

Lincoln County
City-County Board of Health Minutes
Lincoln County Courthouse
6:00 PM, June 8, 2021

- **Call to Order at 6:00 p.m.**
 - Pledge of Allegiance
 - Roll Call: Jan Ivers, Josh Letcher (via Zoom), Jim Seifert, Sara Mertes, Amy Fantozzi, Deb Armstrong (via Zoom). Quorum present.
- **Public Comment on Agenda Items**
 - None
- **Public Comment on Non-Action Items**
 - Evan Cobella addressing an item on April 13 minutes. She requests an apology from Mr. Seifert for his statements at last meeting regarding a letter that she could not find anywhere attached to minutes or on Health Department site. She is shown area on site where that letter was posted attached to March minutes.
 - Mick Walters, Chapter Leader for local John Birch Society, expresses disapproval of Jim Seifert's appointment to the Board of Health.
 - Diane Watson (via Zoom) asked where to find letter attached to March minutes as she could not hear due to crosstalk previously. It is explained to Diane where to find that document on the website.
- **Approval of Minutes**
 - Amy Fantozzi motioned to accept 4/13/2021 and 5/12/21 minutes. Jan, Josh, Jim, Sara, Amy, Deb vote in favor. Motion passed.
- **Unfinished Business**
 - None
- **New Business**
 - *Action Item* – Deb motioned: "When PCR test results are used in county epidemiology studies to justify any public health decision, the cycle threshold of positive cases must also be included as public record."
 - Discussion of work PCR cycle. Jim Murphy, State Epidemiologist, discussed PCR testing, which labs provide cycle threshold levels, cutoff values, etc.
 - Public Comment on Action Item:
 - Diane Watson (via zoom) expressed her support for action item motion.
 - Dr. Brad Black expressed his reasons for not supporting action item motion.
 - *Action Item vote* – Deb motioned: "When PCR test results are used in county epidemiology studies to justify any public health decision, the cycle threshold of positive cases must also be included as public record." Deb, Josh vote in favor. Motion is not passed.
 - Board member opening: Scott Bernhard has given his resignation from the Board effective May 18, 2021. Per Clerk and Recorder, the opening has to be advertised. Vacancy will be in Tobacco Valley News and Western News the following week. It is advertised as North Lincoln County preference, with term expiring December 21, 2022.
 - New Legislation: Jinnifer Merriman, Special Deputy County Attorney, for purposes of advising the Board as general counsel and assisting County Attorney's office as needed on matters that may arise, discussed HB257 and HB121 that directly effect the BOH.

- **Program Reports:**
 - **Community**
 - None
 - **Public Health**
 - Jennifer McCully presented the LCHD 2020 Annual Report
 - COVID-19 Update: Cases are going down with 3 active cases at that time. Vaccine administration is also slowing down at this time. Looking for creative ways to get those out there to the public.
 - Public Comment: Diane Watson (via zoom) discussed her disapproval of the vaccine
 - **Environmental Health**
 - Update on Panoramic View dust complaints: Kathi provided follow-up re: public comments from Taylor Loop residents during previous BOH meeting. She reported the access road to Panoramic View had been chip sealed the past week. Kathi has reached out to residents to get their feedback. It was only the access road that was chip sealed, so contact with Panoramic View landowners and subdivision to see how they plan to treat the rest of the road.
 - **Solid Waste and Recycling**
 - Draft Class IV Asbestos Cell O&M: Kathi said that draft was updated last week. Kathi invited Board member to get a tour of the landfill if they would like to have that for reference.
 - Bryan Alkire described that an Operation & Maintenance Plan is a required document that contains a description of the site, it's equipment, the work practices and safety plans, and maintenance schedule to ensure the system is operating in such a way as to protect human health and the environment.
 - **Asbestos Resource Program**
 - Virginia Kocieda gave O&M and Asbestos Resource Program updates.
 - **Focus Area Liaisons:**
 - Liaison position is vacant. No update at this time.
 - Jennifer Merriman suggested George Jamison have the opportunity to continue as liaison as he has vast knowledge in this area.
- **City Representative Reports**
 - Troy City Council: Jim Seifert reported his position and appointment process to the BOH will be discussed at upcoming City Council meeting.
 - No update on Libby City Council.
 - No update on Eureka City Council.
- **Health Officer Report**
 - Discussed his concern for the upcoming winter and year, hoping that residents continue to get vaccinated.
 - Josh Letcher initiated discussion on prescribed medicines and alternate protocols for COVID 19 treatment.
- **Jim motioned to adjourn. All in favor. Meeting adjourned at 7:58 p.m. Next meeting Tuesday, July 20, 2021.**

PCR CYCLE THRESHOLDS- recap

PCR tests are done to detect genetic material from a specific organism, such as SARS-CoV-2. This test has been used by the Lincoln County Health Department to verify current COVID-19 illness and to quantify the spread of COVID-19 in our community. The results of these tests have informed public health policies such as quarantining people who test positive and mask mandates. There has been much discussion of how these measures have harmed individuals and our communities in terms of mental health, physical health, and economic health.

The PCR test is an **amplification** process that is necessary to detect very small genetic material. The term 'cycle threshold' refers to the number of cycles needed to amplify the viral RNA to reach a detectable level. The number of cycles needed to return a positive result is directly and inversely proportional to the viral load. In other words, the higher the cycle threshold needed to produce a positive result, the more likely the test is to detect viral genetic material that is essentially dead. A PCR test cannot differentiate between viral material that is contagious and that which is incapable of replicating, and therefore harmless. The only way for this test to contribute any meaningful data is to know how many cycles were needed to return a positive result.

I hope you all took the time to listen to the video I sent of an interview that was done in July, 2020 with Dr. Fauci. During this interview, Dr. Fauci stated: "...if you get a cycle threshold of 35 or more, that the chances of it being replication competent is miniscule ... you almost never can culture virus on the 37 threshold cycle so I think that if somebody does come in with 37, 38, even 36, you've got to say, you know, it's just dead nucleotides, period."

When the PCR test was given Emergency Use Authorization to detect SARS CoV-2, the CDC recommended that labs set the cycle threshold for PCR tests at **40 cycles**. This high limit might make sense if you're trying to get a very general idea of how wide-spread an infectious agent might have become in a community.

However, the Lincoln County Health Officer and Health Department, with the Health Board's knowledge and consent, have continued to use PCR tests to "confirm" current and active COVID-19 cases without knowing the cycle threshold that was needed to produce the positive result. We end up with a number that represents positive COVID tests, but we have no context in which to place that number, and therefore no idea what it actually means. I would hate to think that anyone might have been quarantined in our county because they had "dead nucleotides".

The CDC has been researching 'breakthrough' cases of COVID in fully vaccinated people. In April, they issued new guidelines for laboratories that recommend reducing the PCR cycle threshold limit to 28 cycles for those patients. This means that if over 29 cycles would be needed to detect SARS-CoV-2 in the sample, the test will return a negative. The guidelines also state that "the health department will also request the specimen ID numbers and the cycle threshold (Ct) value for positive RT-PCR results."

There have been many requests by citizens of Lincoln County to know the cycle threshold limit that is used for Lincoln County tests, all of which have gone unanswered. The ordering physician, the County Health Officer, or the Health Department may request that this value be reported along with positive test results

I request that the following action item be placed on the agenda for the June 6, 2021 meeting: When PCR test results are used in county epidemiology studies to justify any public health decision, the cycle threshold of positive cases must also be included.

Making the cycle threshold public will help assure that accurate and meaningful data is being used to inform public health policies.