

**LEWIS COUNTY, WASHINGTON**  
**BOARD OF HEALTH**  
**SPECIAL BOARD MEETING MINUTES**

May 14, 2020

1:30 p.m.

The Board of Health for Lewis County, Washington met in special session on Thursday, May 14, 2020, at 1:30 p.m. **COMMISSIONER ROBERT C. JACKSON** was in attendance, joined by **EDNA J. FUND** through ZOOM Meeting, and **GARY STAMPER** by phone. **COMMISSIONER JACKSON** served as Chair and determined a quorum, called the meeting to order, and proceeded with the flag salute.

**ATTENDEES:**

**County Staff:**

JP Anderson  
Dr. Rachel Wood  
John Abplanalp  
Erik Martin  
Sandi Andrus

Amber Smith  
Cullen Gatten  
Johnathan Meyers  
Sheriff Rob Snaza

**Community**

Matt Matayoshi

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

None

**PUBLIC HEALTH UPDATE**

**JP** presented a power point regarding the Novel Corona Virus (COVID-19) (attached) after brief technical difficulties. **John Abplanalp** shared that the current count through May 11 of recent diagnoses is 32. The State DOH has information of county cases available. Ten of those diagnosed have required hospitalization and 22 of the cases are at least 28 days past their symptom onset date with 19 of them considered recovered. The 3 deaths show a 14% mortality rate. **Commissioner Stamper** asked when the last death occurred and **Erik Martin** replied that April 21 was when we reported the last death.

**John** continued reporting on testing. There is a lag time to testing which goes down on weekends. There was a dramatic increase for testing a couple weeks ago due to clearing people in order to have surgeries. Prior to that, only symptomatic people were tested. There were no new cases between April 23 and May 4.

**Commissioner Stamper** asked if this information will be part of the information shared with the State when requesting a variance. **John** responded that this information will be shared on our application and that we currently have a 2.2% positivity rate.

**John** showed a map of the County with relative number of cases per district. He went through the numbers for those who could not see the map. District 1 has 18 cases, or 7.2 cases per 10,000 people. District 2 has 8 cases, or 3.2 cases per 10,000 people and District 3 has 6 cases or 2.4 cases per 10,000 people. **Commissioner Fund** asked how many of those in each district has recovered. John did not have that information but stated he would check and report it next week. This information will be shared on the County website.

**John** explained case and contact investigation. He provided a list of all mandated health conditions that need to be reported by both health care providers who diagnose them and the labs that run the tests. That report allows us to do the follow up by reaching out to the person who is diagnosed and do a voluntary interview with them, typically, answering questions they may have. We collect demographic information and focus on the symptoms that would be indicated by the disease. Another piece of this is identifying contacts. It is the really close contacts who are most likely to have been infected. We then notify those who may have been in contact and provide written guidance and inform them they can contact us at any time. We encourage trust with the person and assure their information will not be shared with others. We have experience with this in PHSS by having a background in investigating other diseases such as HIV. We already have strict protocols in place.

**Commissioner Jackson** stated that there has been a call from the Governor's office for mass testing and asked if the model is still for those who are symptomatic. John explained that the Governor is requesting that statewide especially for those counties who have as much as 10% positive. Lewis County is doing well at only 2% positivity rate.

**Commissioner Fund** asked who is doing the contact investigation. John replied that right now it is a combination of our staff as well as back-up staff from the State DOH. Some National Guard and other state workers have also been trained. They will mainly be notifying the contact of primary contacts while we are doing the initial investigation.

**Commissioner Fund** asked what number we have to have as contact tracers for the variance application. **John** stated that there is not a specific threshold named. Currently, the most we have had to investigate in one week was eight. Contact investigating is one of the allowable costs for the CARES Act funding. **JP** added that the most recent number being used statewide is 30 contact tracers for 100,000 population.

**John** explained how the investigation is done after the initial interview. We will not share identifiable information and those doing the contact investigating will only have a number assigned to the person in front of them, not the name. We would be doing a lot of education and asking questions about symptoms. We would encourage them to get testing if they have symptoms.

**Commissioner Jackson** asked if John could speak a bit about quarantines and how that might be enforced. **John** replied that it is extraordinarily rare that we would move into any kind of punitive or legal enforcement realm. This is a voluntary system. Our Health Officer, Dr. Wood, does have the authority to have people incarcerated. There would be a multitude of legal steps we would have to take to go down that path. **Dr. Wood** added that there is a due process and you have to be clear that the person understood their instructions. We are asking people to do this voluntarily for the protection of everyone. There are vulnerable populations among us.

**JP** explained that he sent the BOH a draft of the variance request this morning. We need to have MOUs with community partners in place. Valley View Medical will be helping by having local ability to have contact monitoring and case management. That will require a great deal of staff. We are setting up the MOU's to pay for staff on an hourly basis as needed. CARES Act funding would fund that MOU.

**JP** explained that he heard last night that Lewis County is not currently eligible to apply for Phase 2 variance based on our population being over 75,000. King County Health Officer proposed a new metrics with guidelines for people to apply for Phase 2. We will continue to advocate for our County and for the State to use a metrics that is realistic and allow us to open safely. PHSS needs to develop a plan that meets the standards of the Health Officer and the County.

**Dr. Rachel Wood** stated the work done to apply for the variance has been very important but we are not yet ready to apply. She expressed the many things that the Department has done to prepare for Phase 2. One of the criteria is to continue to protect vulnerable populations and we are currently in the middle of an investigation in a congregate setting. With many unknowns, Dr. Wood felt she needed more information to say our County is ready for a variance. **Commissioner Jackson** expressed his concern that since we have not seen a major outbreak, why would we think that we would see one to the point that it shuts us down and breaks our economy. He questioned why we are not closer to applying for a variance. Dr. Wood responded that we are getting closer to applying. She is concerned about the current situation and the unknowns. We need to prevent people from getting the virus. She also expressed that it is her job to do what she can with the knowledge that she has and the training that she has to protect the public's health the best she can.

A discussion continued regarding why we are unable to apply for the variance at this time and the reasons why Public Health does not feel we are ready yet to move forward into Phase 2. All the things that we have been asked to do to protect our citizens is being done.

**Commissioner Stamper** expressed frustration that we have been telling our citizens that we were moving forward on this variance application and if the Governor chooses to put it on the shelf, that is his decision. We are not following through as leaders if we do not move forward. **Commissioner Jackson** added that businesses that want to open plan on practicing social distancing. We are concerned about not only the physical health of the citizens, but the mental health, emotional health, economic health, as well as their

spiritual health. He stated that we have to find a way to get to the point to get this variance approved.

**Rob Snaza**, LC Sheriff, expressed his concern regarding the citizens of the County. His concern includes people's jobs and the possibility of losing their businesses or their homes. Our citizens want to go to work and provide for their families. He stated that this variance needs to move forward.

**JP** responded stating that 10% of the people who have gotten the virus in Lewis County have died. Lewis County would be able to follow social distancing rules and handle this. **Sheriff Snaza** stated the business owners would do what they need to do to open up their businesses. Some of them are desperate to open. **JP** replied that we need to work together and we will come out of this known as a community that is safe to go to. **PH** needs to be ready for when COVID-19 does arrive and we are getting ready as fast as we can. **Dr. Wood** expressed that her role as the Health Officer is to protect the public's health; that is what she was hired to do. She also stated she sees herself as part of a team with everyone working on this pandemic.

**Commissioner Fund** reiterated what Sheriff Snaza stated about people being scared, uneasy, afraid of losing their businesses, and getting COVID-19. This is a very difficult time in our country. She shared an email she received from Jim Walsh that stated, "keep going, they are changing parameters for variances as they go. Make the application a way for Washington Health to come to you." Commissioner Fund expressed we need to continue working on this variance application and wondered what the outstanding issues are that we need to work on. She is concerned about an outbreak in a congregate facility and what that might do. She requested a list of the things we need to do to move ahead and that it is time to get our plan together and move forward.

**Commissioner Jackson** asked what the timeline might be to move into Phase 2. **JP** replied that he did not know how quickly the State would allow that move once we are ready. He continued with the power point discussing next steps in readiness. There are MOUs that need to be finalized, adequate isolation and quarantine capacity available, increased test availability, information and recommendations, and continued advocating at the state level for the health of our community.

**JP** presented a desire to meet with Erik Martin and Becky Butler to advocate for a financial person in our office as we build out interventions. We need support in the fiscal office to navigate the CARES dollars coming in, put together pieces, and track what is going on with the MOUs to make sure we are ready. We need some support in public health interventions funding.

**Erik Martin** added that he is in support and looking for the right solutions for everything we need and is supportive of what Public Health needs at this time more than ever. He reported that he and Becky will go into detail with the BOCC on what is available in the CARES Act as far as the coronavirus relief funds and making recommendations on how to spend those funds. **Commissioner Fund** requested something that shows goals, plans and objectives for these CARES Act funds. **JP** responded that the department could have

a detailed report to them that outlines clearly what needs to happen next. He will asterisk items that are required in the variance and outline things for general readiness. These will have implications beyond Phase 2. A lot of people are working on this variance to get this going forward.

**Commissioner Stamper** stated his approval of the parks opening this weekend. He shared part of a letter that the County Commissioners in the State signed off on. This was addressed to Governor Inslee stating, “the glacial speed of this process is killing our citizens of this State in ways the virus is not. It is killing them financially, emotionally, and through undiagnosed other physical conditions not attended to due to the fear of inability to see doctors or go to the hospital.” It explained we have not yet won the fight against the virus and asked the Governor to please turn this around. As County Commissioners, they need to “lead the community in the way that preserves not only the physical health and safety but their economic health and safety. We believe this can be done in tandem at a more rapid pace than seems currently done.”

**Commissioner Stamper** asked if all the letters the Commissioners are receiving are being posted on the website. **Erik** replied that it was posted on Facebook and the website. There are also comments being posted, some positive and some concerned, about what opening the County might do to the spread of the virus.

**Commissioner Jackson** added that this was a collaborative work of County Commissioners in 20 counties and has been shared numerous times. **Commissioner Fund** added that we need to let people know what we are doing and to keep suggestions coming to them. She has received calls from people asking what they can do to help the County.

**Commissioner Stamper** wanted to make sure he has all the information he can to share with county residents. This means relevant information as quickly as possible so they can let the residents know what is going on. **JP** stated that he will get them information as soon as he can. The Commissioners requested to be kept up to date.

**Commissioner Fund** stated next week we will get more data that shows the number per district of recovered individuals. **JP** added that the department will look for good pieces of information and local data around COVID-19. Commissioner Fund requested that if any information is given out to the media, that they be notified so they can be prepared to respond as needed.

**Commissioner Stamper** thanked Sheriff Snaza for the information he provided and asked if he could continue to pass information on to the Commissioners. **Sheriff Snaza** stated he cares about the community and wants to see it flourish. We have great people in our community and will make it through. He thanked the Commissioners and the electeds.

Commissioner **Stamper** moved to adjourn. Commissioner **Fund** seconded, Commissioner **Jackson** adjourned.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at **3:25 p.m.**, on Thursday, **May 14, 2020**. The next public meeting will be held on Monday, **June 8, 2020** at 1:30 p.m.

Please note that minutes from the Board of Health meetings are not verbatim. A tape of this meeting is available.

**BOARD OF HEALTH  
LEWIS COUNTY, WASHINGTON**

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Edna J. Fund, Chair

Respectfully Submitted,

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Gary Stamper, Vice Chair

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Sandi Andrus  
Clerk of the Board of Health

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Robert C. Jackson, Member