

**Lincoln County**  
**City-County Board of Health Emergency Meeting**  
**5:00 PM, July 29, 2020**  
**Commissioner's Office Meeting Room**

- 1. Call to Order**
- 2. Pledge of Allegiance**
- 3. Roll Call**

Attendance: Jan Ivers (via phone), Mark Peck, George Jamison (via phone), Deb Armstrong (via phone), Laura Crismore (via phone), Maggie Anderson (via phone), Sara (via phone)

Jan Ivers, Board Chair, welcomed the group of zoom participants. She went over the agenda for the Q&A portion of the meeting. This included frequently asked questions on labs and testing, contact tracing, masks, and events. During the public comment section, participants could raise their hands to make their 3-minute comment. If they had an additional question that was not addressed during the Q&A portion, they had the opportunity to ask their question. Those questions were recorded to be answered in the FAQ's which will be posted on the website.

**4. Q&A**

- Jennifer McCully, Lincoln County Public Health Manager, gave COVID-19 update.
  - 63 total cases in the county
  - 20 actives at that time.
  - Most of the Libby cluster was out of recovery- all but 2.
  - 41 total recovered
  - Incident rate as of 7/27/20: 57 cases over total population, which is about .3% representing new cases up to that point. Case mortality rate up to that point 2/57 cases or 3.5%, Hospitalizations at 6/57 is just over 10%, Most individuals have been symptomatic or asymptomatic, meaning they by the time they got their results they were experiencing symptoms with only 4 individuals who remained asymptomatic. Testing will be covered in the Q&A section.
- Comments from Board Member:
  - Deb Armstrong: Stated that it is difficult to have an idea of true cases in the county when testing has taken so long to get back. The clinic in Eureka did receive, on that day, a test result from 4 days prior, so that is a much better turn around time. Since the last meeting she had spoken with several business owners in Eureka and had a meeting in the park with about 30 attendees. Topics they covered included enforcement of mask mandate and asked for understanding from both sides in order to move on. Another issue was the information given with updates. Deb stated it had been largely addressed already and thanked Jenn for all of her hard work. The last concern was with the burden of enforcement put on business owners. With

all of the other issues caused by the pandemic, felt it was too much. Wanted to find common ground and exercise kindness when in the community regarding mask mandate and those wearing or not wearing masks.

- Mark Peck: Mark stated he had a very productive meeting that morning and appreciated Dr. Rice, Dr. Garrett and Dr. Boltz as well as some of the nursing staff from the Care Center. There are a lot of complexities from both sides of the mask mandate and wished that there would have been more time before it came out to educate on the importance of their use and discuss what it would like. He didn't like that it was mandated or the bitterness that it has caused in the communities. He saw two issues: civil liberties and if the masks actually worked. He contacted one of his old commanders; a 20-year retired flight surgeon who retired out of NASA after that. He used to run the public health master's program for the Air Force, and one of the most conservative guys he had ever met. He asked him in text if there was any efficacy in mask wearing- did they help? He was surprised in the answer he got which was that it absolutely helped reduce the spread especially when combined with social distancing and handwashing, etc. Would like to try to heal as a county and look at this from more of an education, informed consent standpoint. Because like it or dislike it, Title 50 is the law. The Governor was given the authority to what he has done, and it is the way it is. Felt the discussion this morning and the input from the commander helped to give him a better understanding of the importance of mask use.
- Sara Mertes stated she appreciated Mark's statement.
- Kathi Hooper, Lincoln County Health Department Director, along with Jenn McCully had compiled a list of questions from past Board of Health meetings from the public comment, written comments she had received, and question received on the COVID information line. They created a FAQ document that hoped addressed the questions and highlight a few of them. Some questions that they were not able to answer were forwarded to the Governor's office for clarification. There are still some outstanding clarifications. If a question was asked and not answered, that would be the reason why.
  - Definition of a cluster: Per CDC, a cluster refers to "an aggregation of cases grouped in place and time that are suspected to be greater than the number expected, even though the expected number may not be known."  
The cluster in Libby was an aggregation of 27 cases that were linked to a group of individuals who interact regularly as a community and was greater than the number of expected cases. This cluster was not linked to any event or establishment. As of July 26, 2020, most individuals in this cluster are now recovered and out of isolation.
  - How to get tested in Lincoln County: There are a few ways to get tested. Call the CARD clinic for central community testing at 406-293-9274 or reach out to your provider to see if they are testing for COVID. To this date, approximately 3600 tests have been done throughout the county. Total number of tests is not number of individuals. Are waiting on approximately 800 tests from as far back as 7/7.  
  
Some providers send through private labs which in return could be billed to the individual. The Health Department sends lab to the state Public Health Laboratory because we do not have a contract with any other labs. The Health Department is

not a lab, we are not a provider who can send to labs. We do partner with other facilities when it is necessary to send other labs in. Labs being sent to the state are free to the person being tested. All surveillance tests are sent to the state lab. In this situation, the state lab had contracted with other labs in order to try to keep up on testing. The labs that they were contracting with were getting backed up. At one point, Qwest Laboratory had 14,000 lab samples pending for Montana. Those results are just now beginning to trickle in.

On July 28, the Health Department and CARD received 6 test results back- there is no way to know how many other test sites received. Those 6 were positive. They are getting us the information for positives as soon as they know so that we can quickly work on contacting those individuals and tracing who they had been contact with. We have not received documentation on those negatives and will not inform of results without that documentation. We have no way of knowing the time frame for those results. If you were tested between the 7<sup>th</sup> and the 17<sup>th</sup> and are having symptoms, please come and get tested again. The new tests being sent in are coming back in a more timely manner.

In another event, there were approximately 150 swabs sent to the National Jewish lab. We received notice yesterday that many of the samples were thrown out because the solution was saline, and that lab did not have the ability at that time to test saline media. Waiting on a line list from the state to determine which ones need retested and which ones were sent back to Montana to be tested elsewhere. We will contact those needing retesting. The state is submitting more tests to a lab in North Carolina and MSU should be up and running soon.

- Contact tracing: Contact tracing is a process when public health staff work with an individual who tested positive for COVID-19 to help them recall everyone with whom they have had close contact during the time when they may have been infectious. A close contact is anyone who was within 6 feet of an infected person for at least 15 minutes starting from 48 hours before the patient began feeling sick until the time the patient was isolated. We are only tracing those who are close contacts to the positive- not a contact of a contact. Those who are a contact of a close contact do not need to quarantine, they will need to monitor for symptoms and continue to practice general social distancing, hygiene, and utilize face coverings.
- SCAMS: There had been alleged groups calling people and saying they were with the health department doing contact tracing. If we call you for contact tracing, we will not ask you for private information. We will tell you that you have been identified as a close contact of someone who tested positive and inform you of what you need to do. You would never be asked by the health department for your social security number or credit card number. Date of birth will only be verified after you had given a sample for testing.
- Recovery from Isolation: This has changed from the past few weeks. Accumulating evidence supports ending isolation and precautions for persons with COVID-19 using a symptom-based strategy. Specifically, researchers have reported that people with mild to moderate COVID-19 remain infectious no longer than 10 days after their symptoms began, and those with more severe illness or those who are severely immunocompromised remain infectious no longer than 20 days after their symptoms began. Therefore, CDC has updated the recommendations for discontinuing home isolation as follows: Persons with COVID-19 who have symptoms and were directed to care for themselves at home may discontinue isolation under the following conditions: At least 10 days have passed since

- symptom onset and at least 24 hours have passed with no fever and other symptoms have improved.
- Received quite a lot of questions about mask mandate. Those are in the FAQ document. One question that was verified by the state as being another scam is the selling of exemption cards online. Customers do not need proof of medical condition, no requirement, no need to purchase a card of any kind.
  - County Events: As stated in the local order, organizers of events of more than 50 people are required to submit a written plan for their event to the Health Department. The Health Department is going over those plans to ensure precautions are being met such as social distancing, face covering, handwashing, signage, etc. We still recommend that anyone from vulnerable population avoid events.
  - No questions from Board members on FAQ's.

## 5. Public Comment

- Heather Handy asked if FAQ's will be available for everyone. Told the group that the governor's directive was simply a directive and not law. Asked if out of 57 cases and 2 deaths, low compared to the flu. Asked the Board if they knew of Dr. Sella Emanuel from Houston Texas, believing what she has to say is valuable. Heather handed phone to Jacob who asked with the facemask thing- there are a lot of doctors online and surgeon general saying we don't need them. A lot of doctors saying you will get sick if you do wear a mask. Curious if so many doctors are divided, why was it rolled out at all?
- Tim Haines: Wanted to address question about enforcement and what he believed was a concern with enforcement and letter being sent to a business. It seemed to him that there was an issue of liability. Can a business ask why someone is not or cannot wear a face covering?
- Dr. Garrett: Wanted to address the question about controversy in the medical community. MD from Boston University as well as master's degree in public health from Boston University. Went to the #1 rated family residency facility in the country and was chief resident there, so considered herself a bit of an expert on things like this. She stated that among legit medical sources, there is no controversy on mask wearing. It simply just des not exist. Anyone can post something online, and she urged to check and verify with providers in our community. There is no controversy at all among providers in our community over mask use and their effectiveness. The providers absolutely know that masks work to limit the spread of the disease. Nothing is 100%, but take the mandate out of it, and look at it as how you can help protect your community.
- Pierce Barney: Made statements regarding support of not wearing a mask and use of words such as shall in the governor's mandate.
- Jackie Beyer: Thanked Dr. Garrett for her statements. Wants schools to be able to open safely for the kids this fall.
- Deb Armstrong: Stated she didn't read the governor's directive closely at first. The word may in verbiage says they may ask people to leave businesses, etc., but the use of the word may make it not mandatory. As a nurse, she thinks masks are effective

and there are many factors that go into effectiveness. When inside breathing other people's air, any barrier at all would be better than none. Can be damaging in certain circumstances, but very effective when used by most.

- Catherine: Believes people should not just trust and obey, and that the governor's order is not law. Doesn't understand why a pandemic is called for only around 50 deaths, when the flu has killed many more. Feels the mask mandate is unconstitutional and causes more medical problems with the restriction of oxygen flow.
- Indigo: Wondering of any programs or special funding available for mental health support during the current situation. If so, can I get that information and if not, what can she do to help?
- Jake Mertes: Wanted to point out that O2 or oxygen molecules are many orders of magnitude smaller than a virus particle and can move easily through a surgical mask.
- Maggie Anderson: Wanted to express appreciation to Kathi and Jenn for putting together such a great document together and capturing the community's thoughts and the time that community members took to express their thoughts and concerns as well. She appreciated the opportunity to engage in that way.
- George Jamison: Thinks that progress has been made by attempting to answer people's questions. Would like to continue to answer people's questions as best we can.
- Jan Ivers: This is our 3<sup>rd</sup> public comment meeting and feel like we have learned a lot. This is our first pandemic, and there may be questions that will not be able to be answered for quite a while. She is hearing that people don't want to wear masks or cancel large events. A lot of the frustration comes from not knowing where to go from here. We have 150,000 deaths in the US. And even though Lincoln County has 2, we really want to keep those numbers down, which might mean having to make those changes. Health is very important to everybody.

## 6. Adjourn

Laura makes the motion to adjourn, Mark seconds. All in favor. Meeting adjourned.  
Next meeting will be August 12<sup>th</sup> at 6pm.

Janet Ivers  
Chair  
8/12/2020

