

The Lehigh Valley Board of Health

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

MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING MARCH 8, 2010

Public Hearing Room
Lehigh County Government Center

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

Board members present: David T. Lyon, MD, MPH
David K. Bausch
David G. Beckwith, PhD
Robert B. Black, MS
Eric J. Gertner, MD, MPH
Vicky Kistler, MEd
Carol A. Kuplen, RN, MSN
Judith K. Maloney, JD, MPH
John F. Reinhart, MEd
Halyna I. Stegura, RN, MSN

Also in attendance: Michael A. Gaul, Esq.
Gerald M. Barron, MPH
Amy Holtz

OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT The meeting having been duly announced, Dr. Lyon welcomed members of the public and offered the opportunity for public comment. Mary Reid Cushionbury expressed interest in the numbers of jobs likely to be created by a bi-county Health Department, whether they will be civil service, and the estimated time for hiring. Dr. Lyon explained that Board Personnel Committee Chair Dr. Gertner will be speaking later in the meeting and asked Ms. Cushionbury if she would be good enough to hold her questions until after his report.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES Dr. Lyon pointed out that, during the public commentary portion of the February Meeting, Ms. Jessica Lucas from the City of Bethlehem Health Bureau inquired about the setting of timelines and benchmarks and the date the Board will present its final plan to the Health Commission. This was omitted from the minutes of that meeting. Dr. Lyon called for any further additions or corrections. There were none; and upon motion duly made and seconded, the 02/08/10 minutes were approved as corrected.

REPORT OF THE CHAIRMAN Dr. Lyon reported on his recent meeting with City of Easton Mayor Sal Panto and Easton Director of Planning and Codes Becky Bradley. He also reported on his, Mr. Black's, Mr. Bausch's and Ms. Kistler's meeting with Allentown Mayor Ed Pawlowski. On March 12th, he is scheduled to meet with new Northampton County Council member Bruce Gilbert. Dr. Lyon has written to all other new Commission members (including Commissioner Hansell) on behalf of the Board; and all have received a packet of educational materials. Dr. Lyon stated he spoke with Mr. Dougherty and informed him that the LVBOH is continuing to finalize its proposed plan for presentation to the Health Commission. It was agreed that Dr. Dougherty would be kept apprised of the Board's progress and that a Com-

mission meeting date would be determined within the next few months. Nationwide, county-specific, health status data recently released by the University of Wisconsin and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation were discussed briefly. Steven Bliss indicated that his staff is currently conducting a detailed analysis of the data, so as to define meaningful and comparative interstate measures – and that he will develop “talking points” from these data.

REPORT OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE CHAIR Dr. Beckwith reported that meetings have been taking place with stakeholders and constituents in both the cities and counties as well as with Lehigh Valley and St. Luke's Hospitals regarding contributions of in-kind services. Once funding commitments are in place, the Committee will be meeting to finalize its recommended financial plan for approval of the full Board.

REPORT OF THE PERSONNEL COMMITTEE Chairman Dr. Gertner presented the report of behalf of the Committee. He noted that the combined staffs of the two city health bureaus currently equals 66.5 FTE's (including grant-dependent and non-grant-dependent positions). It is anticipated that the valley-wide health department will increase this number to 90.5. All current staff will be retained; and there will be no diminution in services received by any resident. Dr. Gertner led a discussion of anticipated funding sources, including categorical grant awards. A meeting is planned, to which all Lehigh Valley SEO's will be invited. The purpose of the meeting is to answer questions, address concerns, resolve open matters, and gain the group's support for a bi-county health department. Mr. Barron reviewed what he viewed as the principal SEO concerns; and these include the methodology to be applied in establishing inspection fees and SEO terms of employment.

Dr. Gertner summarized a March 2nd meeting dealing with the Human Resources and employee benefits impact of merging the two city health departments under a single bi-county entity – and how to best accomplish this. Topics discussed included: employee benefits; retirement portability; pension vesting; pay scales; unionization; and the desirability of contracting with one or the other county or a city to provide HR/personnel services. The retention of a national human resources consulting firm was considered.

County Executive John Stoffa stated that the Board was in “pilot status” and that it should remain mindful that, because of this, the State is likely to be predisposed to granting one or several waivers to the Act 315 requirements. He advised that the Board must be certain to address the following in its proposal to the Health Commission:

- the nature of the organization (what it will look like)
- the specific cost to the counties
- how much the cities and hospitals will contribute – and for how long
- the inclusion of existing health department employees (portability issues)
- the likelihood of state approval

In closing, Mr. Stoffa expressed his opinion that the Board was not yet ready to appear before the Commission; and he strongly suggested that it take more time and define more exactly the details of the plan proposal.

Ms. Kistler expressed her gratitude to Mr. Stoffa – as well as Mr. Marcus and Ms. Hamm (also present) – but asked her colleagues on the Board to continue working towards a deadline with a sense of urgency. Mr. Black concurred; although there was general agreement that

the Board not meet with the Commission until it was truly ready and able to be clear in its presentation. The upcoming expiration of available grant funds was noted.

REPORT OF THE PUBLIC HEALTH CONSULTANT Mr. Barron stated that he is working on a final draft of the Personnel Plan. He noted that an ordinance meeting is scheduled for tomorrow under the leadership of Ms. Stegura. The hospital and municipality commitments are also being finalized. Mr. Gaul commented that contracts will ultimately need to be executed..

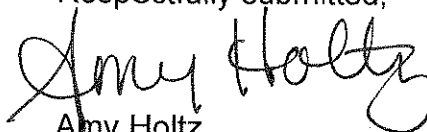
REPORT OF THE COMMUNITY EDUCATION COMMITTEE Mr. Black reported that there is a Northampton Council of Governments (COG) meeting tomorrow. Mr. Reinhart indicated that he hoped to be able to attend. Ross Marcus stated that he would definitely be there. Board representatives have been invited to appear on Mr. Stoffa's March 10th TV show to discuss the importance of establishing a Lehigh Valley Health Department; and Ms. Kistler volunteered to participate. Mr. Bliss agreed to join her.

OTHER BUSINESS Dr. Gertner reported briefly on behalf of Ms. Prokup regarding the LVHD's expected program services.

ADDITIONAL PUBLIC COMMENT Dr. Lyon again invited public comment. Mr. Marcus noted that the position of HR Director is currently vacant in Northampton County. For planning purposes, he pointed out to the Board that Lehigh and Northampton Counties are on different budget schedules – with Lehigh in October and Northampton in December. Ms. Joan Dean, of the League of Women Voters, inquired as to which Lehigh Valley municipalities will have the right to opt out of participation in a Lehigh Valley Health Department.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:30 PM. The next meeting is scheduled for 6:00 PM on Monday, April 12th at the County Council Chambers, Northampton County Courthouse.

Respectfully submitted,



Amy Holtz

Administrative Assistant