

Barton County Board of Health Agenda Meeting Minutes

Recorded audio is available on compact disk upon KORA request to the Barton County Clerk's Office, 1400 Main – Room 202, Great Bend, Kansas 67530.

Phone (620) 793-1835 \ Fax (620) 793-1990 \ Email clerk@bartoncounty.org

Meetings Live Streamed through **Microsoft Teams** at the following link: <https://bit.ly/33t3o0E>

January 13, 2022

The Board of Barton County Commissioners acting as the Board of Health convened this 13th day of January 2022, at the Barton County Courthouse.

Members present:

Kirby Krier, Commissioner, 1st District
Barb Esfeld, Commissioner, 2nd District (*Chairman Pro-Tem*)
Shawn Hutchinson, Commissioner, 3rd District, Chairman
James R. Daily, Commissioner, 4th District
Jennifer Schartz, Commissioner, 5th District
Bev Schmeidler, County Clerk
Matt Patzner, Director of Operations
Patrick Hoffman, County Counselor
Karen Winkelman, Public Health Director

I. OPENING BUSINESS:

Commissioner Daily called the meeting to order at 9:00 A.M.

Commissioner Daily moved to approve the agenda.

Commissioner Schartz seconded the motion.

All voted aye. Motion passed.

Commissioner Daily moved to approve the minutes from the October 5, 2021, and the October 12, 2021, meetings.

Commissioner Schartz seconded the motion.

All voted aye. Motion passed.

II. OLD BUSINESS:

There was no old business.

III. NEW BUSINESS:

A. DEPARTMENTAL UPDATE:

-Karen Winkelman, Public Health Director, will present. Case investigation has been used for decades to slow or stop the spread of infectious diseases and is essential in controlling the transmission of infectious diseases, including COVID-19. At this time, the Board of Health will consider options relative to this work and the COVID pandemic.

Karen Winkelman, Public Health Director, said we had good discussions in study session Wednesday. This may be repetitious but important to update the public. The first COVID-19 case in Barton County was March 30, 2020. Winkelman presented a power point highlighting events in 2021 beginning with the introduction of vaccine availability. There are a lot of long-lasting partnerships that have come out of the pandemic, the community has really come together when needed. First vaccine drive-thru was January 6, 2021 with several more to follow.

Winkelman said today Barton County was ranked at 81 after being at 85 on Monday, a slight improvement. Those rankings were based on the number of tests given, vaccination rates and average number of cases so it varies day to day. From January 1st to January 13th, there were 225 positive cases won in Barton County. State of Kansas reports an increase of 22,240 new cases and 27 new deaths in two days, Monday, January 10th to Wednesday, January 12th.

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Winkelman said by statute, whenever there was a positive COVID result, it must be reported to KDHE and to the local health department. There are over 50 reportable diseases, and some have higher degrees of reporting. COVID was one of the diseases listed. When people are concerned about their information being out there, they are reassured that it was on a need to know basis to comply with statute. These reportable diseases have a workbook of guidelines that are frequently updated. The current policy for a positive result received was to call the individual to determine the onset of symptoms. If there was communication that onset was day 0, isolation infectious was for 10 days. If there was no onset day of symptoms, they go by the date of collection as day 0. Quarantine is the incubation phase when at any point symptoms could start developing. When contact was made with an individual, an isolation order is sent out to them. That order gives information, what to follow and is also a legal binding document. At that point, case by case determination decides if it would be handled in house or sent to KDHE.

Winkelman said KDHE had provided new guidance for isolation and quarantine. There was a set of guidelines for healthcare workers and also for the general public. Basically, a positive case should stay home for 5 days. Then, if the symptoms are mild and the employer agrees, they can return to work on day 6 with a tight-fitting mask for the remainder of the 10 days. This would be a big change and important for them to take the proper measures to protect the public and those they come in contact with. For healthcare workers there are differences in conventional staffing, contingency staffing and crisis staffing. There are different levels due to staffing issues in medical facilities.

Winkelman said that Dr. Pike provided a letter in support of CDC/KDHE new guidance for this strain.

Commissioner Krier asked how you get the number of cases. Winkelman said they have access to a secure website, a database system, called EpiTrax.

Commissioner Schartz said the commission was fully aware of the pressures the Health Department staff has been under, they had full time jobs before COVID. Commended the staff for rising above and hanging in there as long as they have.

Winkelman said KDHE was recognizing the impact this was having on public health, the manpower and the workload. KDHE wants to help health departments and take on more cases on the investigation side. A few weeks ago, they proposed some options. Winkelman explained the options.

Commissioner Hutchinson asked Winkelman what option he suggested in study session.

Commissioner Krier said Commissioner Hutchinson offered Option 4. The county would only do positive cases and no longer do contact tracing or quarantine orders. That would take some of the workload off of the health department.

Commissioner Krier asked for an explanation of the procedure for positive cases.

Lindsey Ensley, Barton County Health Department Clinical Nurse Supervisor, said a positive case would be assigned a number and prioritized by age. When they reach the person, they find out onset of symptoms, what their symptoms were and how to handle them. They ask for any contacts and if the person were willing to share, that information was documented. They try to call 3 times, leave messages if possible and send an isolation letter.

Commissioner Krier said there are multiple testing sites in the county. Do those testing sites give the person any information about their results. Winkelman said she has had people send her a screen shot of results.

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Commissioner Esfeld said she wondered if they were to go with Option 3, would KDHE be able to keep up with all the cases.

Commissioner Hutchinson said isolation orders are for COVID positive individuals and quarantine orders are for those awaiting test results. Winkelman said that several months ago it changed from orders to recommendations for quarantine.

Commissioner Schartz said if they have the state take over positive case investigations and they become overwhelmed, she would rather they say they cannot keep up than the county staff be so overwhelmed.

Commissioner Krier would rather keep it at the Health Department and hire more staff, we have more than \$400,000 in reserve grant funds that could be used.

Winkelman said the state was overwhelmed and have prioritized. They have asked the Health Department to prioritize so even if they attempted to do those inhouse, they would be forced by workload and a finite number of hours to get those prioritized done and it would be a struggle. As far as adding more staff, they have had openings for RN positions, and we still have not filled them. Winkelman said they have been inundated with calls and asked KDHE for a phone number citizens could call with questions. She was given a phone number and an email address. She then found out that the number given went to individuals at Wichita State University that were not medical personnel and were simply reading verbiage from documents but will not go any further. They then defer the questions to local health departments. The Health Department has been pulling from other departments already, taking them from their own program work, but questions come back on the nursing staff.

Commissioner Krier asked after a positive test, are they told to contact their own doctor. Winkelman said doctors tell patients to call the Health Department.

Commissioner Krier asked if the Health Department recommends medications to patients. Ensley said they cannot give medication advice.

Commissioner Schartz as the Board of Health, primary concern was the health of our citizens, secondary concern was to keep the Barton County Health Department functioning. Winkelman has asked for intervention because her staff has been taxed and we need to be respectful of them.

Commissioner Krier said this commission had been very supportive and asked Winkelman if she was short nurses. Winkelman said they are down a part-time dietician so the full-time one was overwhelmed. They are also down a nurse position.

Commissioner Krier said we have increased wages this last year, need to hire people. Winkelman said you have to get applications before you can hire.

Commissioner Krier asked if wages were a factor. Winkelman said that was a big factor.

Commissioner Krier said to increase wages. Winkelman said that would need to be across the board to all nursing staff.

Commissioner Schartz said there are a lot of businesses needing to hire people but no one was applying.

Commissioner Krier asked how KDHE was going to have enough staff to handle the workload.

Winkelman said this was just work for COVID. If the state cannot handle the workload, how was her staff going to. They are only doing COVID work, not able to get regular duties and program work done.

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Commissioner Krier asked by giving this to the state, have we just thrown our citizens under the bus. Right now we are handling it but it is difficult.

Winkelman said we are not handling it; we are doing the best that we can.

Commissioner Krier asked were there floater positions that could help at the Health Department. Winkelman said that had been done in the past, we had people from the Sheriff's Office, Clerk's Office and Facilities for example.

Commissioner Daily said heard this morning that at the start of February, KDHE will no longer do contact tracing or investigations. Winkelman said they would do the investigations but as of yesterday, said the local health departments could cease contact investigations. Winkelman said that would be helpful for them and the state will slowly phase out by February 1st.

Commissioner Daily said we all know you need nurses but what about clerical staff, would more people help you.

Commissioner Schartz said she understood not wanting to shortchange our citizens but if the state would gather information, that would take the burden off of the health department.

Winkelman said when they do the calling, we provide them with the isolation order which has been very definitive, 10 days. Now it would be based on what the positive case determined to be mild symptoms as well as what HR at their employer determines. Unable to put a definitive end date.

Commissioner Hutchinson said they were nervous about giving up control to the state.

Eric Hoffman, County Counselor, said there was no contract to enter with KDHE nor was it tied to any grant funding. He and Winkelman have assurance from KDHE that this could be undone if the commission chooses to do it. Hoffman wanted to reiterate to the public that Kansas law does not require anyone to engage with an investigator.

Commissioner Hutchinson asked Hoffman, there were no ramifications whatsoever, could choose to opt in with KDHE and then choose to opt out and be right back where we started. Hoffman said that was correct.

Commissioner Hutchinson asked if it would be possible for the chairman to sign off in an emergency or would the board have to convene. Hoffman said he thought the County Health Officer could unilaterally do it under the law.

Commissioner Hutchinson asked for any comments from the public.

Glenna Gaunt shared her thoughts and personal experience about COVID.

Commissioner Daily moved that we select Option 3, the Barton County Health Department to automatically route all positive cases to the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) to conduct positive case investigations. Barton County will still have the ability to view access and all the cases through the EpiTrax database.

Commissioner Krier asked that Commissioner Daily add in there that we can opt out at any time.

Commissioner Daily said yes, sir. Put it in there.

Commissioner Schartz seconded the motion.

Commissioner Hutchinson said it had been moved and seconded to go with Option 3, all those in favor aye aye.

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Commissioner Krier said we seem to not have a Commission Health Board meeting that often. Can we have it every 2 weeks or every 3 weeks to where we can get reviews from Karen so the public can see that we are actually, instead of study session, actually have a meeting like this.

Commissioner Hutchinson said could we have her involved in the commission meetings or do you want to reconvene as the board of health.

Commissioner Krier said we actually need to reconvene as the Board of Health in order to rescind this we need to be in the Board of Health.

Commissioner Hutchinson said are you asking to do that the same day that we are doing commission meeting.

Commissioner Krier said yes, right after.

Commissioner Hutchinson said he had no problem with that.

Hoffman said if you wanted to get reports during the meeting you could do it just the way you described it.

Commissioner Krier said I think the public needs to know if we rescind this option. That they get some input and see where we are at and we could get that information to KDHE, correct.

Commissioner Hutchinson said so it has been moved and seconded that we turn over our COVID positive cases to KDHE for them to contact the individual and provide them isolation time frames and orders with the ability to opt out at any time.

Commissioner Krier said before we vote I think the state is going to have a problem, a major problem.

Commissioner Hutchinson said on a scale of 1 to 10, how likely do you think the state is going to have a problem with this Karen.

Winkelman said she wanted to make a comment that this is to start, the effective date for these options to happen is towards the end of January.

Commissioner Hutchinson said that is great.

Commissioner Krier said was that in the motion.

Commissioner Daily said if you want that, I will amend my motion to say that.

Winkelman said for this particular automatically routed to KDHE, this is anticipated to be in effect the end of January.

Commissioner Krier said can we please have a specific date, January 31st or February 1st.

Commissioner Daily said you just tell me Karen, what you want.

Commissioner Schartz said January 31st is a Monday.

Winkelman said when she asked for a copy of the isolation document that they would be providing to the positive cases in this situation, they said the opt in process goes into effect slated for end of January to all health departments that will be opting in completely or just sending us some cases.

Commissioner Daily said their end of January was arbitrary.

Commissioner Hutchinson said but they said they will stop all contact tracing by February 1st. Are you comfortable with February 1st.

Winkelman said yes and they are stopping contact tracing as of right now, as of yesterday.

Commissioner Schartz said she would withdraw her second.

Commissioner Daily said he would amend his motion to make the effective day February 1, 2022.

Commissioner Schartz seconded the motion.

All voted aye. Motion passed.

Commissioner Krier said this vote was for the Health Department, he was not sure the state could meet the challenge.

Winkelman thanked the Board of Health.

Commissioner Esfeld moved to strike Item B from our agenda please.

Commissioner Krier seconded the motion.

All voted aye. Motion passed

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COVID-PROTOCOL GUIDELINES:

-Karen Winkelman will present. The Board of Health will consider making a determination as to which COVID-protocol guidelines will be followed in Barton County.

ITEM REMOVED

IV. OTHER BUSINESS:

- Commissioner Krier – for general population, isolate for 5 days. After 5 days, wear tight fitting mask around others. This has changed dramatically possibly because of the difficulty in finding workers.
- Commissioner Esfeld – would like to see the flow chart discussed yesterday put on website
- Commissioner Schartz – asked Winkelman when the state contacts positive cases, will they be answering questions or referring them to local health departments
- Winkelman – yet to be determined, hoping for open communication with KDHE
- Commissioner Krier – asked Winkelman if she would get involved in the event of a cluster
- Winkelman – most likely they will be involved
- David Wirth – said the N95 masks are considerably cheaper at this time
- Commissioner Krier – suggested Board of Health meet the 1st Wednesday of each month

V. ADJOURN:

Commissioner Esfeld moved to adjourn at 10:17 A.M.

Commissioner Krier seconded the motion.

All voted aye. Motion passed.

ATTEST:



Bev Schmeidler
Barton County Clerk



Shawn Hutchinson
Chairman