

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/3IXs2WH>

February 2, 2022

The Board of Barton County Commissioners acting as the Board of Health convened this 2nd day of February 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 Hutchinson called the meeting to order at 10:30 A.M.

Commissioner Esfeld moved to approve the agenda.
Commissioner Daily seconded the motion.
All voted aye. Motion passed.

Commissioner Daily moved to approve the minutes from the January 13, 2022, meeting.
Commissioner Krier 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 an update on COVID-19 measures.

Karen Winkelman, Public Health Director, said KDHE updates on Monday, Wednesday and Friday, but as of Monday, total of Positive cases in Barton County from the beginning was 6,146. Total COVID related deaths was 81. At this point, KDHE had sequenced 154 specimens with 137 of those being variants of concern. Of those, 120 were Delta, 14 Omicron and 3 Alpha. Looking at case numbers per month, October, November and December of 2021 there were approximately 500 per month being reported to the Health Department. This January, there were 1,655 reported. The last time numbers were that high was November 2020 and there were 1,119. That was right before vaccines became available. They continue to do testing Monday – Friday from 11:00 – 11:30 AM through their drive-thru. The majority of tests done are the send off PCR tests. There is a shortage of rapid tests, so they use those on a case-by-case basis. The PCR test is sent to the State lab and is more precise.

Commissioner Daily asked if the results still come back in 72 hours. Winkelman said they had been getting it back in 48 hours or less.

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Commissioner Schartz said with home testing available, people were probably not reporting. What did Winkelman think the real numbers may be. Winkelman said that was hard to say. So many people were talking about allergies, colds, sore throats and GI problems that it would be hard to speculate. They report the ones they know.

Commissioner Hutchinson asked about a resignation. Winkelman said a CNA just resigned who had been instrumental in helping with COVID investigations to take a higher paying position.

Commissioner Hutchinson asked Winkelman how many open positions they have currently. Winkelman said they have 1 RN, 1 CNA, 2 newly created clerical positions, 1 part-time dietician and 1 full-time Financial Officer positions open at this time.

Commissioner Daily said it was imperative to make a decision about how many RN positions were needed because grant funding was available to pay for them. Perhaps need to increase wages to attract applicants.

Commissioner Hutchinson asked Winkelman about starting wages. Winkelman said 25ish for RN's and 14ish for CNA's. Winkelman said other entities are paying higher to retain their nurses because of nurses leaving the field.

Commissioner Hutchinson noted healthcare workers across the nation are leaving the profession.

Commissioner Daily said perhaps an increase after a probationary period or something similar may help.

Winkelman said some facilities are paying COVID pay or hazard pay and that had been brought up by

Commissioner Daily noted they paid employees some hazard pay.

Commissioner Hutchinson said the workload was lessened effective yesterday.

Winkelman said vaccines were still available and 52.7% of Kansas had completed the series with 45.5% of Barton County completing the series. Contact management and tracing ceased for Health Departments on January 12th. KDHE discontinued it February 1, 2022. County rankings that had been previously reported was discontinued January 31st. Beginning February 1st, 2022, all positive cases would be automatically routed to KDHE. KDHE currently had 100 full-time people to manage case investigations and should have another 200 by the end of February. They are looking at prioritizing those persons under 18 and over 65 years of age. If a letter of isolation would be needed, the state would provide that for the patient. Close contacts will no longer be called, identified and managed. The responsibility lies on the COVID positive person and parents of minors.

Commissioner Schartz said it was interesting to her that health departments were expected to handle case management etc., but when it went to KDHE it all ended because it could not be done.

Winkelman said they have access to the cases; they can view them and provide information to the investigator should they know something vital. Yesterday, 47 positive cases were sent to KDHE.

Commissioner Krier asked Winkelman if she could see where KDHE had contacted those case, Winkelman said yes, she could.

Commissioner Daily said any action taken here would then have to go to the Board of County Commissioners and moved that they authorize Karen to hire 2 additional nurses at the Health Department to help through this COVID issue that we are having.

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Commissioner Krier said he could not support that right now because you are talking about adding nurses in with the federal grant money which will eventually run out. And so will this pandemic, it will run out. Because the Federal Government has told us that we are going to just have to live with it.

Commissioner Daily said, Kirby, I agree with you. I really do.

Commissioner Krier said we have got to be real careful about adding another \$100,000 - \$150,000 worth of wages.

Commissioner Hutchinson said do you think you are going to need more nurses.

Commissioner Krier said we just relinquished a lot of duties that she had before back to KDHE.

Winkelman said we have a lot of public health duties that have been on hold too. So, I am not worried about having things to do at all.

Commissioner Schartz said she is currently looking for one person that has already been built into the budget. My suggestion is if we need to increase pay to get more people, let's pay them out of the money that we are getting for COVID relief and then that way, when COVID goes away, we are not obligated to pay our nurses at a higher rate than we probably can afford.

Commissioner Daily said and along with that too, knowing full well this is grant, we have got other grant positions that when this goes away, either we fund them or they go away. We have done that in the past so.

Commissioner Hutchinson said my question would be do we need them.

Commissioner Krier said I am going to say, if you have an employee that is making \$50,000 and you say, by the way, we are dropping you to \$45,000, they are not going to be happy.

Commissioner Daily said no, no, no, I understand that. It just goes back to what I said. Right now, currently, the way the situation is, I believe she needs the extra help. I believe that those nurses can be utilized, not only for COVID but for some of the other things that have been put on her.

Commissioner Hutchinson said I think your point is that you support her in any way she needs help. My question is, do you need that extra help.

Winkelman said you need to fill the nurse position that has been open for several months and we could hire an additional nurse. Just with what we have on our plate right now. The reason I am saying that is if someone is sick or has any kind of medical issue, vacation, my nurses and staff have put off vacations. There are some that are up to the max and they started losing hours. I have talked to Matt about that already, about getting them their hours back that they did not take off because we were shorthanded, and they felt an obligation to the team to be there. With that said, I would like to take some time off too. You know, all of us really would like to take a week off but we do not typically do that.

Commissioner Hutchinson said Jim, would you be amicable to, you will be here in one month, would you be amicable to her evaluating the new standards and the new workload that she is going to have, now that it has been kicked to KDHE.

Commissioner Daily said I have no objection to that at all.

Commissioner Hutchinson said she could come back in a month with a recommendation and a plan.

Commissioner Daily said at this junction, earlier I said 2, I would say 1 because if that is what she needs, we need to give it to her, plain and simple.

Commissioner Hutchinson said are you wanting to make a motion on that today.

Commissioner Daily said I will make a motion as this group, knowing full well that it comes back to the full board, County Commission for final approval. On the Health Board, I would make a motion that we allow her to hire 1 additional nurse in addition to what she has already got open, that is my motion.

Commissioner Krier asked does she have in her budget to add an additional employee. At this time, I would like to wait until we get all that information, then next month we can look at it.

Commissioner Hutchinson said I tend to agree with you. Unfortunately, for us, it has been moved. Is there a second on this or do we want to let it die until next month.

Commissioner Schartz said she does support Karen but we need more information to evaluate.

Commissioner Hutchinson said she has the authority to hire one more person, a nurse, right now already.

Commissioner Schartz said like she has for the last year and a half.

Commissioner Hutchinson said the motion died for lack of a second.

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Commissioner Krier said the President had said there was no solution and put it back on the local level. Commissioner Krier asked Winkelman her thoughts. Winkelman said each county knows their own county and what is needed.

Commissioner Schartz said she felt the best form of government was local government because it was closer to the people and their needs.

Winkelman said there was a Regional Public Health group meeting held and they learned that 61 counties had opted in to have all COVID cases transferred to KDHE, 26 counties opted to have up to 50 cases per day and 18 counties opted out.

IV. OTHER BUSINESS:

Commissioner Schartz – asked Winkelman if the Health Department Advisory Committee would want to meet with the commissioners. Winkelman said they had never done that, but it was a great idea.

Commissioner Hutchinson – the next Board of Health meeting will be March 2, 2022. It would be nice if the committee members attended.

V. ADJOURN:

Commissioner Krier moved to adjourn at 10:55 A.M.

Commissioner Daily seconded the motion.

All voted aye. Motion passed.

TEST:



Bev Schmeidler
Barton County Clerk



Shawn Hutchinson
Chairman