

**Board of Health
Tuesday, December 13, 2022
Zoom Virtual Meeting**

Members Attending: J. Dethoff, B. Hospidor, M. Kelleher

Others Attending: S. Smith, J. Stoudt, C. Kammerer, E Narvaez, J. Young, J. Searfoss

Dr. Dethoff called the meeting to order at 4:02 pm. He stated that a quorum is present.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion was made by Mr. Hospidor, seconded by Dr. Kelleher, to approve the October 4, 2022 meeting summary as written. Motion carried unanimously.

HEALTH SURVEY

Ms. Kammerer reviewed a brief Power Point presentation.

Ms. Kammerer stated that 2,000 individual surveys have been completed which will provide the City's baseline information. She stated that 20 events were held with project partners and the CATE mobile health unit. She stated that 266 vaccinations were provided to Reading residents at these events.

Ms. Kammerer stated that a COVID vaccination hesitancy survey has been completed and that data is being compiled by the Penn State College of Medicine and RACC students. She explained that this survey was completed by residents who had one dose of the COVID vaccine. She stated that many respondents were either waiting to schedule their second dose or had already been scheduled.

Ms. Kammerer stated that a third survey focusing on health literacy has also been developed. She stated that word and concept translation makes a difference in how people receive health information. She stated that additional information on this survey will be available by the end of 2022. The Board encouraged her to attend their February meeting.

Ms. Kammerer explained that each event provided an opportunity to receive a COVID vaccination and to complete the surveys. She stated that the community has been very willing to participate. She stated that the majority of those who received the vaccine did so to protect themselves, their families and the wider community.

Ms. Kammerer stated that the Health Literacy Survey will provide data about communications and interacting with the healthcare system. She stated that it should reveal challenges and barriers. She screen shared the research article "The grounded psychometric development and initial validation of the Health Literacy Questionnaire (HLQ)"

Ms. Narvaez stated that it is important to understand the baseline information and to ensure that work continues after the grant funding has expired. She stated that work will begin on a toolkit for healthcare providers. She noted her hope that a Health Advocacy and Equity Board would also be

established. She noted the need to assist healthcare professionals to better work with the community.

Dr. Dethoff questioned how the article applies to Reading's survey. Ms. Kammerer stated that the topics in the article were used to develop the survey.

Dr. Dethoff questioned if this article was written by the Reading team. Ms. Kammerer stated that it was not. She stated that the program purchased the license to use the information. She stated that it was developed in Australia and was used to determine the topics to include on the Health Literacy Survey.

Dr. Kelleher stated that this grant focuses specifically on COVID vaccine hesitancy. She noted her surprise that Reading residents are less hesitant to get the vaccine than the surrounding municipalities in the County. She stated that Reading's COVID vaccination rate was higher than most people anticipated.

Dr. Dethoff questioned if future surveys would be related to basic health issues such as weight, diabetes, etc. Ms. Narvaez stated that the current work is focused on COVID. She stated that this baseline, however, can provide a generalized understanding of resident health.

Ms. Kammerer stated that the grant is funded through COVID relief. She noted her hope that finding this baseline information about COVID will lead to ways to address additional health issues in the community and to improve the community's patient experience.

Dr. Dethoff questioned if the surveys were provided in the respondents' native language. Ms. Kammerer stated that all surveys were provided in English and Spanish. She stated that the language was also culturally appropriate and that fifteen standards were met when the surveys were translated.

Mr. Hospidor questioned if only City residents were surveyed. Ms. Kammerer stated that the grant focus is on Reading. She stated that staff is working to extend the grant and hopes to expand the focus area beyond Reading.

Dr. Dethoff questioned the end of the current grant. Ms. Kammerer stated that the grant terminates on June 30, 2023. She stated that focus groups are being formed to evaluate materials about COVID and ways that the materials can be improved. She stated that most Reading residents read on a 4th grade level so it is important that the materials can be understood. She noted her hope that an event would be held when the data is complete. She noted the need to continue improving the Reading community's health and their interactions with healthcare workers.

Mr. Hospidor questioned if Dr. Kelleher knew the percentage of Reading residents who have received the COVID vaccine. Dr. Kelleher stated that she did not have a specific percentage. But she stated that that early in the pandemic it was clear that people of color were more likely to die from COVID.

Dr. Dethoff questioned if any new information has been learned in the project so far. Ms. Kammerer stated that she learned how quickly funding can be spent and that she learned the types of healthcare programs that City residents need. She noted the need for better access to healthcare and to receive materials that they can understand.

HEALTH INSPECTION REPORT

No report.

COVID-19 UPDATE

EMS Deputy Chief Sninsky shared the following via email with his apologies for being unable to attend this meeting:

- COVID cases have, at present, tapered off amongst Fire Department personnel
- No current COVID cases and all within the last two months have been minor in nature
- Fire Department has adequate PPE supplies
- The Flu / RSV / COVID amongst pediatrics has not been seen in large numbers at present
- Shortages in medical staffing in local Emergency Departments as well as any medical service has led to longer wait times and more patients presenting to the ER

Dr. Dethoff questioned the hospitalization rate related to the flu and RSV. Dr. Kelleher stated that Tower Health is reporting that they are at 90+% capacity. She stated that the flu is peaking earlier in the season than in years past. She reported that there are currently 38 patients hospitalized with COVID; 5 in the ICU with 2 on ventilators.

Dr. Dethoff questioned if the flu would begin to decline shortly since it is already peaking. Dr. Kelleher stated that the flu is currently on a steep increase. She stated that it will be a scary situation if that continues.

LEAD ABATEMENT PROGRAM

Mr. Young reported that ten families are currently enrolled in the program. He stated that five inspections are complete.

Mr. Young stated that he is currently working to issue an RFP for 2023 inspection services and relocation services.

Mr. Young stated that he has two additional interviews scheduled with prospective families and that the program is moving forward.

COUNTY DEPT OF HEALTH

Dr. Kelleher stated that she recently participated in a focus group. She stated that the County has hired a firm to collect data to determine if a Department of Health will be established.

FLESH EATING BACTERIA

Dr. Dethoff noted that this issue came forward through a concerned citizen.

Dr. Kelleher stated that this is a rumor and there is no evidence of a problem with this bacteria in Reading.

2023 MEETING SCHEDULE

Dr. Dethoff suggested keeping the same schedule in 2023.

Ms. Smith questioned if the group wished to continue meeting virtually. Dr. Dethoff stated that virtual meetings are better attended. He suggested the possibility of outdoor meetings during warmer weather.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, February 7, 2023 at 4 pm via Zoom.

The meeting adjourned at 4:45 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Shelly Smith, CMC
Deputy City Clerk