

**Board of Health  
Tuesday, February 6, 2024  
Virtual Meeting**

**Members Attending:** B. Hospidor, J. Dethoff, K. Wang, J. Henning, J. Schwartz

**Others Attending:** S. Smith, C. Reed, M. Sninsky, C. Kammerer, P. Brookins

Dr. Dethoff called the meeting to order at 4:00 pm. He stated that a quorum is present.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

None.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**Motion was made by Mr. Hospidor, seconded by Dr. Wang, to approve the December 5, 2023 meeting summary as written. Motion carried unanimously.**

**REPORTS**

- Health Inspections

Mr. Reed stated that 61 regular inspections have been completed along with thirteen rechecks and six animal complaints. He stated that the most problematic animal issue is a property with 51 cats. He stated that this owner has already surrendered ten cats to the Animal Rescue League. He stated that the owner has not applied to keep six or more dogs / cats and a Notice of Violation has been issued. He stated that the animals have not been vaccinated.

Mr. Reed stated that the City is currently transitioning to a new computer system.

- Lead Abatement Program

Ms. Smith stated that Mr. Melendez was not available to attend today's meeting but that he provided the following report:

- Lead has been abated from 20 homes
- 12 homes are in the abatement process
- 21 homes have been tested for radon with 3 homes needing radon mitigation fans

The biggest challenge is getting additional referrals.

Mr. Henning questioned if lead testing is done for referrals. Ms. Smith stated that testing is done for all referrals. She reminded all that the property needs to be inhabited by children under age six to qualify for the program.

Dr. Dethoff questioned the addition of radon testing. Mr. Reed stated that he believes that radon testing is part of the Healthy Home Program. Ms. Smith stated that she will request this information from Mr. Melendez.

- EMS

Deputy Chief Sninsky reported that there were 19,000 911 responses in 2023 with 2,000 missed calls because all of Reading's equipment was already in service. These calls were covered by other ambulance services.

Deputy Chief Sninsky stated that the Center for Excellence in Local Government recently held a meeting about the EMS crisis. He stated that in the past the City service to other County services had a minimal impact but City services are now out of service for longer times due to the longer turn-around time. He stated that he is monitoring this to ensure that Reading residents are served as needed.

Dr. Dethoff thanked Deputy Chief Sninsky for his detailed reports. He stated that he noticed an increase in calls during Christmas week.

Captain Pentheny connected to the meeting at this time.

Deputy Chief Sninsky stated that calls generally increase during holidays.

Dr. Dethoff questioned the current COVID situation and if the Department had enough PPE. Deputy Chief Sninsky stated that COVID cases are down and that two staff members recently had minor cases of COVID. He stated that there is an ample supply of PPE.

Dr. Dethoff questioned the COVID situation in the community. Dr. Schwartz stated that there was a spike before the holidays. She stated that most cases are now presenting with headaches and sinus infection-type symptoms. She stated that the symptoms seem to be clearing more quickly.

Dr. Dethoff stated that he has heard about a Canadian ailment with no treatment. Dr. Schwartz stated that she is following that situation but there have been no cases locally.

- Health Literacy Program

Dr. Brookins stated that the City is in the last five months of the grant program. She stated that a second survey is being conducted throughout Berks County to get a larger perspective. She stated that the results of both surveys are currently being analyzed. She stated that the misinformation community sessions are continuing to teach residents how to determine credible information sources.

Dr. Brookins stated that six institutions were granted \$20,000 each to address health literacy at their institution. She stated that self-assessments were completed and updates will include new signage, staff education, client surveys, additional information being distributed, and additional clinical staff interpreters. She stated that information is also being translated to Spanish.

Ms. Kammerer stated that much progress has been made.

Dr. Dethoff thanked Dr. Brookins and Ms. Kammerer for the update and stated that he is looking forward to seeing the data analysis.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

None

## **NEW BUSINESS**

- Police Social Worker Program

Dr. Dethoff stated that the proposed job description has been provided to the Board.

Captain Pentheny stated that there is a need in the community for mental health situations and assistance. She stated that often 911 is called in mental health situations.

Captain Pentheny stated that Lancaster has had this program in place for two years. She stated that she met with Lancaster officials and reviewed their program. She stated that the Police Social Worker in Reading would not respond to crises but will help with follow up after the situation is deescalated to ensure the person is connected to resources and services. She stated that the position will work daytime hours and will not be going out into the field.

Dr. Dethoff questioned if Captain Pentheny had statistics about how often 911 is called for mental health issues. Captain Pentheny stated that she does not have a firm number but it is several daily. She noted her hope that there would be two social workers – one working 8 am – 4 pm and one working 3 pm – 11 pm.

Dr. Dethoff questioned if the Lancaster program has its social workers respond to situations. Captain Pentheny stated that they do respond to the scene occasionally but that it is generally not feasible. She stated that it is most important to provide follow up services and resources. She stated that the social workers will track their statistics and she reminded all that services cannot be forced on an individual. She noted the need to provide options and to have a warm handoff. She stated that the social workers will not become that individual's caseworker.

Dr. Dethoff stated that many people need resources but don't have access to them or knowledge of what is available. Captain Pentheny agreed and noted the importance of connecting people with services. She noted her hope that this would reduce the number of 911 calls for mental health issues.

Dr. Dethoff questioned if there was a timeline to begin the program. Captain Pentheny stated that the program will begin as soon as the positions are filled.

Mr. Henning questioned if Lancaster used its program as part of community policing. He questioned if they offered legal aid services. Captain Pentheny expressed the belief that they are not using their program as part of community policing. She stated that no legal advice can be given.

Dr. Dethoff expressed the belief that this is a great start. He noted his belief that social workers should also be part of the staff of every school.

## **NEXT MEETING**

Dr. Dethoff stated that he may be traveling on April 2 to see the total solar eclipse in Indiana.

Mr. Henning stated that he was lucky to see an 80% solar eclipse in the past.

Dr. Dethoff questioned if the group wished to continue meeting via Zoom. The group stated that they did wish to continue meeting via Zoom.

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, April 2, 2024 at 4 pm via Zoom.

The meeting adjourned at 4:28 pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
*Shelly Smith*, CMC  
Deputy City Clerk