



BOARD OF HEALTH
Joint meeting of
THURSTON & MASON
COUNTIES

Minutes of May 5, 2009
3:30 P.M.



Held at the Thurston County Courthouse
2000 Lakeridge Dr SW, Bldg 1, Room 280; Olympia, WA 98502-6045

1) CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Thurston County Chairman Sandra Romero called the meeting to order.

Attendance: Mason County Commissioners Lynda Ring Erickson, Ross Gallagher and Tim Sheldon, Thurston County Commissioners Sandra Romero, Cathy Wolfe and Karen Valenzuela, Mason County Ex-Officio Board Members Peggy Van Buskirk and Frank Phillips, Mason and Thurston Counties' Health Officer Dr. Diana Yu, Mason County Public Health Director Vicki Kirkpatrick, Thurston County Public Health & Social Services Department Director Sherri McDonald, Mason County Environmental Health Division Manager Debbie Riley, Thurston County Environmental Health Division Director Art Starry and Clerk of the Thurston County Board Lydia Hodgkinson.

- a) Approval of Agenda** – Sherri McDonald requested agenda Item Number 5 “Public Health Preparedness” be presented before Agenda Item Number 4 “Water Quality Lab Coordination Between Thurston Co. and Mason Co.”. Commissioner Wolfe moved to approve the agenda as amended. Commissioner Valenzuela seconded the motion. The motion carried.
- b) Approval of Minutes** – Commissioner Wolfe moved to approve the Thurston County Minutes of April 7, 2009 as submitted. Commissioner Valenzuela seconded the motion. The motion carried.

2) UPDATE ON CITIZEN ISSUES – none

3) OPPORTUNITY FOR THE PUBLIC TO ADDRESS THE BOARD - none

4) PUBLIC HEALTH PREPAREDNESS

Dr. Yu introduced Marianne Remy Public Health Preparedness Team Supervisor. Ms. Remy gave a Region 3 Public Health Preparedness presentation providing background, current status and future plans of the program. She explained that Thurston and Mason Counties have worked closely for the past 7 years on Public Health Preparedness issues in a relationship that was formalized by a Washington State Department of Health contract designating Thurston as the lead county in Region 3 which includes Grays Harbor, Lewis, Mason and Pacific Counties. Ms. Remy explained the development work has been principally around planning for disasters affecting the health of residents and bolstering existing resources to meet increased demand for services. Ms. Remy acknowledged Joy Fulling for

preparedness work in Mason County. The work between Mason and Thurston has been incredibly helpful with the current Swine Flu virus situation. She introduced Randall Olsen, Thurston County's Emergency Response Coordinator, Annie Merritt the Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) coordinator and Jennifer Burns a Vista Volunteer. She noted Ms. Merritt works closely with Joy Fulling, Mason County's MRC Coordinator. Beginning August of this year, Thurston will no longer assume the lead role for Region 3, and planning is underway to maintain the close and productive working relationship that has been established. She explained public health preparedness is a successor to bioterrorism planning, which helped us learn how to protect the public from large public health events regardless if it is of a natural cause or man made. Although, Ms. McDonald noted, staff exercises have provided calculations of the length of time it would take to set up a mass vaccination clinic and the number of vaccines that could be given, these calculations are based on full staffing. With the Public Health and Social Services Department's lay-off of 20 critical staff another event in the near future would be difficult to respond to. Both Ms. Kirkpatrick and Ms. McDonald agreed that during the current Swine Flu event large numbers of staff have been pulled from revenue generating roles to work on the event response causing challenges in other programs. Commissioner Wolfe acknowledged the 38% budget cut to Public Health is a real emergency. Commissioner Ring Erickson stated, and all Commissioners agreed, it is a great honor to have the opportunity to sit with Thurston County Commissioners and discuss this important topic.

5) WATER QUALITY LAB COORDINATION BETWEEN THURSTON CO. AND MASON CO.

Debbie Riley, Mason County Environmental Health Division Manager and Art Starry, Thurston County Environmental Health Division Director, addressed the Board explaining due to budget restrictions Mason County closed their water quality laboratory on January 31, 2009. To help meet the needs of Mason County residents, the Thurston County Environmental Health laboratory and Mason County Public Health developed a plan to provide laboratory services for Mason County citizens. Thurston County staff who live in Mason County now pick up water samples from the Mason County Health Department Permit Assistance Center office at 426 West Cedar on Tuesday and Wednesday mornings and deliver them to the Thurston County laboratory at the Courthouse in Olympia. Thurston County lab staff is also available by phone for consultation. Laboratory customers were notified of this change with notices on the Thurston and Mason County websites, pamphlets at Mason County, and articles in the *Mason County Journal* and the *Daily Olympian*. Laboratory services are available for drinking water and surface water samples for coliform, E.coli, fecal coliform, heterotrophic plate count and nitrate. Approximately 100 water samples have been received from Mason County customers since January 31st. Both Ms. Riley and Mr. Starry stated this arrangement has been working well for all parties.

6) **JOINT HEALTH OFFICER SERVICES**

Dr. Yu stated, since February of 2005, Mason County Public Health has contracted for Health Officer Services with the Thurston County Public Health and Social Services Department. She explained she works one day a week in Mason County and four days a week at Thurston which is budgeted at 80% Thurston and 20% Mason. She is available via blackberry and email at all times for both counties. Dr. Yu outlined the advantages, and challenges, of shared Health Officer resources and the benefits of having regional Health Officers. She explained there are many Washington Counties that share Health Officer services. Dr. Yu stated she enjoys working in both counties and appreciates that the County Directors, Ms. Kirkpatrick and Ms. McDonald, work and communicate so well together. Discussion ensued around programs and services that are jointly administered by both counties. Both Boards agreed it would be beneficial to discuss what other administrative services could be shared.

7) **COMMUNITY HEALTH ASSESSMENT**

Sherri McDonald presented information to the Board for Mary Ann O’Garro, the Department Epidemiologist who could not attend. Ms. McDonald explained data-informed decision making is highly valued among local policy makers and community leaders. The process of collecting, analyzing and reporting data is a core function of public health. Health departments in Washington State accomplish this function, often referred to as community health assessment, in different ways. Access to data for grant writing and planning processes in Mason and Thurston Counties is obtained by sharing staff with expertise in local data sets of interest to both counties. Ms. Kirkpatrick explained Mason County receives a mass of information by sharing data at very little cost. Both Directors agreed it is a very valuable partnership. Ms. McDonald described different types of data information referencing handouts “Mason County Data Series” and “Thurston County Data Tidbits”. Ms. McDonald did note that due to budget cuts one of two Department Epidemiologists will be laid off.

8) **DIRECTOR’S REPORT**

Commissioner Ring Erickson expressed her strong desire to brainstorm for shared services and partnerships across jurisdictions. Commissioner Wolfe suggested discussing the benefits of sharing a grant writer. Discussion ensued regarding Mason County’s partnerships with other counties besides Thurston.

9) **HEALTH OFFICER’S REPORT**

Dr. Diana Yu provided information and an update on the status of Swine Flu H1N1 in Mason and Thurston Counties. Swine Flu information can be obtained by calling (360) 427-9670 x599 in Mason County and (360) 709-3080 in Thurston County or visiting each county’s websites. In addition, Dr. Yu provided seasonal influenza information, which she stated has also hit both counties. She explained that covering your cough, washing your hands, staying home or wearing a mask if you are sick are all practices that should be used for protection against all influenza viruses.

Ms. McDonald noted the next planned joint Board of Health meeting is scheduled for September 22, 2009 at 3:30 P.M. in Mason County. Both Boards' expressed appreciation for the opportunity to meet.

10) **ADJOURNMENT**

BOARD OF HEALTH
Thurston County, Washington

SANDRA ROMERO, Chair

CATHY WOLFE, Vice -Chair

KAREN VALENZUELA, Member

BOARD OF HEALTH
Mason County, Washington

ROSS GALLAGHER, Chair

TIM SHELDON, Commissioner

LYNDA RING ERICKSON, Commissioner

ATTEST:

Lydia Hodgkinson
Thurston County Clerk of the Board

Date: _____