

Okanogan Board of Health
Tuesday, May 10th, 2022, 1:30 PM

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Present:

Lori Jones (LJ), BOH (Board of Health) Director
Dr. James Wallace (JW), Health Officer
James Wright, BOH board member
Mariann Wright (MW), BOH board member
Dave Hilton (DH), BOH, Environmental Health
Chris Branch (CB), County Commissioner, BOH board member
Andy Hover (AH), Commissioner, BOH board member
Jill Gates, Public Health
Megan Barton, Mid Valley Hospital
Sara Bates, Clean E, NCACH

Time stamps refer to a Zoom recording on the County Watch website.

Summary of Important Discussions: *Amendment passed for \$70,253 increase in routine program spending; Health Officer Wallace says Covid rates below 100 per 100,000, recent up-tick elsewhere not yet felt here, new strain less virulent, resources and treatments improving; Director Jones encourages home Covid testers to report any positive results, says increase in sexually transmitted diseases and drug overdoses, especially Fenanol tied to lack of routine care during pandemic, ad for “consumer of public health” board position has yielded one applicant; Environmental Health Director Hilton dealing with “solid run on development across the board”, says influx due to “social unrest stuff along I-5 corridor”; avian flu looming on the horizon.*

1:35 - *The trucks have their “Tonneau covers” now and DH says no further theft in the parking lot so far.*

1:36 - *A laptop is approved for Jennifer (Thill?) who does the website and communications. This way she can work remotely and be in the county system. It will belong to Public Health.*

1:36 - *Approval of a consolidated contract amendment for a \$70,253 increase spanning four programs: Covid mass vaccinations, ELC (Epidemiology and Laboratory Capacity) Covid response, Maternal-Child Health and Immunization. LJ: It's an adjustment; nothing different about our current state of work. We are frugal.*

Medical Officer's update - JW: ...The new case rate is below 100 per 100,000... We're starting to see an increase, not as much as in the northeastern US or Western Washington where there are more hospitalizations. Central Washington Hospital does not have an increase. We're seeing variants of the Omicron variant but celebrating these lower rates and the decreased

virulence of the current strain... One challenge is the home tests. People diagnose themselves. We're not getting as many reports so we encourage people to report their results or call if they have symptoms. We can do home checks, and there are more opportunities for treatment. Oral and IV antiviral medications can help prevent complications. There are still fewer cases among vaccinated people. It's a smart idea to mask when the risk is higher. There's no restriction now for gatherings or travel.

AH: What are the current guidelines for quarantine? J: Isolate for 10 days. Now if there's no fever and nearly resolved symptoms after five days you can discontinue isolation... So five days from a positive result or the beginning of symptoms. But if things are getting worse, 10 days. *MW mentions mobile clinics doing weekly services. JW says a number of services are doing this—once a week in Omak, once or twice a week in Brewster and Pateros.* JW: There's also on-demand testing or vaccination. There's demand from a lot of growers who have an increase in employment population this time of year. (19:45) Omicron has short-live, mild symptoms.

CB: An elderly friend of mine was denied a scheduled surgery because he tested positive but when he went back later they didn't test him. *JW says since contagion only lasts five days there's little chance of contracting the virus again right away.*

22:35 - MW: We certainly appreciate all the work you're doing, all that goes on in the background that we don't see every day. JW: Well that's what we do... We've got a strong department and everybody is doing a good job.

23:60 - Home Covid test reporting - LJ: We have our online home test report forms on our web page. It goes to a secure spread sheet. We encourage everyone who has data home tests who test positive to fill that simple form out to make sure that the course is running smoothly. We can provide resources, anti-virals. A non-profit, Care Connect, can deliver food or pay mortgage or rent if you're not getting any sick leave, as some companies have pulled that benefit.

25:39 - LJ: Now we have an application form online for the consumer of public health board position. We have one applicant. There's a simple form on our webpage. It's in the newspaper too. I'm hoping that we can get some interest. Also there's an increase in STIs (sexually transmitted infections.) We're working with the Spokane regional group. Some tougher ones like syphilis are a whole different level. We've just received the numbers from Wayne Walker with overdose responses. We're really working with several different organizations so we can address this. We know Fentanyl is here, people using that. CB: Is there any particular age group? LJ: Late teens to 30s. People have delayed routine care. Now we have day-to-day care. It was really tough, two years without it, for people to be seen for certain things. *JW proposes to speak on that at the next meeting.* JW: We're seeing a rebound in STIs after rates going down in 2020 and 2021. People didn't have much access to treatment and prevention. Unfortunately opioid overdose trends are very similar... We've got strong programs we can expend on with other partners in the county so we can prioritize these things in the next weeks and months.

29:50 - Environmental Health - DH: There's an influx of new land owners in a pretty solid run on development across the board, contractors all booked out for months if not a year or more. With that, an influx of complaints—everything from solid waste to squatters, the stuff we see every year. Aside from an up-tick in the volume it's a normal spring. MW: It's a good time to have a new vehicle. DH: Mine's not the new one! (*Laughter.*) MW: Then, a good time to have a Tonneau cover! Are the new landowners a side effect of people moving here for Covid reasons? DH: It's probably more along the lines of social unrest in various urbanized and

heavily populated areas. They're trying to get their own piece of heaven. Not necessarily realizing what they've got themselves in for. They're turning in applications (though struggling to fill them out). The problem is the urbanized unrest stuff that took place along the I-5 corridor. MW: There is something infections or contagious about spring in the Okanogan.

3:48 - Avian flu - LJ: They've identified birds in Spokane. We've watched it creep west. I wouldn't be surprised to find some birds infected in the county. We have good USDA resources. It isn't our first "bird flu rodeo"... CB: We need to be cautious with chickens and other quackers. They did get a notice about them. MW: What about vet checks? CB: I didn't see that on the notice, just "watch the birds." LJ: With the last outbreak it 21 days from the time of depopulating birds and the contamination clean-up, which is what they did in Riverside. *JW asks about human transmission.* LJ: There was one case in Colorado but it was pretty mild... It does cross. Just give a little "heads up". *CB jokes about rewards for starlings.*

37:02 (2:10 p.m.) - Meeting adjourned