public Health Sanitarian, has been difficult. Have not had any bites, possible due to the specific education qualifications and salary.
- Ms. Miller stated that making sure people know we are here to help as a resource; rebuilding partnerships. Also, of course the EI provider shortage. All we can do is advocate.
 - Mr. McCann gave fiscal explanation of EI provider shortage (since 2013 EI providers have been paid by New York State and receive delays in payments, because of this provider have pulled out of the program).
 - Ms. Medina stated that the Commissioner of the State has highlighted that this is an issue. Ms. Vroman added that the State is trying to increase EI provider rates by 11% to try to be able to keep providers.
 - Ms. Leary noted that EI services are great, need to have available.

The Board thanked the Public Health staff for sharing.

ADDITIONAL ITEMS:

- Proposed 2024 Calendar (distributed electronically and in hardcopy)- Ms. Vroman stated that the By-Laws indicate having an annual review [of the By-Laws], have it listed tentatively in January. Is that something you would like to move to a different month? Board decided to leave the review in January.
 - Dr. Raftis noted that it was nice having the different Public Health directors/supervisors here to be able to get feedback and asked that they come in at least once a year.
 - Dr. Nytch stated maybe one or two could come in at a time every other month so that it doesn't take up the entire meeting.
 - Ms. Vroman stated that Quality Assurance is completed quarterly, we could have one or two staff come quarterly to coincide with that. The Board was in agreement.
 - Discussed possible presentation topic ideas:
 - County Government Structure/ other committees (Ms. Vroman briefly explained Health and Human Services Committee meetings, when meetings are/what occurs). Ms. Leary stated with more knowledge might assist in advocating for resources (like EI).
 - Discussion between Ms. Vroman and Board members on EI program and proper advocacy/ support for children.



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OLD BUSINESS:

- Meeting Minutes: No discussion; motion to approve prior minutes made by Dr. Kapur-Pado; seconded by Ms. Leary, all were in favor, none opposed, motion approved.
- Enforcements: Ms. Vroman stated only one enforcement, forgot to submit water sample.

INFORMATIONAL: Ms. Vroman shared updates.

- The Legislature approved Dr. Nytch's reappointment.
- A rabid kitten situation in Rockland County. *0 kids had to receive RPEP for exposure. On the call that discussed this referenced the Tioga County Goat incident.
 - Mr. Simmons stated that he has real concern for Agriculture classes in schools, bringing animals in to classes. Need to be informed of proper protocol (animals need to be vaccinated).
 - Ms. Vroman stated that Public Health can put out a letter to send to schools (Superintendents, principals, Agriculture teachers) to inform them that if bringing animals into classrooms that they must be vaccinated.
- December 5th will be having a Environmental Health Administrative Hearing for an enforcement that did not get paid. Discussion of enforcement, meeting details.
- We have been contacted by an attorney regarding a lead case that was investigated in 2021. Working with County Attorney DeWind on this.
- The 2024 Medical Consultant position is going to be two positions (based on previous model we had in 2009). This for budgetary purposes and to have expertise in different areas. The Board briefly discussed.
- What priorities would you like to see addressed, things you'd like to be updated on in 2024?
 - Dr. Nytch stated that he would like to see more on lead and dental, important topics.
 - Mr. Simmons enjoyed today's presentation from staff, would like to see more of the inner workings of Public Health.
 - Dr. Raftis asked about Mental Health-not clear on what's fully available. Also possibly identify other local county health departments/Board of Health's to see how they perform, how we can improve.
 - Ms. Leary stated that it is all about resources, how does Tioga County allocate funds; how can we share messages and make changes.
 - Discussion of rural communities, politicizing Public Health, staff incentives (salary raises), retention and recruitment strategies.


NEW BUSINESS:

- Quarter's Three Audit Summary: Dr. Kapur-Pado provided the Board with brief summary of the internal chart audit review of public health programs that took place November 3, 2023.
 - The internal audit team reviewed charts to see what can be done better.
 - Feel it is good that auditors review their own charts.
 - Had some corrections to make.

Ms. Vroman noted that bringing back Quality Assurance/Quality Improvement is definitely one of highlights for the year, looking at what we do and what we can do better.

Meeting adjourned at 9:29 A.M.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Abigail Reigelman.


William Simmons, Vice President


Abigail Reigelman, Secretary

Minutes approved January 18, 2024
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