



**BENTON-FRANKLIN HEALTH DISTRICT (BFHD)
BOARD OF HEALTH (BOH)**

MEETING MINUTES

March 15th, 2023

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BOARD OF HEALTH
MEETING MINUTES
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IN ATTENDANCE

Benton	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Commissioner McKay	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Jason Zaccaria, Administrator & BOH Executive Secretary	
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Commissioner Delvin	<input type="checkbox"/>	Lisa Wight, Sr. Human Resources Manager	
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Commissioner Alvarez	<input type="checkbox"/>	Carla Prock, Sr. Healthy People & Communities Manager	
Franklin	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Commissioner Didier	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Sean Domagalski, Interim Sr. Surveillance & Investigation Manager	
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Commissioner Mullen	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Janae Parent, Assistant Administrator	
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Commissioner Peck	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Carl Turpen, Systems Administrator Lead	
				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Heather Hill, Deputy to the Health Officer
				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Dr. Larry Jecha, Interim Health Officer
				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Kelly Harnish, Healthy Living Manager
				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Diane Medick, Administrative Assistant
				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Lauren Cowles, Administrative Support
				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Annette Cary, Editor, Tri-City Herald
				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Aaron Derrick, member of the public
				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Ron Higgins, member of the public
				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Kat Espinda, member of the public
				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Laura Silvana, member of the public
				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Matthew Clapper, member of the public
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Elizabeth Shemy, member of the public				

CALL TO ORDER

Chair McKay called the meeting to order at 1:31 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. Commissioner Delvin moved to approve meeting minutes for January 25th, 2023. Commissioner Alvarez seconded. Motion carried.
2. Commissioner Delvin moved to approve meeting minutes for February 21st, 2023. Commissioner Alvarez seconded. Motion carried.

DISCUSSION ITEMS FROM THE PUBLIC/STAFF

1. The first comment was from Aaron Derrick, expressing concerns about the safety and effectiveness of COVID vaccines, as well as the fact that \$20 gift cards are being provided to attendees of vaccination clinics in Benton County. A. Derrick also

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expressed frustration about finding someone willing to listen to his concerns instead of redirecting to someone else.

2. The second comment was from Ron Higgins, who expressed deep concern regarding the effects and potential harm of mask-wearing, and read several quotes regarding the importance of telling the truth. The concerns expressed included the use of masks to conceal identity when committing crimes, health and social effects impacting mask-wearers, speech delays in children, and detrimental environmental and wildlife effects from discarded masks. An accompanying handout was provided to the Board, and a copy has been filed with official Board of Health records.
3. Kat Espinda expressed concerns regarding the COVID vaccine, as well as \$20 gift cards being used as financial incentives for parents to vaccinate their children. Deep concern was expressed regarding the safety of vaccines as well as injuries and deaths related to them, particularly among children. K. Espinda also expressed concern about vaccine mandates from Governor Inslee and questioned their legality.
4. Laura Silvana expressed agreement with K. Espinda's comments, and stated deep concern about the negative impact on children and schools from the COVID vaccine.
5. R. Higgins provided a second verbal comment stating that the County Commissioners had taken oaths, and have the authority and a duty to intervene if there is a potential harm to their constituents.
6. Commissioner McKay expressed understanding and sympathy with the statements provided, expressing that it should have been a personal choice to get vaccinated and to wear masks. Commissioner McKay stated that both Benton and Franklin County had written multiple letters to Governor Inslee requesting local control of health matters, and asked Jason Zaccaria whether BFHD had spent money last year to provide gift cards at vaccination events. J. Zaccaria responded that the event in question was held at BFHD but was run by the Washington State Department of Health (WA DOH). Commissioner McKay asked whether BFHD was currently providing gift cards, to which J. Zaccaria replied that the gift cards are not being provided by BFHD, but historically provided by DOH. Commissioner McKay stated that Dr. Person followed state regulations during the pandemic, and expressed frustration that these regulations were not questioned. Commissioner McKay expressed hope that the new Health Officer would be more aggressive about bringing local concerns to the state.
7. Commissioner Didier asked who was providing the vaccination event gift cards, and stated that if they are being provided by WA DOH, a letter should be sent requesting that they discontinue doing so. Commissioner Didier also expressed that financial rewards should not be used to incentivize vaccination.

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UNFINISHED BUSINESS

1. BFHD Health Officer Recruitment Update – Jason Zaccaria

J. Zaccaria has a meeting with Dr. Aren Giske and Lisa Wight tomorrow to address some of Dr. Giske's questions regarding compensation scale and the planned timeline of starting at BFHD. If the timeline is moved up from the current plan, it could require Dr. Giske to make a payment to their current employer.

2. 1152 Committee Update – 1152 Committee Members

- a. Review and approval of revised BOH Bylaws – Jason Zaccaria
 - J. Zaccaria stated that the 1152 committee members and Chris Mertens have reviewed the revised BOH Bylaws.
 - J. Zaccaria directed the Board's attention to the additions and clarifications made in Sections 4.10, 7.4, 7.4.1, 10.9
 - Commissioner Delvin moved to approve the revised BOH Bylaws. Commissioner Alvarez seconded. Voting was unanimous, motion carried.

- b. Review and approval of Non-Elected Member Recruitment Policy with Procedures – Jason Zaccaria
 - J. Zaccaria stated that this document is a BOH document and not a BFHD document. J. Zaccaria briefly summarized the contents, with Janae Parent adding further clarification that this is a supplement to the BOH Bylaws, which have a high-level focus.
 - Commissioner Alvarez requested that there be an addition to the policy stating that information about the applicants be provided to the Board sufficiently ahead of time to allow for review prior to the interviews.
 - Commissioner Alvarez moved to approve the Non-Elected Member Recruitment Policy with Procedures, with the requested addition. Commissioner Mullen seconded. Voting was unanimous, motion carried.

- c. Discussion on and selection of Non-Elected Member interviews and positions
 - J. Zaccaria reviewed with the Board their impressions following the applicant interviews. Once the final three applicants have been selected for recommendation, the County Commissions can move forward with approving and appointing the three individuals to fill the positions.
 - The Board was in consensus to select the applicants for recommendation based on the majority impressions.
 - The applicants selected for recommendation were: Kathleen Nusbaum for the Public Health, Health Care Facilities and Providers category; Marcella (Marcie) Appel for the Community Stakeholders category; and Dr. Wassim Khawandi for the Consumers of Public Health category.

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- Commissioner Delvin motioned to approve the recommendation of these applicants for formal approval and appointment at the County Boards of Commission. Commissioner Alvarez seconded. Voting was unanimous, motion carried.

- d. Discussion on Elected Membership positions
 - Commissioner McKay, Commissioner Alvarez, Commissioner Mullen and Commissioner Didier each expressed a desire to remain on the Board. Resolutions to this effect would be presented at the next County Board of Commission meeting for each county.
 - No action was taken.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Communicable Disease Updates – Dr. Larry Jecha

- a. The respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) and influenza season started earlier than usual this year, and emergency rooms and hospitals were full. BFHD provided education to the public through multiple channels and held a press conference with the four hospitals in the area regarding under what circumstances patients should go to the emergency room for these diseases. Currently, RSV, influenza and COVID cases are greatly decreased.
- b. Norovirus is a highly contagious disease, and is currently one of the most infectious diseases. Regular hand sanitizer is ineffective against it. There have been several norovirus outbreaks recently, with many cases ending up in emergency rooms. Norovirus is seasonal, but case numbers have been higher than normal this year. BFHD is monitoring outbreaks and providing education both to the public and affected establishments. Individuals who are frail or immunocompromised are at highest risk.
- c. Dr. Jecha expressed his support for BFHD's role in preventing the spread of disease within the community.
- d. Commissioner Alvarez asked whether hand washing is effective against norovirus, to which Dr. Jecha responded affirmatively, and added that bleach is also effective.

2. Age-friendly Public Health Update – Kelly Harnish

- a. Kelly Harnish provided a PowerPoint presentation to the Board. In summary, the Age-friendly Public Health Systems (AFPHS) grant period is drawing to a close, and K. Harnish presented on the work that was done through this grant, as well as work that is upcoming to support healthy aging in the community. This grant was through Trust for America's Health (TAH), through a collaboration with the Washington Department of Health (DOH) and other Washington state partners.

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The project team was formed in partnership with BFHD and Southeast Washington Aging and Long-term Care.

- b. Healthy aging includes all ages, not only retirement-age and older individuals. Healthy aging focuses on creating places, spaces, and policies that help with aging in a healthy manner throughout an individual's lifespan.
- c. TAH developed a framework for AFPHS called the 6 C's: Connecting and convening multi-sector stakeholders; Coordinating existing supports and services; Collecting, analyzing, and translating relevant data; Communicating important public health information; Complementing existing health promoting programs; and Creating and leading policy, systems, and environmental changes. This framework has a central focus on advancing health equity.
- d. Life expectancy, leading causes of death, and quality of life are all affected by residence location. As of 2020, Benton and Franklin counties had average life expectancies of 78.7 and 79.8 years, respectively. This is comparable to the Washington state average of 79.9 years, and better than the United States overall average of 77.3 years. Life expectancy is an essential factor for social determinants of health, and can vary significantly even at the zip code level.
- e. Another metric assessed was Years of Potential Life Lost (YPLL); in 2020, Benton County had significantly more YPLL before age 65 than the Washington state average, while Franklin County had significantly less. Significantly in this case indicates a statistically significant difference. This metric may not identify the reason, but is still important to assist in identifying trends.
- f. Leading causes of death can also vary depending on residence location. The two leading causes of death in 2020, for both Benton and Franklin counties and Washington state as a whole, were major cardiovascular diseases and malignant neoplasms (cancers). The third leading cause of death varied, with Alzheimer's disease being the leading cause in Benton County and Washington state, and COVID being the leading cause in Franklin County.
- g. Another equity disparity that was identified was the age bracket most at risk for intentional self-harm (suicide). In Benton and Franklin counties from 2016-2020, individuals aged 65+ had the highest rate.
- h. Next steps will include the Safe and Healthy Aging Adults Coalition continuing to work within the AFPHS goals to address areas of focus; alignment with the Benton-Franklin Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP); building relationships with new partners looking for areas not yet well represented or addressed; continuing with social medial messaging and website content; and attending and participating in outreach events. AFPHS goals are already in alignment with CHIP regarding housing and homelessness needs; behavioral health needs; access to health; and community partnership development.
- i. Commissioner Didier asked for the definition of malignant neoplasms, to which K. Harnish answered that these are cancers.

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- j. Commissioner Didier also asked whether the increase of major cardiovascular diseases and malignant neoplasms could have been caused by the COVID vaccine, to which K. Harnish responded that the data was from 2020, which was prior to the vaccine being administered.
- k. Commissioner Didier questioned why COVID was included in the leading cause of death data, to which K. Harnish responded that the data was from 2020, which included deaths due to COVID, and stated that follow-up on COVID death trends for following years could be done.
- l. Commissioner Alvarez asked whether the high rate of deaths due to major cardiovascular diseases was due to stress, to which K. Harnish replied that cardiovascular diseases are common and have a lot of contributing factors, such as lifestyle.

3. Review and approval of Resolution #23-02 - Appointment of Interim Health Officer – Jason Zaccaria

- a. The purpose of Resolution # 23-02 is to permit the Regional Medical Officer for Washington State Department of Health Region 2 to act in place of the BFHD Health Officer, should the Health Officer be unavailable.
- b. Commissioner Delvin moved to approve Resolution #23-02. Commissioner Alvarez seconded. Voting was unanimous, motion carried.

4. Relocating the BFHD Kennewick office – Commissioner McKay`

- a. Commissioner McKay requested that a discussion item be added to the agenda regarding the possible relocation of the BFHD Kennewick office to the old Kennewick General Hospital (KGH) Spaulding building.
- b. Commissioner McKay stated that the Spaulding building would be a good place for BFHD to relocate to, given the size of the building, and also stated that the Benton County Sheriff's office is likewise in need of more building space. Given that part of KGH is already planned to be remodeled for a mental health facility, relocating BFHD into the Spaulding building could save money. The Benton County Sheriff's office would then be relocated to BFHD's current Kennewick location.
- c. Commissioner Alvarez expressed an opinion that this move is more of a business decision and would not affect public health, and that from a financial perspective, there are potential cost savings and benefits for the taxpayers. As BFHD grows, they will need additional square footage to expand into. Commissioner Alvarez also expressed understanding that relocation will be difficult.
- d. Commissioner Delvin expressed a desire to save the county taxpayers money and stated that the Spaulding building has room for growth. The county would pay for the building to be improved and renovated to fit BFHD's needs. The lease

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agreement would state that BFHD would own the building after a certain number of years.

- e. Commissioner Delvin stated that Dr. Jecha's understanding was that BFHD would own the current Kennewick building once the lease was finished, but that documentation to that effect cannot be located. Dr. Jecha confirmed this, and also expressed deep frustration at the fact that the current building was constructed to fit BFHD's needs, yet BFHD will not own the building once the lease is finished. Commissioner McKay expressed that it would be ideal if 10-15 years from now, BFHD owned the building it was located in.
- f. Commissioner Didier stated that the location by the planned mental health hospital and the police department seemed ideal, but that the decision would ultimately be up to Benton County.
- g. Commissioner Mullen stated that both buildings are located in Benton County, and therefore the decision would ultimately be up to Benton County.
- h. J. Zaccaria stated that while the Spaulding building would offer more space, it would be very expensive to renovate, potentially costing many millions of dollars. J. Zaccaria also expressed significant concerns regarding the location, stating that the Spaulding building is located too close to the currently existing BFHD office in Pasco, and that the move would place the main BFHD office far from citizens on the west side of Benton County that need to access services. The current lack of available public transit options was also noted. A drop in revenue from the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program could also occur due to the presence of other WIC services in the area around the Spaulding building. J. Zaccaria stated that BFHD moving to another location is not a concern, but emphasized that Spaulding building would not be a good fit for BFHD and may not make good financial sense.
- i. J. Zaccaria acknowledged that reducing costs is a concern, but that this should not come at a cost to the citizens who are accessing BFHD's programs and services. J. Zaccaria presented a possible alternative solution, where the Human Services and/or Washington State University Extension (WSU) programs could be relocated, and that a Benton County records storage area on the second floor could be utilized more effectively.
- j. Commissioner McKay stated that Benton-Franklin Transit has been contacted multiple times regarding creating bus routes and a depot near the Spaulding building in preparation for the mental health facility.
- k. Commissioner Alvarez also expressed that the move would likely add approximately 10 minutes of travel time by car, and that this would not cause undue hardship.
- l. Commissioner Alvarez expressed an interest in determining what the cost of the relocation would be, and stated a desire to find a location with sufficient square footage for BFHD to continue to grow into.

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- m. Commissioner Delvin asked J. Zaccaria if data regarding the potential effect on WIC services could be solidified. J. Zaccaria stated that BFHD epidemiologists are currently working on creating a geographical map of where WIC clients are located, which will be brought to the April BOH meeting. Commissioner Delvin asked if the timetable of that project could be moved up. J. Zaccaria answered that it likely could be, and stated that while the original project was focused on WIC caseload, this would be a focus on where the WIC clients are actually coming from.
- n. Commissioner Delvin asked what WIC providers are already located in the area around the Spaulding building, to which J. Zaccaria responded that while he did not immediately have that information available, he would ensure that it was presented at the next Board meeting.
- o. Commissioner McKay stated that while the Board is waiting on additional information, it would move forward on working with BFHD to figure out a lease for the Spaulding building.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

PROTEC17 Collective Bargaining Update – Jason Zaccaria

BFHD has met with PROTEC17 to continue its engagement of collective bargaining. The previous session was February 24th, 2023. As soon as the proposed costs which the union is presenting to BFHD are figured out, BFHD will re-engage with collective bargaining. BFHD will bring a package to the Board for review and approval once agreement is reached.

APPROVAL OF VOUCHERS

Commissioner Delvin moved to approve vouchers 03-2023 through 19-2023 in the amount of \$1,865,044.93, with the Chair to sign the vouchers on behalf of the Board of Health. Commissioner Alvarez seconded. Voting was unanimous, motion carried.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Date of next meeting is scheduled for April 19th, 2023.

ADJOURNMENT

Chair McKay adjourned the meeting at 2:47 p.m.

Signature on file

Commissioner Will McKay
Chair of the Board

Signature on file

Jason Zaccaria
Executive Secretary