

# The Lehigh Valley Board of Health

*An Historic Public Health Partnership between the Counties of Lehigh and Northampton*

## MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING FEBRUARY 8, 2010

County Council Chambers  
Northampton County Courthouse

The meeting was called to order by Dr. Lyon at 6:05 pm.

Board members present: David T. Lyon, MD, MPH                      Robert B. Black, MS  
Halyna I. Stegura, RN, MSN    Judith K. Maloney, JD, MPH  
Vicky Kistler, MEd    Ilene Prokup, RN, MS  
David G. Beckwith, PhD    Eric J. Gertner, MD, MPH

Also in attendance: Michael A. Gaul, Esq.  
Amy Holtz

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OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT The meeting having been duly announced, Dr. Lyon welcomed members of the public and offered the opportunity for public comment. There being none at this time, the Board proceeded with its published agenda.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES Motion to approve the minutes of January 11, 2010 as distributed was made, seconded and unanimously carried.

REPORT OF THE CHAIRMAN Dr. Lyon informed the Board that information has been provided to all new Health Commission members; and opportunities will be explored to meet privately with each. Meetings have been scheduled with Easton Mayor Panto and Allentown Mayor Pawlowski. Dr. Lyon reported that, with the assistance of Congressman Dent's Office, he has determined that bi-county DOH establishment does not qualify for federal stimulus funding. An op-ed piece was published in the *Express Times* on January 27<sup>th</sup>; and a letter to *The Morning Call* is expected to appear this week. In addition, conversations have been held with the *Blue Valley Times*; and Dr. Lyon and Mr. Reinhart will prepare an article for appearance in this newspaper serving the Slate Belt. Dr. Lyon noted that he and Steven Bliss are exploring the possibility of regional public health supporters who have officially endorsed the establishment of a Lehigh Valley Health Department submitting letters of support to the Health Commission. Ms. Prokup, Ms. Stegura and Dr. Beckwith have assumed oversight roles in finalizing BOH proposals in the areas of specific services, code and ordinances, and budget and financial planning respectively. Dr. Gertner and Mr. Black will continue to lead in personnel issues and community education and support respectively. Finally, Dr. Lyon informed the Board that a contract extension has been negotiated with the University of Pittsburgh and agreed to verbally, although not yet executed. It will continue until April 30, 2010 or until the completion of all identified services, whichever occurs later. There will be no additional expense to the Board.

FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT Dr. Beckwith presented the Fourth Quarter of 2009 Financial Report to the Health Commission. Itemized expenditures totaled \$56,983.00 for the Quarter, with cumulative expenses since January of 2009 of \$90,807.76. Dr. Beckwith informed board members of ongoing discussions with potential funders. The viability of several different

financial models are under consideration. Dr. Beckwith stressed the continued disparity in the availability of public health services across the Valley.

COMMUNITY EDUCATION COMMITTEE REPORT Mr. Black reported that the Committee continues to meet monthly. LVBOH billboards and signs on LANTA buses are now in place; and a series of radio spots on WAEB and elsewhere are planned. Ms. Kistler interjected that she has seen the bus signs; and "they look great". The LVBOH Website Call to Action Page will go live this week. Four articles have been received from board members; and those who have not yet submitted theirs were encouraged to do so as soon as possible. Tim Kennedy of *The Morning Call* has suggested an early April editorial, perhaps accompanied by a supportive column authored by city and county leaders. Mr. Black further reported that the CEO of Air Products has expressed his support for a regional health department – and indicated his willingness to write a letter to that effect. Finally, a list of upcoming COG meeting dates was circulated; and those board members able to attend were encouraged to let Mr. Black know of their availability.

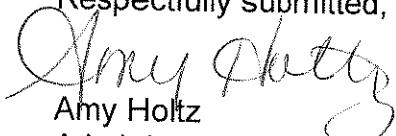
REPORT OF PUBLIC HEALTH CONSULTANT Due to inclement weather conditions, Mr. Barron was unable to attend the meeting; but his previously submitted written report was discussed briefly. Dr. Gertner indicated that he expects the hospitals' commitments of contributed services to solidify over the next several weeks.

OTHER BUSINESS Dr. Beckwith proposed a definition of "diminution of services" – requesting that board members review it and provide comment. He noted that >70% of Lehigh Valley residents are lacking access to comprehensive public health services; and this disparity is profound in some areas (such as the Slate Belt and Easton). This further underscores the need for a regional health department. Ms. Kistler and Ms. Maloney expressed concern about the Board's timeline and the scheduling of additional critical meetings. There followed lengthy discussion regarding the amount of time available to achieve all necessary objectives and whether an April deadline is likely to be realized. Many felt that this target was unrealistic.

ADDITIONAL PUBLIC COMMENT Dr. Lyon again invited public comment. Ms. Joan Dean, of the League of Women Voters, suggested that endorsement letters be sent individually to Dr. Dougherty, with copies of every letter to every Health Commission member. She also emphasized the importance of endorsing organizations sending representatives to the next Health Commission meeting – and the value of signs identifying their position. She opined that all resistance to DOH establishment was unwillingness to commit any money. Dr. Lyon encouraged people to remember that even in challenging economic times – perhaps especially in challenging economic times – it is important for leaders to invest in the community's future. That having been said, he added that expenditures do need to be carefully analyzed from cost versus benefit and return on investment perspectives. Northampton County Executive Stoffa offered suggestions and encouraged the Board to stay focused. Dr. Lyon expressed the Board's appreciation for Mr. Stoffa's continued support. There were additional comments regarding the short timeline.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:20 PM. The next meeting is scheduled for 6:00 PM on Monday, March 8<sup>th</sup> at the Lehigh County Government Center.

Respectfully submitted,

  
Amy Holtz  
Administrative Assistant