

LARIMER COUNTY | HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT

1525 Blue Spruce Drive, Fort Collins, CO 80524, 970-498-6700, www.larimer.gov/health
Director Tom Gonzales, MPH

Board of Health

Tony J. Van Goor, MD, President
Janna West Kowalski, MS, Vice President
Bernard Birnbaum, MD
Brian Delgrosso
Christy Bush, MHS

Mission:

Working to provide everyone in Larimer County the opportunity for a healthy life.

Vision:

Larimer County is a thriving, health-aware community where everyone has access to healthy choices and a healthy environment

Larimer County Board of Health (BoH) – January 19, 2023

The Larimer County Board of Health (BoH) convened their regular meeting at 6:00 p.m., in-person, at 1525 Blue Spruce Drive, Fort Collins, CO, 80524, and virtually through the Zoom platform.

Members Present: Dr Tony J. Van Goor (Chairman)
Ms Christy Bush
Dr Bernard Birnbaum

Excused Members Absent: Janna West Kowalski
Brian DelGrosso

Executive Secretary: Tom Gonzales

County Staff: Commissioner John Kefalas (virtually), Dr Paul Mayer, Frank Haug, John Voss, Andrea Clement-Johnson, Chris Manley, Erika Cathey, Nicole Aguilar, Talia Hirsch, Kori Wilford, Olivia Kraus, Bron MacGregor

Call to Order - Dr Tony J. Van Goor, Board of Health President, called the regular BoH meeting to order at 6.00 p.m.

Public Comment - Mr Charles Compton of Loveland made a public comment requesting the resignation of Director Tom Gonzales and any Board members who had participated in the mandatory closing of schools and businesses during the COVID-19 pandemic. He also would like medical healthcare facilities to abandon their mask requirements.

Approval of December 15, 2022 Minutes

Dr Van Goor requested the following amendment to the minutes from December 15, 2023 - strike "*Dr Van Goor is member of Loveland Senior Advisory Board*" and insert "*Dr Van Goor is a liaison from Loveland to the Larimer County Office on Aging Advisory Council.*"

Action - Dr Bernard Birnbaum moved to approve the minutes with the above mentioned amendment. Ms Christy Bush seconded the motion.

Motion was unanimously approved.

NEW BUSINESS

Financial Report

Mr John Voss, Office of Accounting and Business Operations Manager, reported that the department is ending the year positive. He explained that grants are reimbursement based so the full award amounts are reflected in the budget but not yet spent, which accounts for most of the underspending and revenue not received. Revenue from Vital Records is lower this year compared to previous years, and the forecast was based on those figures as they are difficult to accurately predict. In response to Dr Birnbaum's question of whether the number of births and deaths were lower than usual, Mr Voss explained that the lower revenue is likely due to a decreased need for multiple official birth and death certificates, and not necessarily a decrease in birth and death rates. The State has raised the Vital Records software system costs by between 5% - 10% but the State's fees have not increased accordingly. Half of the underspending is due to the COVID-19 grants complexities. Mr Voss believes revenue and expenditures will normalize and that a general tightening of the budget going forward into 2024 and beyond is likely.

Public Hearing to consider additional comment or modification regarding 2023

Environmental Health Fee Schedule

A clerical error in the original publish date has been corrected and re-advertised. No public comment was made.

Action - Dr Birnbaum moved to approve the 2023 Environmental Health Fee Schedule and Ms Christy Bush seconded the motion.

Motion was unanimously approved.

2023 Work Plan Overview

Director Gonzales explained that the 2023 Annual Work Plan ties in with the 2020-2025 Strategic Plan and the Director's Annual Goals. He introduced Talia Hirsch, the Strategic Planning and Health Equity Initiatives Program Supervisor, who said the focus remains on increasing staff engagement in the Strategic Plan, enhancing collaboration between internal and equity initiatives, creating tools that help staff to use an equity lens in their decision making, and documenting activities to build institutional knowledge. Ms Hirsch discussed the goals, priorities, and the various pilot programs that are being implemented by the department to meet those goals. These included Community Outreach, Incident Command System (ICS) certification, as well as Emergency Preparedness and Response (EPR) training, which had scored lower amongst the employees core competencies.



Ms Bush asked to know more about the mentorship program and where the coaches and mentors would be sourced from, and Dr Birnbaum suggested collaboration with mentors from other local public health. Ms Hirsch responded that these issues were being considered and developed. Ms Hirsch gave examples of the new monthly “Lunch and Learn” events which have been popular with staff, the Employee Resource Groups, and a new book club.

The Language Access Plan will be implemented in 2023. The Office of Communications and Technology has hired a new Bilingual Communications Specialist as an additional effort towards language equity. Dr Van Goor asked how many languages were used in Larimer County and what the operational protocol entailed. Ms Hirsch responded that four primary languages are a current priority and that language interpretation and translation are offered to the community upon request. Our service provider, Voyance, offers remote language translation so they are called upon when required. Director Gonzales gave an example of the benefits of an in-house bilingual specialist, in which the department was able to release a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document, in both English and Spanish, during a recent incident at a local school. Dr Birnbaum inquired about the dashboard and how it will be rolled out to the community. He believes it will have a very positive impact on the community and is excited to see how that information gets used, throughout. Ms Bush acknowledged the substantial amount of work involved. Commissioner Kefalas asked when the dashboard will go live and Director Gonzales said the goal was the end of January 2023.

National Radon Action Month Proclamation

Chris Manley, Environmental Health Director, explained that in past years, the department has used a CDPHE grant to further radon education, train and certify staff in radon mitigation, and this year is focusing on testing. Free radon test kits are available at the Fort Collins and Loveland offices. Kori Wilford, Office of Communications & Technology Manager, explained that the Office of Communications and Technology had worked with IT to build a map of the county, showing radon levels and she also shared that the Radon.gov website has gone live. There is a focus on social media and a news release will be sent out on January 23, 2023. Dr Birnbaum asked if radon testing is required when purchasing a house as not all real estate agents mention this and Mr Manley said radon testing is not required as part of a real estate transaction. Dr Van Goor added that radon was the leading cause of lung cancer for nonsmokers and is particularly high in the area. In response to Dr Van Goor’s question regarding mitigation efficacy, Mr Manley explained that there are extremely simple, effective, and inexpensive mitigation systems. Commissioner Kefalas asked if homes with crawl spaces are less susceptible to radon and Mr Manley said that was not necessarily the case, it depended on the construction and ventilation. Commissioner Kefalas will share the National Radon Action Month Proclamation at the Administrative Matters meeting on Tuesday, January 24, 2023. Dr Van Goor read the proclamation for approval.

Action - Dr Birnbaum moved to approve. Ms Bush seconded the motion.

Motion was unanimously approved.

UPDATES

Director's Update

Director Gonzales is now the President of CALPHO, effective January 1, 2023, and he outlined CALPHO's Strategic Policy Priorities and Long Term Policy Priorities. He emphasized the need for flexible state funding to allow for program flexibility that enables local public health to pivot and be nimble when crises arise.

Mr Manley introduced Nicole Aguilar, Supervisor for Consumer Protection, who explained the philosophy which has ensured impactful engagement with partners. Her team takes the approach of serving as educators, partners, and then regulators, and they assist the industry in order to ensure that everyone succeeds together. Ms Aguilar gave a program review of various establishments where staff conduct inspections using a risk-based approach, including child care centers and schools. The Retail Food Program (RFE) uses a state-based rating system and reported a pass rate of 93.5% of RFEs in 2022. In this program, the frequency of inspections is based on the type of food prepared, the population served, and inspection history. The results of these inspections are available to the public on the department's website. Ms Aguilar explained the requirements to work as an Environmental Health Specialist. In addition, she noted the educational qualifications, soft skills, and equity standards which are essential qualities in any potential candidate. Dr Birnbaum commended her on the volume of work, commenting that it was particularly impressive for such a small team. Director Gonzales thanked Ms Aguilar for her team's work and their collaborative approach which has been popular with industry members and the community.

Dr Birbaum inquired about efforts to encourage the community to receive vaccinations. Andrea Clement-Johnson, Deputy Public Health Director, agreed that there have been diminished up-to-date levels of childhood vaccination since COVID-19 occurred, in particular. To combat this, LCDHE, CDPHE, CALPHO, and immunization coalitions in the state are prioritizing educational and vaccination efforts to ensure that providers do not miss any opportunity for providing a vaccine, and that they do not miss education opportunities about the importance of vaccines, most notably with parents. There is a toolkit available to get the word out and our clinic staff are communicating with our schools regarding compliance for required vaccinations or documentation of an exemption, as well. Departmental staff are active in community outreach and mobile vaccinations and they keep up to date on the resources that are available for combatting this issue within the populations we serve.

Dr Van Goor mentioned the recent extreme cold temperatures in late December 2022 and early January 2023, and the actions that were taken by LCDHE to assist the cold-challenged and migrant population populations. Erika Cathey, Communicable Disease and Emergency Preparedness and Response Manager, explained how LCDHE had partnered with the Office of Emergency Management. The role of the department was to coordinate partners and offer

logistical assistance. Dr Paul Mayer, Medical Officer, assisted with the initial medical evaluation process and the team worked with Sunrise Community Health to ensure quality follow-up care. There was also a Behavioral Health Specialist on site to assess the migrants upon their arrival. Dr Van Goor asked how significant the health problems were amongst the migrants. Dr Mayer said that most had walked from Venezuela, and had no communicable diseases occurring. COVID-19 testing was done as a precautionary measure. The LCDHE staff involved had all volunteered and Director Gonzales offered his heartfelt thanks to Sunrise's Executive Director and staff for their commitment and care. There was limited local capacity but staff and the community had provided great care. Commissioner Kefalas said there were also additional community-based groups working on the migrant issue and that churches were able to provide temporary housing. It was an extraordinary effort during the life-threatening weather conditions and the holidays.

Board Member Updates

Dr Birnbaum reiterated the need for the community to continue to get their influenza and COVID-19 vaccines.

Adjourn Meeting

Dr Birnbaum moved to adjourn the meeting. Ms Bush seconded the motion.

The meeting adjourned at 7:26 p.m.