

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

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September 10, 2021

The Board of Barton County Commissioners acting as the Board of Health convened this 10th day of September 2021, at the Barton County Courthouse.

Members present:

Kirby Krier, Commissioner, 1st District
Barb Esfeld, Commissioner, 2nd District
Shawn Hutchinson, Commissioner, 3rd District (*Chairman Pro-Tem*)
James R. Daily, Commissioner, 4th District, Chairman
Jennifer Schartz, Commissioner, 5th District
Donna Zimmerman, County Clerk
Barry McManaman, Interim County Administrator
Patrick Hoffman, County Counselor
Karen Winkelman, Public Health Director

I. OPENING BUSINESS:

Commissioner Daily called the meeting to order at 10:00 A.M.

Commissioner Krier moved to approve the agenda.
Commissioner Schartz seconded the motion.
All voted aye. Motion passed.

Commissioner Hutchinson moved to approve the minutes of March 29, 2021, Board of Health Meeting.
Commissioner Schartz seconded the motion.
/oted aye. Motion passed.

II. OLD BUSINESS:

There was no old business.

III. NEW BUSINESS:

A. COVID-19 INFORMATION UPDATE:

- Karen Winkelman, Health Director, will provide details.

Karen Winkelman, Local Health Officer, said pursuant to K.S.A. 65-210, as the Health Officer, she has the responsibility to act in an advisory capacity to the Board of Health. As the Board of Health, you have the ultimate responsibility that rests with you on decisions, responses and support regarding the health and wellbeing of Barton County citizens. Winkelman said this meeting is basically informational to clear up some confusion with the general public and noted the subject matter experts available as well: Patrick Hoffman; Dr. Jonathan Pike, Local Health Advisor; Sheri Tubach, Deputy State Epidemiologist, via Teams; Kori Hammeke, Health Department Child Care Licensing; and Lindsey Ensley, Nursing Supervisor. Winkelman said none of us present have been through a pandemic before and said incident command is typically a 24/48-hour event, but we are at day 561 of incident command.

Winkelman provided the following update on cases: 160 currently in isolation, 127 in isolation 2 days ago, positive cases up by 62 cases in 2 days, over 3,000 positive cases throughout the pandemic.

June 2021 – 11 cases

July 2021 – 101 cases

August 2021 – 226 cases

September to-date – 153 cases (only 1/3 way through the month)

Deaths remain at 51

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Commissioner Krier asked what the timeline is for infectious cases. Winkelman said Day 0 is the onset of symptoms and they need to be in isolation for 10 days. If there are no symptoms, but a positive test, they go by the collection date.

Winkelman said the Barton County Health Department has administered over 13,000 doses and according to KDHE, about 19,000 doses have been administered overall in Barton County. All preparations are available on a walk-in basis during regular hours. Winkelman reported 38.4% have been vaccinated in Barton County and 44.5% in the State of Kansas and ages 12 years and up is 45.4% complete. Probably tested at least 75 in drive-through and on-site.

Winkelman said testing is processed through the KDHE lab and noted their department does do some rapid testing on an individual basis.

Winkelman reported there are 100 counties reporting variants and out of the 72 specimens sequenced, Barton County has 55 variants of concern (52 Delta/3 Alpha). There are variants of interest, variants of concern, and variants of severe consequence. Barton County is in the variant of concern category. Winkelman reported that Dr. Lee Norman discussed schools at length and defined schools as a flash point and noted children under the age of 12 are now making up a high number of their cases. Winkelman said KDHE has District Specialists scattered throughout the state and said Cassy Brown is the contact for Barton County. On August 12th, KDHE provided guidance for K-12. Winkelman said there are strategies in the plans that she would support and said having the same document to refer to would make it much simpler. Four components to the purpose of the plans. Vaccinations for staff and or students, robust testing strategies, CDC and KDHE recommend masking for teachers and students, 3-foot physical distance, good personal hygiene. Three different strategies: (1) Test to know. Testing supplies available at the facility; (2) Test to stay and learn. Susceptible close contacts are tested daily. If they have a negative test and are tested daily and are not symptomatic, they can stay in school; (3) Testing for full quarantine period of 14 days. Winkelman said there is also Test to Stay, Play & Participate. Testing for extracurricular activities, sports, etc.

Commissioner Krier asked how our numbers compare for children 12 and under to last year. Sheri Tubach, KDHE Infectious Disease Epidemiology and Response Section Director (attending via Teams®), said from July to August to September of this year, the number of cases being reported is doubling. Commissioner Krier said he is specifically asking about 12 and under. Tubach said she can look up that information.

Winkelman said a quarantine "order" was initially in place during this pandemic. Now it is a quarantine recommendation. They also shortened quarantine options from 14 days to 10 days, but noted incubation is still 14 days. Winkelman said hoping for better compliance, they made the decision to shorten quarantine recommendations to 10-days. Then the Delta variant came in and changed everything as it is much more transmittable and severe. Winkelman said since they do not always know if they are dealing with a variant, they decided to go to 14-day quarantine recommendations across the board.

Winkelman said there are a lot of resources available. KDHE releases numbers Monday-Wednesday-Friday. Kansas County COVID rankings come out today. Ranking is on vaccination rate, the average number of cases and the average number of tests given. August 30th we were at 84. September 1st we were 87 and as of Wednesday we are at 77.

Commissioner Hutchinson asked if we had seen the report that the Delta variant is plateauing. Tubach said we are still seeing increases in case counts, not decreases at this time. Commissioner Hutchinson asked if we have peaked. Tubach said she would not say we have peaked. A lot of counties are still seeing increasing trends.

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Winkelman said we had an after-school program and a daycare type program under the same guidance and direction in addition to an outbreak in the schools. Found that there were multiple contacts and exposure on multiple days and times. Everyone was considered to have been exposed. The after-school program is regulated by KDHE. The director decided to close for 14 days and were supported by KDHE and the Health Department. That also involved children in schools. They can't go to the afterschool program, but they can go to school. Winkelman said the schools are governed by the school board. The daycare closed for 14 days. Winkelman said her understanding was there has been some discussion with KDHE on a plan. Patrick Crowdis, USD 431 Superintendent, said no plan discussion, only had discussions on testing. Winkelman said the goal of the testing was to identify those students as quickly as possible, and explained they are most infectious 2 days before the onset of symptoms.

Commissioner Daily asked Superintendent Crowdis the rationale for keeping kids in schools. Crowdis said the plan approved by the school board is a 10-day quarantine with the exception that if both student and teacher were vaccinated and fully masked, or if the subject had a confirmed COVID case in the past 6 months. In order to shorten quarantine, they added that on day 3 a confirmed negative test gets kids back into school. Crowdis said Cassy Brown of KDHE did not state the number of days. They plan to do one single test instead of testing kids 3 days in a row. Cassy Brown said their plan was not going to be approved by KDHE so they will reevaluate the plan on Monday at the school board meeting.

Commissioner Krier asked if there is a problem between the school's 10-day quarantine and the 14-day quarantine. Winkelman said according to the KDHE strategy it includes consecutive testing. Commissioner Krier asked if KDHE could pull the licensing if there wasn't compliance. Winkelman said the daycare and after-school program must be 14 days per KDHE. Commissioner Krier asked if it would affect the licensing. Patrick Hoffman said ultimately the childcare center follows KDHE guidance.

Commissioner Daily asked Winkelman if her belief was children should be tested every day. Winkelman said yes. Commissioner Krier asked if there is funding for testing. Winkelman said yes.

Commissioner Hutchinson asked what the shortest length of time was to test someone and determine that they are negative. Sheri Tubach said it is generally 4–5 days. Commissioner Hutchinson asked if we could go with a 5-day quarantine with a negative test and be done with it. Tubach said no because some still develop illness up to 14 days after exposure. Tubach explained 80% develop symptoms within 10 days of exposure and the remaining 20% develop between 10-14 days.

Commissioner Krier asked if a person could still transmit the disease between the 10-14 days. Tubach said yes.

Patrick Crowdis said the specific incident is that we would not ask them to test any sooner than the 11th. The advice we are giving them is waiting to come back to school on the 14th after their 10-day quarantine. No testing.

Commissioner Hutchinson asked if that is some of the push back, 14-day quarantine vs 10-day quarantine. Winkelman said that does add to the confusion because they have it as a recommendation, not a mandate.

Commissioner Daily asked if Winkelman's recommendation is to follow KDHE's recommended 14-day quarantine. Winkelman said yes. Superintendent Crowdis said students are coming back on day 4 with a negative test. Close contacts have not been coming back positive. Had students out who never had symptoms. Had students coming back sooner who tested positive than those who were quarantined.

Commissioner Krier asked if there are legal issues with the number of quarantine days. Winkelman said there is a 10-day guidance (10 days no symptoms and monitor the 4 additional days), but it also says 14 days are recommended.

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Dr. Jonathan Pike, Medical Consultant to the County Health Officer, local family physician, and Medical Director for Inpatient Services at the hospital, said he would defer to KDHE on statistics. Closing in on a year since vaccine has become available. Increased transmissibility, increased pathogenicity and severity of the Delta variant has changed his thoughts and what COVID-19 has done to communities. Pike said we were dealing with one standard variant last year and people under the age of 40 were at extremely low risk. People in the 40-60 age category were at somewhat of an increased risk and people over the age of 60 were at the highest risk. The Delta variant is different as are some of the other variants. Pike said from a hospital and medication perspective, we have seen numerous people coming in that do not fit any of those age stratification categories that are in very severe situations that need advanced airway management and need transferred to higher facilities. Would emphasize keeping kids in school and not hindering their learning experience but stands by KDHE recommendations. Some of the confusion comes from comments and recommendations from health care professionals nationwide that could have sounded like requirements. Pike said he believes the three options: Test to Know; Test to Learn; and Test to Stay & Play can maximize the ability to keep kids in schools. We might think years later some of these things were maybe excessive but would rather err on the side of excessiveness than to impose greater risk. Pike said one of the problems with COVID and its impact on the community is people's different opinions in operating out of caution vs operating out of fear. Dr. Pike said his final thought is immunizations, would somewhat sit by the recommendations and when a person should consider a vaccine. Unfortunately, the variant has changed that. People should consider their own circumstances. Would wager the risk of exposing yourself to any of the variants is higher than the risk of the vaccine. There are risks, but those are far less.

Commissioner Hutchinson asked Dr. Pike if he was seeing more children under the age of 16 hospitalized with air way problems. Pike said his direct exposure is to individuals 18 years and older and does not have that information. Commissioner Hutchinson said if the Delta is more contagious and symptoms are more severe, would it also be a shorter incubation period. Pike said unfortunately, the increased infectivity and contagiousness differs with every virus, it's a plausible theory, but does not have evidence to support it. Tubach also said she does not have any evidence it is a shortened incubation period.

Kori Hammeke, Child Care Licensing Surveyor, said she had a phone call this morning from a program director from a large center from a neighboring county. The director said they often have options to close one unit within a center. In this case, they were so short staffed with exposures, they had to combine children. A child attended school in a different locality and another child from that same home attended a daycare in a neighborhood county. Because of shortened quarantine orders not approved by KDHE, the child could return to school, the sibling attended daycare in a neighboring county. Now, that child exposed multiple children and staff. When we have exposure, and a child goes to another facility, it impacts multiple people. It spreads to our neighboring counties as well.

Commissioner Hutchinson said he had just received an email from a school nurse. He read the email which asked if they could put a child in quarantine for 14 days, test them on day 7, and if negative, let them go back with a mask for the remainder of the 14 days. Winkelman asked Tubach if that would be adequate on just one day. Tubach said it would all have to be approved by the local health officer, recommended 14-day quarantine, 10-day quarantine and monitor for the remaining 4 days, or 7-day quarantine with a negative PCR test no sooner than day 6, could then go back to normal activity on day 8. Tubach said the CDC has provided those 3 days options and noted some are deciding the 7-day option is not appropriate due to how easily the variant is being transmitted. If a child would be staying in school with a rapid antigen test every day, that does not shorten the quarantine period.

Commissioner Krier asked Tubach what she considered to be the most reliable test. Tubach said the PCR is the most reliable. The antigen tests perform fairly well in those cases where an individual is being tested every day and develops symptoms or right before they develop symptoms.

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Commissioner Daily asked which test USD 431 is using. Crowdis said because they are not yet approved, they are working with Clara Barton as well as other local facilities. Results are coming back in 24/72 hours.

Dean Stoskopf, USD 431 School Board member, said he prefers 7-day quarantine and testing and asked if KDHE accept that. Tubach said it would require a PCR test and not the antigen (rapid test). Tubach said if a school wants to do the Test to Learn or the Test to Stay, Play and Participate, they can do the 10-day quarantine if ok with the local health department and can use the antigen test.

Commissioner Schartz said the 7-day quarantine and waiting 24/72 hours on PCR test results puts you back to 10 days. Tubach said yes, because the sample is taken at day 6 which could take you to 9 days, but if you get a 24-hour turn-around it could possibly be at day 8.

Stoskopf said he is still not sure if KDHE will approve their plan. They chose the 3-day quarantine, test and come back on the 4th day. Might have chosen that if they would have known that was an option.

Commissioner Krier asked Tubach if they opted for the 7-day quarantine, would KDHE pay for the PCR testing. Tubach said the child would have to quarantine and would not be able to do the test to learn.

Crowdis asked who is going to administer the PCR test. Tubach said she does not know the testing options available in Barton County. Would provide funding to the school district to send samples to the KDHE lab. Crowdis asked about the collection of the PCR test. Tubach said they would provide funding to hire that out. Commissioner Hutchinson said as long as our Health Director agrees. Tubach said that was correct.

Commissioner Daily said the 7-day quarantine, would that be permissible? Winkelman said this only applies to schools. The problem is businesses then call asking why. With Delta things have changed. In the schools it looks like they have options to do testing for each day they are in quarantine. Winkelman said she would personally prefer a 14-day quarantine across the board, but that is a decision for the Board of Health.

Patrick Hoffman said legally, the school districts oversee their schools. If they want funding from KDHE they must select from one of the options. The Health Department is responsible for controlling infectious disease in their populations. Schools are a congregate setting. Hoffman said Barton County issues isolation orders for positive cases which is a legal order. We have now switched to quarantine recommendations which is not a legal order. People are encouraged to modify their lives to limit exposure.

Commissioner Daily asked Hoffman what authority this board has over the process. Hoffman said it is up to the school districts to decide if they want to select one of the options. Winkelman is continuing mandating orders for isolation and recommendations for quarantine. Commissioner Hutchinson said the school boards can decide for the schools and the Board of Health along with the Health Director can decide for the general public.

Dean Stoskopf said their goal is to keep the kids in school as much as possible. The 7-day option and testing would provide funding. This would not meet the Health Department 14-day quarantine. Commissioner Schartz asked if Winkelman must sign off on the plans. Winkelman said she has not had any sent to her to sign. Commissioner Schartz said she wants to keep doors open. Winkelman has always been so forth coming with information and provided very good leadership.

Crowdis said their big concern is not only keeping kids in school, but also making them feel comfortable welcome in school. The PCR test is uncomfortable. Would not recommend his children take that test and also does not recommend multiple tests. Stoskopf said parental consent is also an issue. Tubach

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and the state public health laboratory has a new method of collection called Quick Sal, which is a solution that you swish in your mouth and noted that could be provided by KDHE. Crowdis said this is the first time they heard about this test. Tubach said this was something new that has been validated and explained there is also no harm if the solution is swallowed. Commissioner Daily asked if the solution is as good a test as the PCR test. Tubach said yes that is what she has been told. Commissioner Daily said that is far less invasive.

Barry McManaman, Interim County Administrator, asked USD 428 Superintendent Kris Thexton and John Popp if they have thought about testing daily so kids could stay in school. Thexton said they filed their request with KDHE for Stay to Learn. They would stay in school and test daily for 7 days with the rapid antigen test. Thexton said this would go before the board of education on Monday. Thexton reported each building has a nurse. The kids would come in a separate entrance and be tested each morning before school. This will tax their staff but are planning to train other staff members to do the tests.

Commissioner Hutchinson asked if other schools have used this plan. Thexton said Maize and Sterling have the same plans. Testing would be 7 days in a row. Tubach clarified that it would be 10 school days, not 7 days. If they have a PCR, it would be 7 days.

Commissioner Schartz asked if you could do the 7 antigen tests and then the PCR on the 7th day. Tubach said you could do the daily antigen test and on day 7, do the PCR test and with a negative test, be done.

Information Only. No Action Required.

IV. OTHER BUSINESS:

There was no other business.

V. ADJOURN:

Commissioner Schartz moved to adjourn at 11:38 A.M.

Commissioner Hutchinson seconded the motion.

All voted aye. Motion passed.

ATTEST:


Donna Zimmerman
Barton County Clerk


James R. Daily, Chairman