

# OFFICIAL RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

**Boulder County Board of Health (BOH) Regular Meeting  
Online/Telephonic Meeting  
November 9, 2020**

**BOH Members:** President Gregg Thomas; Vice President Jorge DeSantiago; and Board Members Morgan McMillan; Landrey Fagan; and Brooke Harrison.

**BCPH Staff:** Public Health Director Jeff Zayach; Deputy Public Health Director Lexi Nolan; Director of Strategic Initiatives Susan Motika; Director of Finance and Administration Megan Hatten; Community Health Division Manager Nadine Bridges; Health Equity Coordinator Sheila Davis; Communicable Disease & Emergency Management Division Manager Indira Gujral; Senior Assistant County Attorney Kate Haywood; Administrative Assistant Rita Mangeyn; and Business Operations Manager Tammy Golden.

## **Meeting Called to Order.**

President Thomas called the meeting to order at 5:32 p.m. and asked all participants to identify themselves for the record (see above). He declared that a quorum was present, that notice of the meeting was posted on the Board of Health website, and that call-in information was included to allow for public participation. Due to COVID-19, the need for social distancing, and the current public health order, President Thomas said the meeting was being conducted online and telephonically.

## **ITEM 1. Public Comments (on unscheduled agenda items).**

None.

## **ITEM 2. Approval of October 7, 2020, Special Meeting Minutes. Approval of October 12, 2020 Regular Meeting Minutes.**

*Board Member McMillan made a motion, which was seconded by Board Member Harrison, to approve the October 7 and October 12 Board of Health minutes, as presented. With all members voting in favor of the motion, President Thomas declared the motion carried.*

## **ITEM 3. Resolution 2020-04, Joint Resolution with Boulder County Board of County Commissioners Declaring Structural Racism as Public Health Crisis in Boulder County.**

Public Health Director Jeff Zayach introduced Health Equity Coordinator Sheila Davis, who collaborated with the BCPH Health Equity Coordinating Committee (HECC) and Boulder County to draft a joint resolution with the BOH and Boulder County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) to declare structural racism as a public health crisis in Boulder County.

Dr. Davis commended the willingness of the County Commissioners to address structural racism in Boulder County and emphasize the need to assure equity for all people in Boulder County. The HECC works to dismantle structural racism within BCPH, ensure that BCPH is inclusive, and provide equitable access for all people in the county to have healthy lives. Parallel efforts are coordinated at the county level through Boulder County's Cultural Responsiveness and Inclusion Advisory Committee (CRIAC).

Milestones for improving equity, diversity, and inclusion in Boulder County have included the hiring of a diversity equity and inclusion manager; providing Courageous Conversations About Race (CCAR) trainings and discussions for county employees; and applying a racial equity lens by using the Governmental

Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE) Toolkit, which has been implemented by the County's COVID-19 Forward Together Safely (FTS) teams.

Dr. Davis answered questions of the Board. She said she began working on BCPH's structural racism resolution earlier in the year but realized it should be revised once COVID-19 illustrated the many inequities community members were experiencing. She began collaborating with Boulder County to develop a joint resolution with strengthened language to reflect inequities and community needs in the county. If approved by the Board of Health, the resolution would be considered by the BOCC for approval.

Mr. Zayach said the City and County of Denver, Jefferson County, and State of Colorado were also considering adopting similar resolutions on structural racism. He reiterated the importance of internal and external collaboration utilizing HECC and CRIAC. As an example, he highlighted BCPH's involvement in 2019 to support local mobile home owners struggling with restrictions and requirements imposed by their mobile home park owners. The effort resulted in statewide legislation to support and protect mobile home homeowners (i.e. HB19-1309, the Mobile Home Park Act).

***Board Member Fagan made a motion, which was seconded by Vice President DeSantiago, to approve Resolution 2020-04, a joint resolution with the BOCC declaring structural racism as a public health crisis in Boulder County. With all members voting in favor of the motion, President Thomas declared the motion carried.***

**ITEM 4. Resolution 2020-05, Adopting 2020 BCPH Amended Budget.**

Director of Finance and Administration Megan Hatten presented Resolution 2020-05, which included an additional \$1,091,00 from Boulder County under the CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security) Act to support BCPH's COVID-19 response and recovery efforts. Resolution 2020-05 increased the 2020 Approved Budget from \$18,007,156 to \$19,587,659, a net increase of \$1,580,503. The overall changes would not change the unrestricted/undesignated fund balance of \$2,352,030 and would result in a Reserve Fund balance of 12.8% of 2020 expenditures.

***Board Member McMillan made a motion, which was seconded by Board Member Harrison, to approve Resolution 2020-05, adopting the 2020 BCPH amended budget in the amount of \$19,587,659. With all members voting in favor of the motion, President Thomas declared the motion carried.***

**ITEM 5. Update on Current COVID-19 Pandemic.**

Public Health Director Jeff Zayach gave an update on current COVID-19 statistics for Colorado and Boulder County. On November 6, the State of Colorado moved Boulder County from Level Yellow ("concern") to Level Orange ("high-risk") on the State's COVID-19 Dial because of increasing incidence rates in the county. Although classified as Level Orange, Boulder County showed partial movement into Level Red, the stay-at-home level. Mr. Zayach said the average positivity rate for Boulder County was 6.8%, although the target threshold was less than 5%.

Mr. Zayach presented a map of Colorado that showed other areas of the state – particularly the most populous areas – that were all moving into and/or exceeding stay-at-home incidence levels. Current numbers were significantly higher than they were during the University of Colorado (CU) event in the fall when restrictions were placed specifically on people between the ages of 18-22 years within the city of Boulder. Mr. Zayach said Boulder County was able to successfully and quickly decrease incidence rates during that event since it mainly involved a single age group associated with the university. The current challenge was the rise of incidence rates across every age group and not any specific age group. Incidence rates were continuing to rapidly increase throughout the county, the state, and the nation.

Mr. Zayach said the rise in COVID-19 cases could be attributed to “COVID fatigue,” wherein people are tired of following public health guidelines and aren’t appropriately social distancing, wearing masks, or limiting the number and size of their gatherings. He said incidence levels that followed other holiday gatherings (e.g. Independence Day, Labor Day, etc.) notably increased; therefore, public health officials were very concerned about the upcoming holiday season. To make matters worse, colder weather has forced gatherings to move indoors, which is allowing the virus to spread more rapidly and effectively.

The majority of Boulder County COVID-19 cases have been identified in Longmont and Boulder and are also rapidly increasing in the Latinx population; this group accounts for 13.8% of the population but 43% of all COVID-19 hospitalizations in Boulder County. Mr. Zayach and Communicable Disease and Emergency Management Division Manager Indira Gujral stressed the importance of staff taking cultural aspects into account when serving clients, especially the Latinx population. Dr. Gujral said many Latinx residents were essential service workers (e.g. grocery store workers) who were disproportionately impacted, but many were uncomfortable seeking out COVID-19 testing or medical care.

Health Equity Coordinator Sheila Davis said staff focused on the inclusion of priority populations when updating the agency’s strategic plan. A bilingual/bicultural COVID-19 resource coordinator has been hired to collaborate with Boulder County to ensure that everyone in the county had appropriate access to services. As an example, BCPH recently established a COVID-19 testing site in the Country Meadows neighborhood where many disproportionately impacted residents in Longmont live.

Mr. Zayach voiced concern that hospitalizations were at their highest levels since the pandemic began and continuing to rise across the state. He said he and the local hospitals meet weekly to discuss the pandemic. The biggest concern currently facing hospitals was staffing. But although positive hospitalizations were rising, the hospitals asked that they be allowed to determine any future changes regarding hospitalizations (e.g. elective surgeries). He said the State would be able to activate alternate care sites in the event of a surge in hospitalizations, and St. Anthony’s Hospital could also be used as a long-term care facility.

Mr. Zayach said research shows many students are starting to fall behind because of disruptions stemming from COVID-19. He said in-person learning risks were lowest for grades K-5, slightly higher for grades 6-8, and at highest levels for grades 9-12. He noted that CU was moving to full remote learning beginning November 16. Mr. Zayach said the schools were doing a good job implementing best practices (i.e. social distancing, mask wearing, and disinfecting) and were not the primary source of transmission. Experts feel most infections were being brought into the schools rather than originating in schools. It is also believed that the primary source of transmission in schools were gatherings and parties taking place in homes and throughout the community where social distancing and masking guidelines weren’t being followed. He recognized that remote learning was having a huge impact on families, particularly mothers who must facilitate in-home learning for their children while also working from home.

Mr. Zayach stressed the importance of everyone doing their part to help protect the hospitals from becoming overwhelmed and to protect the community’s most vulnerable residents (e.g. the elderly). He said everyone should follow public health guidelines to reduce further the spread of COVID-19, and that would be even more critical during the upcoming holiday season, as the virus was clearly circulating easily throughout the community. He said estimates indicate that 1 in every 100 people was infectious.

Mr. Zayach said a special Board of Health meeting would take place on November 12 for staff to share Boulder County’s latest mitigation framework. He cautioned that if COVID-19 transmission doesn’t slow, more restrictions (e.g. further lowering the number of people or households allowed at gatherings and/or further restrictions on businesses) may be required to prevent movement of Boulder County to Level Purple, the stay-at-home level.

President Thomas asked if all three components of Level Red were needed before a stay-at-home order would be issued. Mr. Zayach said the State could move counties into Level Red if only one trigger was reached.

Deputy Public Health Director Lexi Nolan said priority populations have been embedded in BCPH's COVID-19 strategy plan, and staff was working hard to ensure resources were being utilized effectively. Staff regularly collaborated with the community to outline goals and objectives. Dr. Gujral added that the BCPH Epidemiology ("epi") Team was established to serve priority populations (e.g. shelters, un-housed, jail, early childhood education, etc.). She said the biggest focus during COVID-19 has been protecting residents of long-term care facilities (LTCF). The Epi Team prioritizes work with LTCF and other high-risk groups for mortality and morbidity, including Latinx and some school-age groups. Dr. Gujral said staff has worked hard to ensure that the community recognized BCPH's focus on protecting all vulnerable populations in the community.

Mr. Zayach said until a vaccine became available the goal would be to reach Level Green, *Protect Your Neighbors*, on the Colorado COVID-19 Dial. Boulder County was on track to reach that level before the CU outbreak occurred. Once that event was resolved, the incidence of COVID-19 in the county had risen so significantly in all other age groups that moving to Level Green was impossible. With the number of people easily traveling across counties and states, especially during the holidays, Mr. Zayach said it would be difficult to control the spread of COVID-19. Board Member Harrison said everyone understood the public health guidelines; however, many people clearly are ignoring them. Mr. Zayach said public health won't be successful until a vaccine is available and herd immunity can be realized. Dr. Gujral highlighted how successful public health restrictions can be, such as the quick reduction of incidence at CU. She said COVID-19 was very challenging because roughly 50% of people are asymptomatic and don't even realize they're spreading the virus, thereby putting vulnerable populations at higher risk.

Board Member McMillan expressed her appreciation of staff but voiced her concern regarding their long hours and intense workload the past several months. She questioned the sustainability of these efforts and if there was anything the Board could do to support them. She also recognized that although continued work in other areas was important, she encouraged staff to identify projects or conflicting priorities that could be postponed or eliminated to better support their mental health and prevent burnout.

Dr. Gujral thanked Board Member McMillan and acknowledged that much of the work promised earlier in the year to the community has been tabled so staff could focus on COVID-19 work. She said she also recognized the importance of burnout prevention and availability of mental health resources for staff, many of whom are dealing with personal challenges like caring for children while also working from home. She said BCPH was continually stressing to all staff they are not expected to absorb the burden of COVID-19 on top of their normal workload. If working on COVID-19, they must prioritize their workload to maintain a healthy workload and protect their mental health. She said managing staff workload during COVID-19 was more of a marathon than a sprint.

Board Member McMillan also stressed the need for a smooth transition in relation to Mr. Zayach's pending retirement next April. President Thomas said he and staff have been working on a transition process, and Mr. Zayach said he was confident there would be a smooth transition.

Board Member Harrison asked about Boulder County's COVID-19 vaccine plan. Dr. Gujral said that was evolving, and staff was working closely with the State to develop a distribution plan. She said staff would provide a COVID-19 vaccine update at the December Board of Health meeting.

Director of Strategic Initiatives Susan Motika said there have been many differences among Colorado communities on addressing COVID-19. She expressed a need and desire for the State to more proactively implement consistent policies across counties.

Mr. Zayach added that the incidence level has risen so significantly that contact tracers had to resort to sending out letters with isolation and quarantine guidance instead of contacting people individually because of the sheer volume of COVID-19 activity in the community.

The Board thanked staff for the update and asked Mr. Zayach to share their appreciation and support to all BCPH staff.

**ITEM 6. Director's Report.**

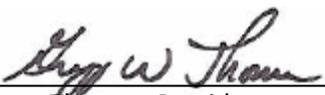
No additional comments.

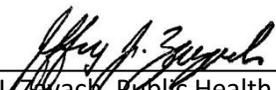
**ITEM 7. Old & New Business / Announcements.**

None.

**ITEM 8. Adjournment.**

There being nothing further to discuss, President Thomas declared the meeting adjourned at 6:59 p.m.

  
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Gregg Thomas, President

  
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Jeffrey J. Zayach, Public Health Director