



Snohomish Health District
Board of Health Minutes
Special Meeting
April 12, 2022

The meeting was held via Zoom conference call/video.

Members Present

Julieta Altamirano-Crosby, Councilmember, Lynnwood
Elisabeth Crawford, Councilmember, Mukilteo
Megan Dunn, County Councilmember
Mark James, Councilmember, Marysville
Anji Jorstad, Councilmember, Lake Stevens
Heather Logan, Councilmember, Arlington
Sam Low, County Councilmember
Kyoko Matsumoto Wright, Mayor, Mountlake Terrace
Jared Mead, County Councilmember
Nate Nehring, County Councilmember
Joe Neigel, Councilmember, Sultan
Neil Tibbott, Councilmember, Edmonds
Stephanie Wright, County Councilmember – BOH Chair
Ben Zarlingo, Councilmember, Everett

Members Absent

Stephanie Vignal, Councilmember, Mill Creek

Call to Order

The special meeting of the Board of Health was called to order at 4:31 p.m. via Zoom conference call by Board Chair Stephanie Wright.

Roll Call

Roll call was taken by Ms. Sarah de Jong who reported there was a quorum present.

Special Business

COVID-19 Response presentation

Chair Stephanie Wright began by saying that the goal for this meeting is to provide a high level update of the COVID-19 pandemic response. Snohomish County's Department of Emergency Management (DEM) and the Health District are preparing a formal after-action review of their joint pandemic response. The report is expected to be ready in the next few weeks and will be shared directly with Board members and County Council members once completed.

Chair Wright introduced two of the presenters: Dave Somers, Snohomish County Executive; and Jason Biermann, Director of the Snohomish County Department of Emergency Management.

Executive Somers expressed appreciation for the hard work performed by staff at both the Health District and the County. The last few years have been a remarkable example of why collaboration and cooperation is important for tackling large challenges and Snohomish County has come through it well because of the unity of purpose between the two organizations.

Dr. Chris Spitters shared that our communities are learning to adjust to the ebb and flow of cases, as done with other infectious diseases. COVID is a serious communicable disease that continues to impact the residents of Snohomish County and the public health work around COVID will continue into the foreseeable future. Many of



the initial emergency response efforts that are clinical in nature have been dialed back or shifted to other partners. Though we've seen a small increase in cases over the past few weeks, our numbers are still far below where they were during the peak of the Omicron wave.

The COVID response has been a prolonged effort and required a number of public agencies and partners to pull together under circumstances that were unprecedented in any of our lifetimes. Dr. Spitters' hope is that the lessons from the COVID response will inform how agencies and organizations in Snohomish County can best work together for the health and safety of our community.

Mr. Biermann shared that the Snohomish County DEM and the Health District have had a rich relationship that began in 2009. Both organizations have worked closely together on public health responses such as the H1N1 virus in 2009, the Oso mudslide in 2014, and have been in collaboration since 2017 on the county's opioid epidemic.

Mr. Shawn Frederick began by expressing appreciation for the partnership with the County and other agencies that partnered in the COVID response and reviewed the challenges the county faced.

Mr. Biermann opened a presentation and he and Mr. Frederick presented on the following.

Snohomish County had many achievements made in response to COVID, including:

- The administering of over 150,000 tests
- Seven mass-vaccination sites and dozens of mobile vaccine clinics delivered more than 1,000,000 doses of vaccine throughout Snohomish County
- The establishment and operation of an isolation and quarantine facility that provided a safe place for over 350 residents
- The procurement and distribution of over 21,000,000 pieces of PPE to over 500 agencies
- A joint communications team that provided hundreds of updates and maintained social media platforms with over 10,000,000 reaches

Things that went well included:

- Communication
 - Weekly media availability
 - Held regularly scheduled conference calls with Mayors, school districts, and businesses
 - Provided hundreds of daily updates and maintained multiple social media platforms
- Finding novel solutions
 - Established the I&Q site within a month
 - Worked through planning efforts outside of normal areas of responsibility (e.g., medical surge)
 - Utilized multiple avenues to procure over 21,000,000 pieces of PPE
- Remaining proactive
 - Established one of the first mass testing sites in the state
 - Began planning for mass vaccination in August of 2020 and established the first mass vaccination site in the state on January 6, 2021
 - Leaned into policy issues like allowing delivery of food at all hours of the day

Areas of identified improvement included:

- Mitigating the bureaucracy
 - Cumbersome for the Health District to utilize federal funds (e.g. CARES Act) that came to the County
 - Confusing reimbursement through FEMA public assistance because it was filtered through DOH



- Refining plans, policies, and procedures
 - Clarifying the responsibilities between Human Services and the Health District
 - Finding the resources to reclaim local responsibility for planning that got reassigned by WA DOH to the Northwest Healthcare Response Network
- Addressing distinct authorities
 - Snohomish County DEM and the Health District are separately governed entities, which sometimes led to confusion at the staff level
 - Ultimate decision making is poorly defined in state law; however, we were extremely fortunate to have the right personalities in key positions

Mr. Biermann and Mr. Frederick addressed frequently asked questions.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 5:03 p.m.

Stephanie Wright, Chair

Shawn Frederick, Administrative Officer / Secretary