

ALLEGHENY COUNTY BOARD OF HEALTH

MINUTES

Nov 6, 2019

Present: Lee Harrison, MD, Chair  
William Youngblood, Vice Chair  
Ron Sugar, Secretary  
Anthony Ferraro  
Ellen Stewart, MD  
Edith Shapira, MD  
Donald Burke, MD  
Kotayya Kondaveeti, MD

Absent: Caroline Mitchell  
Joylette Portlock, PhD

1. **Call to Order**

The meeting was held at ACHD's Administration Office at 542 Fourth Avenue. Dr. Harrison called the meeting to order and announced that an executive session was held to discuss litigation and personnel matters.

2. **Approval of Minutes from September 11, 2019**

Dr. Harrison asked if there were any comments or questions about the minutes. There were none.

**Action:** Mr. Ferraro moved to approve the minutes, Dr. Stewart seconded the motion.  
**Motion passed unanimously.**

3. **Public Comments on Agenda Items**

**A. Matt Mehalik, Breath Project, re: Environmental Health Programs Enforcement Update**

Mr. Mehalik stated that the Board was subjected to low-information graphs at its September meeting. He suggested that the Board request higher standards. He stated that air quality has not been good since the hearing for US Steel in July and stated that the air stinks more than half of the time. He stated that weather shouldn't be counted on as a control action. He urged ACHD to increase enforcement and to get US Steel's investment promise in writing. He stated that US Steel has already reneged on its promise to improve the Mon Valley works. He stated that US Steel places profits over people. Mr. Mehalik ended his comments by expressing his surprise at the reappearance of the Corrigan Drive project on the Board's agenda.

**B. Ned Mulcahy, GASP, re: Clean Air Fund Request, Corrigan Drive Project**

Mr. Mulcahy stated that he is the staff attorney for GASP. He stated that he is opposed to the Corrigan Drive project. He stated that it won't reduce emissions. He also stated that the Clean Air Fund application for the project listed its main goal as public safety, which is not allowable for Clean Air Fund purposes. Mr. Mulcahy also stated that only \$7,500 of the project was to be used for education. Mr. Mulcahy stated that this project has a weird aura of low transparency.

4. **Old Business**

**C. Clean Air Fund Request: Corrigan Drive Project, \$627,100**

**Action:** Mr. Ferraro moved to take the Clean Air Fund Request for the Corrigan Drive Project from the table, Mr. Youngblood seconded the motion.

**Motion passed unanimously.**

Jim Kelly, ACHD Deputy Director for Environmental Health, stated that disbursements from the Clean Air Fund are regulated by ACHD Regulation 2109.09 and that they are allowed for projects consistent with the mission of the Board of Health. He stated that Clean Air Fund projects shouldn't be limited by their emissions reductions alone.

Mr. Kelly stated that South Park has more than four million visitors annually. The goal of this project is to use solar energy instead of fossil fuel energy, as well as more efficient LED light bulbs, to eliminate a two-mile long path in South Park, thus preventing air pollution. He stated that 122 light poles in total will be installed, with approximately 90 feet between each pole. Education signage will be posed on every fifth pole.

Mr. Kelly informed the Board that South Park is open every day of the year from dawn to midnight. This project will extend the usage of Corrigan Drive as a walking and running path by four to six hours per day, depending on the season, creating more healthy lifestyle opportunities for residents. The project's high visibility will also serve as a demonstration for using solar power to light recreational areas. Mr. Kelly stated that the 45-minute-drive radius for South Park is home to 869,000 people, including virtually all of the Mon Valley. He stated that using signage to highlight the direct impact of the LED Solar Pedestrian Light Path project will help carry the conversation and messaging beyond the boundaries of the park.

Mr. Ferraro thanked Mr. Kelly for this additional information about the project. Dr. Burke asked Mr. Kelly if South Park was the second-largest park in the County. Mr. Kelly stated that it was and noted that it is one of only two parks that are open until midnight.

**Action:** Dr. Kondaveeti moved to approve the Clean Air Fund Request for the Corrigan Drive Project for \$627,100, Dr. Stewart seconded the motion.

**Motion passed unanimously.**

### **A. Environmental Health Programs Enforcement Update**

Mr. Kelly stated that things remain consistent with the Housing program. He informed the Board that the Plumbing program has implemented electronic plans, and that the Board should expect to see more Plumbing enforcement stemming from this. He stated that things remain consistent with the Food program, though he did note a decrease in alerts and closures. The Solid Waste program has seen an increase in complaints, which Mr. Kelly attributed to increased public awareness. The Water Pollution Control program also remains consistent.

Mr. Kelly informed the Board that the ALCOSAN agreement remains in a public comment period. The public comment period began on September 19<sup>th</sup> and will end on November 19<sup>th</sup>. Final approval will be granted by a Federal judge after the comment period ends.

Mr. Kelly stated that the Air Quality program received fewer complaints in August 2019 compared to August 2018 but received more complaints in September 2019 compared to September 2018. Mr. Kelly stated that a public comment period was held regarding the Settlement Agreement that was signed with US Steel on June 27<sup>th</sup>. He stated that ACHD is finalizing its responses to the comments. He noted that ACHD was not required to hold a comment period related to the Settlement Agreement, but that ACHD felt it was important to do so.

### **B. Surveillance Update**

ACHD Chief Epidemiologist Dr. LuAnn Brink stated that there has been an outbreak of Hepatitis A since January of 2018. She noted thousands of cases in Ohio and West Virginia. She stated that there were 645 cases in Pennsylvania and noted a hotspot among the homeless inhabitants of the Kensington neighborhood in Philadelphia. She stated that Allegheny County has had 22 cases, including 7 this year. Of the cases in Allegheny County, 82% involved a hospitalization and there was one death. She stated that ACHD has been engaged in a Hepatitis A vaccination campaign and has been providing an average of sixty vaccines monthly since June.

Dr. Brink then commented on vaping. She stated that the most recent health survey, dating from 2016, indicated that 22% of 18-29-year-olds in Allegheny County had vaped within the past 30 days. She noted recent CDC and PaDOH Health Alerts regarding vaping; and stated that ACHD has engaged in outreach to Emergency Department chiefs, Infectious Disease chiefs, university health services, pediatricians, and high schools. She noted that 37 deaths nationally had been linked to vaping and noted that 86% had used THC products. She urged against buying vaping products on the streets and noted that almost all vaping related illnesses have been linked to black-market cartridges and oils.

### **D. Updated on Search for Director**

Dr. Shapira assured the Board that the search for ACHD's next Director is continuing.

5. **New Business**

**B. Prevention Point Pittsburgh – new location request**

Aaron Arnold, Executive Director of Prevention Point Pittsburgh, stated that Prevention Point is planning to open its fifth site. He stated that in 2018 Prevention Point distributed more than 500,000 syringes and more than 4,000 doses of naloxone. Mr. Arnold stated that the fifth site that Prevention Point is planning to open is in Homewood. He noted that there is a high rate of Hepatitis C in Homewood. He noted that other parts of Pennsylvania are recently seeing an increase in HIV among intravenous drug users. Further justifying the selection of Homewood for a service site, Mr. Arnold stated that black males over the age of 40 have always, and continue to have, the highest rates of overdose deaths both nationally and locally. Mr. Arnold noted that while there was a 41% decrease in overdose fatalities in Allegheny County between 2017 and 2018, during the same timeframe there was a 40% increase in overdose fatalities in Homewood.

Mr. Arnold stated that the proposed site in Homewood is already home to an established outdoor drug market and has a high number of arrests for drugs and petty crimes. He stated that Prevention Point was asked to help by a community stakeholders group convened by Representative Ed Gainey after a weekend in which there were numerous public overdoses on the corner of Frankstown and North Homewood Avenues. He stated that the House of Manna offered their parking lot for use as a site by Prevention Point. The House of Manna is located at 7240 Frankstown Avenue, and Prevention Point will have an outreach vehicle in their lot on Fridays between 1 and 4 PM.

Mr. Ferraro asked if this location was the home of a strip mall. Mr. Arnold stated that it was. He stated that the strip mall is only one-third occupied and that the House of Manna owns the strip mall and its lot. He stated that Prevention Point will next seek the permission of Pittsburgh City Council if the Board grants its approval.

Dr. Harrison asked which of the letters of support is Homewood's. Mr. Aaron stated that when Councilman Burgess introduces this to City Council, that will be considered the community's announcement of support. Dr. Burke asked if Mr. Arnold could estimate the number of users in Allegheny County and if adequate coverage exists to serve their needs. Mr. Arnold replied that there were an estimated 12,000 intravenous drug users within the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Statistical Area, but that there could be up to 20,000. He estimated that services were reaching only ten percent of the users and stated that there is a massive need for more services. Dr. Burke asked if Mr. Arnold could comment on Pennsylvania's position. Mr. Arnold stated that Pennsylvania considers syringe exchanges to be illegal, though he did note that a bill has been introduced to legalize such services. Dr. Burke noted that schools of public health support changing this law. Dr. Shapira thanked Mr. Arnold for the vital work that Prevention Point does.

**Action:** Dr. Burke moved to approve Prevention Point's request for a site in Homewood, Dr. Kondaveeti seconded the motion.

**Motion passed unanimously.**

### **C. 2020 Meeting Dates for Board of Health**

**Action:** Mr. Youngblood moved to approve the proposed 2020 meeting dates for the Board of Health, Mr. Ferraro seconded the motion.

**Motion passed unanimously.**

### **D. Food Safety Fund Request: Computer Hardware to go Paperless, \$35,000**

Mr. Kelly stated that this is a request to utilize the Food Safety Fund as established for the purchase of new and replacement equipment in 2019. The current specialized laptops used by the food safety inspectors in the field and in the office are now out of warranty and nearing the end of its useful life. Additionally, the Food Safety Program is moving to a paperless system that will require equipment adapted to a paperless approach for the inspection process.

**Action:** Mr. Youngblood moved to approve the Food Safety Fund request for \$35,000 for computer hardware, Mr. Ferraro seconded the motion.

**Motion passed unanimously.**

### **E. Environmental Health Fund Request: Plumbing Training, \$7,000**

Mr. Kelly stated that all plumbing inspectors are required to be licensed Journeyman or Master Plumbers and all supervisors and some inspectors are required Sewage Enforcement Officers. Each of these qualifications requires continuing education credits related to the Uniform Commercial Code (UCC) to remain certified with the credits being good for 3 years. Typically, these credits are obtained through specific, off-site, events that require travel, which results in additional expense as well as inspectors/supervisors unavailable to perform their required duties. The Plumbing program is proposing to obtain the continuing education services through Skillworks, who will provide a program to administer the training and testing within ACHD's Plumbing Program, negating the need for travel. This program would allow ACHD to control the timing of continuing education training and no longer be subject to the schedules and requisite travel of the previously relied-upon training entities.

**Action:** Dr. Stewart moved to approve the Environmental Health Fund Request for \$7,000 for Plumbing Training, Dr. Shapira seconded the motion.

**Motion passed unanimously.**

### **E. Environmental Health Fund Request: Extension of "Get Ahead of Lead" Campaign, \$2,000**

Mr. Kelly stated that last year, the Health Department began a "Get Ahead of Lead" education and outreach campaign to encourage parents to have their children's blood lead levels tested (required for all children in the county) and empower parents to adopt some simple behaviors to reduce their children's risk of lead exposure. This winter, ACHD would like to expand its reach via social media influencers. This push will remind parents that even when it is

not back-to-school season, it is very important to have your children's blood lead level tested at both 9-12 months and approximately 24 months old. It will also emphasize the main sources of lead exposure and let parents know some of the easy things that they can do to keep their children safe.

**Action:** Dr. Stewart moved to approve the Environmental Health Fund request of \$2,000 for the Get Ahead of Lead Campaign, Dr. Kondaveeti seconded the motion.

**Motion passed unanimously.**

**G. Environmental Health Fund Request: Household Hazardous Waste & E-Waste Collections in 2020, \$70,000**

Joy Smallwood, of ACHD's Solid Waste Management program, stated that ACHD is proposing to hold a minimum of three Allegheny County Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) collections in 2020. At these events, hard to dispose of HHW, including paint and paint products, automobile fluids, pesticides, pool chemicals, and cleaners will be collected. The event organizer will contract with an environmentally compliant contractor to take possession of the waste and dispose of it in a responsible manner. The \$35,000 expenditure from the Environmental Health Fund will help offset disposal costs of the collection events.

A minimum of five one-day Hard to Recycle (HTR) collections will be scheduled in Allegheny County. At these events, e-waste, tires and glass will be collected. Fees will be charged for some of the materials collected. The event organizer will administer the collections. Their staff and preparation time will be covered by this \$35,000 expenditure from the Environmental Health Fund, along with the cost of transport and recycling of the items collected. An environmentally compliant contractor will take possessions of the materials and recycle them in a responsible manner. Giving residents convenient and affordable recycling options for these materials will help protect the environment, save natural resources and landfill space, and help fight illegal dumping throughout the County.

Mr. Ferraro asked how much was spent on last year's collections. Ms. Smallwood said that \$65,000 was spent. Mr. Ferraro asked if a list of drop-off locations was available. Ms. Smallwood said that it is available on ACHD's website.

**Action:** Mr. Youngblood moved to approve the Environmental Health Fund request of \$70,000 for Household Hazardous Waste and E-Waste Collections, Dr. Kondaveeti seconded the motion.

**Motion passed unanimously.**

*At this time, Dr. Kondaveeti excused himself and left the meeting.*

#### **A. Electronic Support for Public Health (ESPnet)**

Dr. Brink informed the Board that this project is in its beta testing phase. She stated that ACHD's goal is to use EHR data to complement data received from the BRFSS and NHANES. She stated that ESPnet allows ACHD to receive deidentified data from both UPMC and AHN's EHR systems in order to allow ACHD to conduct disease surveillance. Advantages of ESPnet include the timeliness of the data, being able to acquire data on rare conditions that are of public health interest and dealing with objective measures of data compared to self-reported data. Topics of interest to ACHD include diabetes, smoking, hypertension, pediatric asthma, and obesity.

Dr. Harrison stated that this was a great project.

*At this time, Dr. Harrison excused himself and left the meeting. Mr. Youngblood subsequently fulfilled the role of chairing the meeting.*

#### **6. Public Comments on Non-Agenda Items**

##### **A. Rachel Filippini, GASP, re: Coke Oven Regulations**

Mr. Filippini stated that she is the Executive Director of GASP. She stated that waking up to a rotten-egg smell is abnormal. She stated that such a smell is caused by H<sub>2</sub>S. She stated that the biggest source of H<sub>2</sub>S is the Clairton Coke Works, which emitted 109 tons of it in 2017. She stated that H<sub>2</sub>S does have a limit enforceable by ACHD, and this limit was violated more than fifty times per year. She stated that no new regulations have been produced, eighteen months after ACHD promised them. She said that the community is tired of waiting and needs stronger regulations.

##### **B. Mark Dixon, re: Air Quality Complaints**

Mr. Dixon stated that the public has a right to know whether there was a spike in asthma-related visits to Emergency Departments after the fire in Clairton or not. He encouraged the Board, the press, and ACHD staff to look into this. Mr. Dixon stated that he finds the data from the SmellPittsburgh app to be better than ACHD's data and asked why it's not used regularly.

#### **7. Adjournment**

Dr. Burke moved to adjourn the meeting, Dr. Shapira seconded the adjournment.