

ERIE COUNTY BOARD OF HEALTH
December 15, 2008
5:00 P.M.
ERIE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

PRESENT:

Paul F. Burroughs, Esq., Chair
Sant Ram, M.D.
Reza Nassiri, D.Sc.
Richard A. Ortoski, D.O.
Johnie Atkinson

IN ATTENDANCE:

Andy Glass
Janet Vogt
Rich Knecht
Char Berringer

Doug Range
Pamela Brunner
David Bruce

I. Call To Order: Chairman, Paul Burroughs, Esq., welcomed board and guests. Board members accepted the minutes as recorded for June 23, and August 25, 2008. Minutes for October 27, 2008, were accepted after a required change: Item II. Public Comments: topic, Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention, change "County (5%)" to "PA DOH (5%)".

II. Public Comments: None.

III. Director's Report:

- By-Laws – In accordance with Act 315, Board of Health meetings are required to be held at least quarterly. Board was requested to consider holding quarterly meetings for ease of Member attendance, with provisions to hold Special Meetings, should the need arise. Beginning in 2009, Board of Health meetings will be held quarterly, on the 4th Monday of the month, starting with March 2009, on a motion from Sant Ram, M.D., seconded by Reza Nassiri, D.Sc., all in favor.
Exception to the 4th Monday rule is the month of December, with the meeting being held on the 2nd Monday in December. Motion made to accept the December variance by Paul Burroughs, Esq., seconded by Sant Ram, M.D., all in favor.
"Rules" addendum to the By-Laws will be deleted in their entirety, with items 3 and 4: notices of meetings and attendance at regular meetings by Board Members, respectively being incorporated into Article VII-Meetings of the existing By-Laws, to read as Section VI and VII, on a motion from Richard Ortoski, D.O., seconded by Sant Ram, M.D., all in favor. (*attached*)
- Meeting Dates for 2009 – As approved by the Members of the Board of Health, meeting dates for 2009 are as follows: March 23, June 22, September 28, and December 14. Legal notice will be printed in the Times News in January 2009 with the approved dates.
- ECDH Position Eliminations – Effect on Department & Community – There are 5 positions effected at ECDH with the recent County budget position eliminations. Three of the positions are currently vacant and will not be filled. Two other positions are staff-employed positions. These staff will either bump into other County positions, or take a lay-off. Staff within the Department must assume additional responsibilities and services to the public of Erie County will be affected. Educational programs to schools and organizations will be reduced significantly; maternal and child health community outreach programs will be lessened dramatically; environmental complaints handling will be reevaluated. Overall, these position eliminations will change what, who and how processes and programs are or are not maintained. Additionally, one clerical staff person has been bumped from the Health Department as part of the overall County position elimination process. The staff at ECDH has bumped into a different County office. As the bumping process continues, other staff may be affected within the Health Department.
- Healthy Erie – The Health Department, in cooperation with the PartnerSHIP for a Healthy Community, area hospitals, and local agencies worked with DeBrunner and Associates, to support House Bill HB2625 regarding Medicaid accessibility to un- and under-insured populations of PA. This Bill would study the effectiveness and efficiency of Medicaid, and provide for access to health care regardless of insurance status. The Bill has been held over to the spring 2009 House session. More information to follow.
- Tires-to-Energy Plant – Letter was received from Pat Lupo, OSB, Benedictine Sisters of Erie PA, regarding concerns of the Tires-to-Energy Plant being placed in Erie. During the recently held Erie School Board Public Hearing regarding the Plant, public comment regarding concerns were also heard from organized labor unions and the Booker T. Washington Center, as well as other organizations. Both Erie Renewable Energy (ERE) and the PA DOH will provide health risk assessments on the proposed Plant. In late spring 2009, DEP will provide their recommendations and actions regarding the permit for ERE.

- Electronic Health Department – The Environmental Division has been working with Garrison, Inc. to provide restaurant inspection reports “live” for the public to view on the ECDH website. However, due to software issues with Garrison, Inc., it has been decided to develop and maintain the inspection reporting process within the Health Department utilizing the Information Technology staff. The completed process is slotted for spring 2009.

IV. New Business:

- Board Initiatives for 2009 – Amongst other items effecting the residents of Erie County, the following initiatives will be monitored throughout 2009 by the Board of Health:
Clean Indoor Air Law – How the law is working in Erie County; compliance; and success of statute, are all items the Board would like to see addressed and reviewed in 2009.
Access to Health Care – Keep in the forefront access to health care for the population of Erie County.
- Board Member Resignation – Reza Nassiri, D.Sc., announced that his resignation from the Board of Health was submitted to County Executive Mark A. DiVecchio, effective on December 31, 2008. Dr. Nassiri will be joining the team at Michigan State University as Associate Dean. Thank you Dr. Nassiri for your contributions to the Board of Health.

V. Board Updates:

A. Public Health Preparedness:

State Contract: Rich Knecht, Director of Public Health Preparedness, stated that PA DOH has requested a contract submission for 2009-2010 without a budget attached. This is contradictory to previous contract submissions and is difficult to assess what can be accomplished by staff for the public of Erie County without a known budget amount.

B. Community Health Services:

Flu Season 2008: Char Berringer, Director of Community Health Services, stated that a confirmed case of Type A and one of Type B influenza have been reported. The CDC has seen early-season signs of Tamiflu resistance, the antiviral drug most widely used.

C. Health Education Division:

Clean Indoor Air Law: Janet Vogt, Health Education Manager, reported that the Pennsylvania Clean Indoor Air Law, which became effective on September 11, 2008, is a complicated law. Health Department Tobacco Grant staff have been assisting area businesses with filing of exemption paperwork to PADOH. Criteria vary for bars, Bingo areas, and restaurants. Tobacco staff will begin conducting site visits of facilities that have requested exceptions under the CIAA. Findings will be sent back to PDH for final determination of eligibility for exceptions. Complaints regarding non-compliance violations are filed directly to the PA Dept. of Health.

Walking and Bike Trails: Health Department, OPANAC Grant, has partnered with the Erie Port Authority to publish maps of walking and bike trails in the Erie Bayfront area.

Loss of Health Educator for the Erie County Dept. of Health: Due to the loss of the position of Health Educator at ECDH, presentations at schools, work sites, agencies and organizations will be eliminated for topics other than what are currently grant funded, i.e. animal bite, hand washing, general health, etc. The previously funded Health Educator represented at least one-third of the community education/outreach for the Department, along with newspaper article submissions.

VIII. Adjournment:

- The meeting was adjourned at 6:06 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Pamela K. Brunner, Recording Secretary

The next Health Board meeting is scheduled for Monday, MARCH 23, 2009 at 5:00 p.m.