

**Board of Health
Tuesday, April 5, 2022
Zoom Virtual Meeting**

Members Attending: J. Dethoff, B. Hospidor, K. Schorn, M. Kelleher, L. Bohn

Others Attending: S. Smith, E. Blankenbiller, I. Litvinov, BCTV

Dr. Dethoff called the meeting to order at 4:01 pm. He stated that a quorum is present.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion was made by Mr. Hospidor, seconded by Ms. Schorn, to approve the January 25, 2022 meeting summary as written. Motion carried unanimously.

HEALTH INSPECTION REPORT

Mr. Estrada provided the monthly report via email before the start of the meeting:

Inspections 2022 Q1

- Inspections – 240
- Food related complaint investigations – 17
- Building & Trades walk-thru – 22
- SR requests as they relate to health – 33
- Animal control inspections – 20
- Product recalls – 17
- Product recall store checks - 51
- Businesses delivered 2022 health bills due to not being paid – 48
- NOV's issued – 11
- Current state of businesses in the city - We are seeing a downward trend in the sale of existing businesses and an up tic in the startup of completely new businesses.

Dr. Dethoff questioned the meaning of SR. Mr. Blankenbiller explained that this is a service request. He stated that they can be submitted by residents by calling the City or using the iRequest app. He stated that most health-related SRs are for food complaints. He stated that SRs can also be created by the State if they receive a complaint about a City food business.

Dr. Dethoff questioned the type of animal control inspections that are conducted. Mr. Blankenbiller stated that these are mostly complaints about chickens, the keeping of more than six dogs / cats, or animal welfare concerns.

Dr. Dethoff questioned the amount of chickens in the City. Mr. Blankenbiller stated that he was in court two times for chicken issues. He stated that people want to keep them.

Dr. Dethoff questioned the keeping of roosters. Mr. Blankenbiller stated that people may apply to keep chickens through the Zoning Hearing Board but that there is a \$1,000 application fee. He stated that most times neighbors will tolerate hens because they aren't noisy like roosters.

Fire Marshal Searfoss connected to the meeting at this time.

Dr. Dethoff questioned what the City does regarding product recalls. Mr. Blankenbiller stated that they will visit grocers to ensure that recalled products have been removed from shelves. He stated that generally the business will do this but they double check.

Ms. Bohn stated that the State has a list of recalled products that is shared with the City and with business owners. She stated that many of the recalls are due to undeclared allergens.

Dr. Dethoff questioned if the public is informed of all recalls. Ms. Bohn stated that recalls of products with high usage are publicized. She stated that manufacturers know their customers and how to contact them to take products off shelves. She stated that if a small store owner buys their products at a local grocery store and resells them, there would be a higher chance that the product would not be pulled from shelves.

Dr. Dethoff questioned if the report refers to 17 product recalls or 17 stores that were visited for recall issues. Mr. Blankenbiller stated that there were 17 product recalls. He stated that many recalls involve specialty items that are only sold in a few stores.

Dr. Dethoff questioned if recalls are also checked during regular inspections. Mr. Blankenbiller stated that they are. He stated that items are also removed from shelves by grocers upon customer complaint and are returned to the manufacturer.

Dr. Kelleher screen shared the product recall list from the US FDA website. She stated that people can register to receive emails about recalled products. She stated that if recalled products are already in people's homes they may not know about the recall.

Dr. Dethoff questioned the meaning of NOV. Mr. Blankenbiller stated that this is a Notice of Violation. He stated that NOVs are rechecked after a short time to ensure that the problem has been corrected. He stated that many of the issues that receive an NOV are mechanical.

COVID-19 UPDATE

Dr. Kelleher stated that the case rate is the best it's ever been. She stated that healthcare workers have been able to catch their breath. She stated that hospitalizations are down and there are no COVID cases in the ICU. She stated that positivity rates and testing demand are also down. She expressed the belief that this is reassuring.

Dr. Kelleher warned that lifting the mitigation requirements may lead to an increase in new infections. She stated that new surges are beginning in other countries. She stated that it is unknown at this time if or when the US will begin surging again.

Dr. Dethoff questioned the B2 variant. Dr. Kelleher stated that this variant is even more contagious than Omicron and may also have a higher mortality rate.

Dr. Dethoff described a situation where a person tested positive at home. He stated that this person went to a physician's office to be tested to confirm the results. The person wasn't because he had all

the symptoms. He questioned if this person's positivity would be counted. Dr. Kelleher stated that if he went to a healthcare facility they are required to report the case. She stated that if he had tested at home and did not seek medical assistance, his case would not be counted.

Dr. Dethoff questioned Dr. Kelleher's stance on the second booster. He stated that he is trying to decide if he should get it now or wait until another surge is more likely. Dr. Kelleher stated that she is recommending the second booster now to all her patients but she personally has the same thoughts about the timing for her own booster.

Dr. Dethoff noted the timing of effectiveness of the booster and noted that it may be too late after the next surge begins. Dr. Kelleher agreed and noted that no one wants to become a statistic. She encouraged all to get their second booster when they are eligible.

Dr. Dethoff stated that he has seen information that the booster is more effective if you mix Moderna and Pfizer. He questioned if that is recommended. Dr. Kelleher stated that there is some evidence that effectiveness increases when Moderna and Pfizer are mixed.

Dr. Dethoff questioned progress on oral anti-viral medications. Dr. Kelleher stated that the BCHC has some anti-viral medications but that they are difficult to obtain.

Fire Marshall Searfoss agreed that Reading is doing well. He stated that there has been a decrease in the caseload in Berks but that 16 states are now reporting case increases. He stated that the mandates have been lifted but that some personnel still wear masks for medical emergencies.

Dr. Dethoff questioned if the City has an adequate supply of PPE. Mr. Searfoss stated that there is an adequate supply. He stated that he was able to maintain the City's stock during the pandemic and the City is well prepared. He stated that the City has also been able to acquire respiratory paper hoods to use as needed for increased respiratory protection.

BERKS TEENS

Ms. Smith stated that the name change is complete and the group is now known as Berks Teens.

LEAD ABATEMENT COALITION

Dr. Kelleher stated that the City is actively recruiting patients to participate in the lead abatement program. She stated that they are currently focusing on owner occupied properties. She stated that she has shared a report of children with elevated lead levels with the City for follow up. She stated that many BCHC patients live in rental properties and that the program may be expanded.

Dr. Dethoff stated that he understands that BCHC orders routine lead testing. He questioned the percentage of children that need attention. Dr. Kelleher stated that during 2021, 86 patients had a lead level higher than 5. She expressed the belief that Reading has one of the highest lead problems in the country.

Dr. Dethoff questioned if these patients all live in Reading. Dr. Kelleher stated that most BCHC patients are Reading residents.

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No report.

COUNTY DEPT OF HEALTH

Dr. Kelleher stated that the Community Foundation is advocating for a County Dept of Health. She stated that the Commissioners want a system but not a full Dept of Health. She stated that the Commissioners have hired a consultant to study the issue.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Board is scheduled for Tuesday, June 7 at 4 pm via Zoom.

Dr. Dethoff noted the safety and convenience of meeting virtually and stated that more people attend meetings now. All agreed to continue meeting virtually.

The meeting adjourned at 4:26 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Shelly Smith, CMC
Deputy City Clerk