

OFFICIAL RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

Boulder County Board of Health (BOH) Special Emergency Meeting Via Teleconference March 23, 2020

BOH Members Present: President Gregg Thomas; Vice President Jorge DeSantiago; and Board Members McKenzie Rieder; Morgan McMillan; and Landrey Fagan, M.D.

Staff Members Present: Public Health Director Jeff Zayach; Director of Strategic Initiatives Susan Motika, Director of Administrative Services Megan Hatten; and Business Operations Manager Tammy Golden.

Boulder County: Assistant County Attorney/BOH Legal Counsel Kate Haywood.

Public: None.

Meeting Called to Order.

President Thomas called the meeting to order at 3:11 p.m., asked all participants to identify themselves for the record, and announced that a quorum was present.

President Thomas stated that this special emergency Boulder County Board of Health meeting was scheduled at the discretion of Public Health Director Jeffrey Zayach. Notice of the meeting was posted on the Board of Health website and included call-in information to allow for public participation. Due to the current COVID-19 pandemic, the need for social distancing, and a local public health emergency declaration currently in place, President Thomas announced that the meeting was being conducted telephonically, as was allowed by the Boulder County Board of Health Bylaws.

COVID-19 was a novel coronavirus that began surfacing in Wuhan, China, at the end of December 2019. Since then, the respiratory disease has rapidly spread globally and has been significantly impacting Europe and the U.S. Public Health Director Jeff Zayach said significant numbers of COVID-19 cases were being reported in Boulder County, throughout Colorado, nationally, and globally. He said it was an extremely contagious disease that was even more severe than originally thought. Currently, 69% of infected people are younger than 65 years, but the disease is also impacting younger people, which differs from initial information that was provided about the disease.

The spread of COVID-19 (aka coronavirus) in Colorado began in Eagle County, where it quickly taxed the local health care system and required the transport of patients to Denver hospitals. It was thought that significant impacts were being felt in Eagle County and Pitkin County due to exposure from international visitors at local ski areas.

In accordance with research released during the week of March 15, it appears that people can be infectious prior to diagnosis, as case numbers are increasing across the country at alarming rates. For instance, in New York, cases increased from 400 to 800 to over 8,000 in a period of 3 days. Many experts

feel that trajectory was starting to occur in other areas of the country. As of the morning of March 23, 2020, there were 39 cases identified in Boulder County; 20 of which were confirmed since March 20.

Mr. Zayach said it was apparent that stricter social distancing measures were necessary to help “flatten the curve” and minimize the volume of cases to prevent overwhelming the health care system. Based on evidence from Washington state, where the nation’s first cases were diagnosed, the health care system was caught off-guard and quickly became overwhelmed. It became evident that the rest of the country needed to act promptly to shut down non-essential businesses and activate stay-at-home (SAH) orders to protect the health care system and vulnerable populations (e.g. long-term care facilities, homeless population, immunocompromised, older people, etc.). Not taking these measures would most definitely impact the ability of hospitals to care for all patients, especially those in acute distress because ICU (intensive care unit) beds and ventilators would be in low supply.

Mr. Zayach said he and other Front Range public health directors from City-County of Denver (including Denver Health and Hospital Authority), as well as Broomfield, Tri-County (Adams, Arapahoe, Douglas), Jefferson, Weld, Larimer, and El Paso Counties have been sharing information and collaborating to develop broad-reaching public health orders. The public health directors have been working with the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) – primarily CDPHE Chief Medical Officer Eric France – to remain current on models to actively project how COVID-19 will impact Colorado.

Other states have started issuing SAH orders, but Mr. Zayach said Colorado Governor Jared Polis indicated he wasn’t yet ready to issue a statewide SAH public health order for Colorado. Therefore, Mr. Zayach said he and the Jefferson County and Tri-County public health directors planned to issue similar and simultaneous SAH public health orders for their own jurisdictions on March 24.

Mr. Zayach said 60% of the state’s population lived in the Denver Metro Area, so having consistent SAH orders for the region would prevent residents from traveling between counties because of less-restrictive SAH orders. He said the SAH orders would basically require all residents to shelter in place except to provide care for family or pets, shop or work at essential service businesses (e.g. health care, banks, grocery stores, pharmacies, media, restaurants for takeout/delivery, gas stations), engage in outdoor exercise, or move to a new residence. The City-County of Denver issued a similar SAH order on March 23.

Mr. Zayach talked about the importance of testing to help experts predict the disease’s progression and help control its spread. Testing would enable a more targeted approach; however, the serious dilemma was the dire lack of available testing supplies.

Assistant County Attorney Kate Haywood said she was developing protocols for enforcement of the public health order. She noted that BCPH had broad authority under C.R.S. 25-1-506 to close schools and public places and establish public quarantine and physical control of property for the protection of public health.

Board members voiced their concerns about the lack of testing supplies for timely identification of positive cases and personal protection equipment (PPE) for health care providers and first responders.

Mr. Zayach requested board approval to issue a SAH public health order for Boulder County on March 24 that would coincide with similar SAH public health orders being issued simultaneously for Jefferson and Tri-County Health Departments. Mr. Zayach said a Boulder County Call Center would be activated so members of the public and business community could request information and report SAH order violations. He said local law enforcement would be taking an education-first approach but would have the

ability to fine people for defiance of the SAH order. He said the SAH order would be announced and distributed through the media and social media. A Joint Information Center (JIC) has been staffed by public information officers from throughout Boulder County, including municipalities, and would broadcast the SAH order, which will also be available in Spanish.

Several staff and board members voiced their concern about the omittance of liquor stores and marijuana dispensaries as “essential service” businesses.

Board Member Rieder made a motion, which was seconded by Board Member Fagan, to support and authorize Public Health Director Jeff Zayach to finalize and distribute a local stay-at-home public health order for Boulder County on March 24, 2020, in collaboration and unity with other Metro Denver Area public health departments. With all board members voting in favor of the motion, President Thomas declared the motion carried.

Mr. Zayach acknowledged the numerous Boulder County Public Health staff members who have been working long, intense hours around the clock and making very complex decisions on the fly. He expressed his intense pride and appreciation for the incredible job BCPH staff was doing in response to COVID-19. He said these were trying times, but it was amazing how so many people have quickly bonded to battle this disease together. He also thanked the Board of Health for its support and quick response in scheduling this emergency meeting.

President Thomas and the other board members thanked Mr. Zayach and BCPH staff, stressing and reiterating how proud they were of Boulder County’s COVID-19 response efforts.

ITEM 6. Adjournment.

There being nothing further to discuss, President Thomas declared the meeting adjourned at 4:08 p.m.



Gregg Thomas, President



Jeffrey J. Zayach, Public Health Director