

Minutes of Meeting
Panhandle Health District Board of Health Interviews
April 14, 2021
9:00 a.m.

The Kootenai County Board of Commissioners: Chairman Chris Fillios, Commissioner Leslie Duncan and Commissioner Bill Brooks met to discuss the following agenda items. Also present were BOCC Communications Manager Nancy Jones and Deputy Clerk Tina Ginorio. Also present were Kootenai County Residents Erin Barnard, Sandy White, Suzanne Knutson and Bruce Edwards.

- A. Call to Order:** Chairman Chris Fillios called the meeting to order at 9:04 a.m.
- B. Changes to the Agenda (Action):** There were no changes to the agenda.
- C. Business (Action):**

Panhandle Health District Board of Health Interviews

9:00 a.m. – Bruce Edwards, M.D.

Chairman Fillios stated that there was one opening on the PHD Board of Health and the BOCC would choose among the applicants either later this week or next week. He said that the PHD Board met nine or ten times per year, unless special circumstances required more meetings, and that each 60 to 90 minute meeting was normally held at lunchtime.

Dr. Edwards said he had just retired and had been thinking about ways he could serve the community.

- What is the role of the Panhandle Health District's (PHD) Board? (Commissioner Duncan)

Dr. Edwards replied that he saw them as a group that met to consider community issues, meet public health needs and offer education.

- Where does Panhandle Health District's funding come from? (Chairman Fillios)

Dr. Edwards said he did not know.

- Commissioner Bill Brooks asked how Dr. Edwards felt about PHD's recent activities, including the mask mandate.

Dr. Edwards remarked that Idaho seemed to be populated by independent people that liked to make their own decisions. He said he felt conditions needed to be carefully weighed before choices were taken away from citizens.

- Commissioner Duncan asked whether he thought it was ok to quarantine healthy people.

Dr. Edwards discussed the historical use of quarantine and the difference between quarantine and isolation. He stated that there were times when placing someone in isolation was appropriate.

- What do you think about the one septic system per 5 acre minimum (over the Aquifer) rule? (Commissioner Duncan)

Dr. Edwards stated that he saw the aquifer as a protected resource that was very vulnerable and that a heavy concentration of septic systems in a small area should be carefully reviewed for impact.

- Do you believe nutrition/prevention should fill a bigger role in PHD's community education? (Chairman Fillios)

Dr. Edwards replied that he felt public education was very important and making information on proper nutrition available was vital. He said approaching this at a grassroots level, teaching families how to feed their children was the best way to start. He added that he was a huge proponent of preventive medicine.

- Commissioner Bill Brooks asked if Dr. Edwards knew what other duties PHD had.

Dr. Edwards replied that they monitor the health of the community in regard to infectious diseases.

- Can you imagine a circumstance when mandating a vaccine could be necessary? (Commissioner Duncan)

Dr. Edwards said he could see that it could be necessary under certain conditions, as a condition of employment for people working in close contact with a specific, vulnerable population. However, other than in those situations, he felt people should be allowed to make their own decisions.

- Chairman Fillios asked about the risk to other individuals created by a person who chose not to get vaccinated.

Dr. Edwards replied that there was responsibility on both sides.

- How will you keep the BOCC apprised of the issues facing PHD? (Chairman Fillios)

Dr. Edwards said he preferred email to calling or texting, because it was most efficient.

- Commissioner Brooks asked Dr. Edwards how he viewed stem cell therapy.

Dr. Edwards said stem cells had a large, untapped potential that was not yet understood, but much of the controversy came from how the stem cells were obtained. He cautioned that any time there was a potential profit, such as in this situation, it needed to be monitored to prevent abuse.

Treasurer Steve Matheson entered the meeting at 9:22 a.m.

Chairman Fillios asked if Dr. Edwards had any questions for them.

Dr. Edwards said he did not.

Dr. Edwards exited the meeting at 9:25 a.m.

Kootenai County Resident Richard Meyer entered the meeting at 9:26 a.m. He distributed bags of beef jerky to the Commissioners.

9:30 a.m. – Richard Meyer

Chairman Fillios stated that there was one opening on the PHD Board of Health and the BOCC would choose among the applicants either later this week or next week. He said that the PHD Board met nine or ten times per year, unless special circumstances required more meetings, and that each 60 to 90 minute meeting was normally held at lunchtime.

Dr. Meyer stated that he felt obesity was the single greatest problem facing our society and worldwide. He discussed his experiences as a food technologist and stated he would like to see PHD doing more to improve the nutrition of children and seniors. He said he believed that obesity was the largest contributing factor to people that died of COVID-19.

- What is the role of the Panhandle Health District's Board? (Commissioner Duncan)

Dr. Meyer replied that it was to promote health and to identify factors that would contribute to good health and healthy lifestyles in the community.

- Where does Panhandle Health District's funding come from? (Chairman Fillios)

Dr. Meyer said he did not know this. He commented that it probably came from a variety of sources, grants, Kootenai County, the State and from the other participating counties.

- Commissioner Bill Brooks asked how Dr. Meyer felt about PHD's recent activities, including the mask mandate.

Dr. Meyer said that if the CDC (Center for Disease Control) recommended it, that they could do so. He added that individual responsibility should be taken into account as well, but that in a last resort type of case it could be done.

- Commissioner Brooks asked if he felt that a last resort situation had occurred with the recent PHD mask mandate.

Dr. Meyer said yes, but added that he was a scientist who had studied viruses and that something better than the normal, disposable mask was needed to block them. He commented he did not like mandates.

- What do you think about the one septic system per 5 acre minimum (over the Aquifer) rule? (Commissioner Duncan)

Dr. Meyer replied that he did not know how good the science was on septic systems. He suggested the issue should be reviewed with updated information, then updated regularly to check for improvements to systems.

- Do you believe nutrition/prevention should fill a bigger role in PHD's community education?

Dr. Meyer said he absolutely agreed with this and offered a lengthy explanation of his views on the relationship between nutrition education, preventive medicine and obesity, especially focused in pre-high school years. He added that he was on the school board and their wellness committee. He discussed findings in Germany, where certain nutritional standards had been mandated in nursing homes to keep patients leaner. He also commented on meeting and talking to the Minister of Health of China about obesity.

- Commissioner Bill Brooks asked if Dr. Meyer knew what other duties PHD had.

Dr. Meyer remarked that he thought PHD was more of a reactive than proactive group. He said he was not aware of their other duties.

- Can you imagine a circumstance when mandating a vaccine could be necessary? (Commissioner Duncan)

Dr. Meyer said he could, if there was a virus or bacteria that was deadly in large numbers. He indicated that it would have to be a pretty extreme situation, however.

- How will you keep the BOCC apprised of the issues facing PHD? (Chairman Fillios)

Dr. Meyer said he preferred text message or email.

- Commissioner Brooks asked Dr. Meyer how he viewed stem cell therapy.

Dr. Meyer replied that he had worked with the FDA a great deal and if something had passed the FDA standards, he thought the therapies were terrific. He stated he felt it was pretty solid science.

Chairman Fillios asked if Dr. Meyer had any questions for the Commissioners.

Dr. Meyer said he did not. He offered additional information on protein supplements used for weight loss in South Korea, Indonesia, Thailand and Australia. He also talked about his other professional experiences as a food technologist.

Dr. Meyer exited the meeting at 9:53 a.m.

Chairman Fillios exited the meeting at 9:54 a.m. and returned at 9:56 a.m.

Kootenai County Resident Duke Johnson entered the meeting at 9:56 a.m.

10:00 a.m. – Duke Johnson

Chairman Fillios stated that there was one opening on the PHD Board of Health and the BOCC would choose among the applicants either later this week or next week. He said that the PHD Board met nine or ten times per year, unless special circumstances required more meetings, and that each 60 to 90 minute meeting was normally held at lunchtime.

Dr. Johnson explained that he had previously been an advisor to a multi-billion dollar company and their customers on dealing with SARS1 and H1N1 pandemics. He said he had become accustomed to analyzing data from the CDC (Center for Disease Control) and the World Health Organization. He remarked that he been medical director of Nutralite Health Institute, a subsidiary of Amway, and had traveled around the world to areas of concern, to teach about preventive medicine.

- What is the role of the Panhandle Health District's Board? (Commissioner Duncan)

Dr. Johnson replied their role was to provide solid science to help make community decisions, to enable people to protect their health from a wide variety of issues. He stated it should be well-informed experts who helped guide the community.

- Where does Panhandle Health District's funding come from? (Chairman Fillios)

Dr. Johnson said he did not.

- Commissioner Bill Brooks asked how Dr. Johnson felt about PHD's recent activities, including the mask mandate.

Dr. Johnson said that he felt it would be better to examine the mask mandate from a historical and global perspective, rather than an immediate, local one. He explained that he had been able to reinterpret the data originally released, which had stated there was a 9% death rate from COVID, and found that the actual figure was 0.26%. He added that the CDC later confirmed his calculations three months later and added that the inaccurate original figures had led to ineffective or even wrong actions being taken.

Dr. Johnson reviewed information from studies he had gathered about the ineffectiveness of masks in preventing the spread of certain viruses.

Dr. Johnson gave further information about his experiences with the SARS1 virus. He stated that COVID was another name for SARS2 and that it was almost identical to SARS1 and discussed how the first virus had behaved, historically.

- What do you think about the one septic system per 5 acre minimum (over the Aquifer) rule? (Commissioner Duncan)

Dr. Johnson remarked that he was not versed in issues regarding septic systems and the aquifer.

- Do you believe nutrition/prevention should fill a bigger role in PHD's community education? (Chairman Fillios)

Dr. Johnson stated he definitely agreed with this proposal. He commented that the company he created focused on new nutritional information and the impact on weight loss diets and other aspects of nutritional health.

- Commissioner Brooks asked if Dr. Johnson knew what other duties PHD had.

Dr. Johnson listed suicide prevention, drug abuse and addiction, vaccine implementation, basic care and nutrition, neonatal care, among other areas.

- Can you imagine a circumstance when mandating a vaccine could be necessary? (Commissioner Duncan)

Dr. Johnson stated that a vaccine had never been mandated, to his knowledge, except for with small pox or similar things. He said that the trials dealing with messenger RNA for illnesses like COVID had never gotten beyond the animal trials. He noted that the COVID vaccines had skipped animal trials because it was an emergency situation. He stated he felt it was very risky to mandate a vaccine that had not gone through animal trials.

- How will you keep the BOCC apprised of the issues facing PHD? (Chairman Fillios)

Dr. Johnson said he would prefer to speak directly to the Board, or email.

- Commissioner Brooks asked Dr. Johnson how he viewed stem cell therapy.

Dr. Johnson stated this was an area he wanted to research further. He said there were many sources of stem cells and a number of potential uses. He urged caution in approaching the types of therapy offered and making sure of the science behind them.

Chairman Fillios asked if Dr. Johnson had any questions for the Commissioners.

Dr. Johnson said he did not.

Treasurer Matheson exited the meeting at 10:30 a.m.

Kootenai County Resident Marian Underdahl entered the meeting at 10:30 a.m.

Dr. Johnson exited the meeting at 10:30 a.m.

10:30 a.m. – Marian Underdahl

Chairman Fillios stated that there was one opening on the PHD Board of Health and the BOCC would choose among the applicants either later this week or next week. He said that the PHD Board met nine or ten times per year, unless special circumstances required more meetings, and that each 60 to 90 minute meeting was normally held at lunchtime.

Ms. Underdahl said she had a Bachelor's of Science degree in Nursing and had spent much of her time working in acute care, including in an Emergency Room for several years. She added that she had later gotten a Master's Degree in Nursing Education and became a teacher at NIC (North Idaho College). She described some of her other employment experiences.

- What is the role of the Panhandle Health District's Board? (Commissioner Duncan)

Ms. Underdahl said she saw the Board as holding an advisory and leadership role in the community. She remarked that she was surprised at the breadth of areas in which PHD was involved when she reviewed their website.

- Where does Panhandle Health District's funding come from? (Chairman Fillios)

Ms. Underdahl replied that she thought they received both State and Federal funding for their activities. She said she was unaware of their other funding sources.

- Commissioner Bill Brooks asked how Ms. Underdahl felt about PHD's recent activities, including the mask mandate.

Ms. Underdahl remarked that she had asked herself how she would have voted, had she been on the Board at the time the mask mandate was passed and had to admit she did not know, because she did not have access to the information on which the decision was based. She said she and her family chose to wear masks and that, as a healthcare provider, she believed masks made a difference in protecting people. She said that, as a nurse, when she entered a room with someone who had an infectious disease, it was standard to don a mask and wash your hands.

- What do you think about the one septic system per 5 acre minimum (over the Aquifer) rule? (Commissioner Duncan)

Ms. Underdahl said that question was out of her area of specialty and would need to seek more information before she made any statements about that.

- Do you believe nutrition/prevention should fill a bigger role in PHD's community education? (Chairman Fillios)

Ms. Underdahl agreed that these topics should play a larger role in PHD's outreach programs.

- Commissioner Brooks asked if Ms. Underdahl knew what other duties PHD had.

Ms. Underdahl said she was familiar with several of their programs such as water safety, WIC (Special Supplemental Nutritional Program for Women, Infants and Children), tobacco abstinence programs, food safety, women and children's health clinics and mental health issues in the community. She stated that she would like to see them become involved with actively trying to attract health care providers to the area.

- Can you imagine a circumstance when mandating a vaccine could be necessary? (Commissioner Duncan)

Ms. Underdahl remarked that there had been a lot a talk about it, but she thought it would be very difficult to do. She stated that achieving herd immunity was probably the best approach. She said there might be instances in which taking a vaccine might be required, such as engaging in certain activities or employment, but she thought it was highly unlikely that it would happen.

- How will you keep the BOCC apprised of the issues facing PHD? (Chairman Fillios)

Ms. Underdahl asked what method the BOCC would prefer. She said she liked email, was comfortable texting, and under some circumstances thought a verbal discussion would be important.

- Commissioner Brooks asked Ms. Underdahl how he viewed stem cell therapy.

Ms. Underdahl said there were many people who could really benefit from stem cell therapy, but some avenues proposed were scary. She stated she would hate to see growth and progress in medicine be limited for fear of where it could lead. She remarked it was not an area she had followed closely.

Chairman Fillios invited Ms. Underdahl to ask the Commissioners any questions she might have.

Ms. Underdahl asked what issues the BOCC saw in the future that might be addressed by the health department.

Commissioner Duncan said she thought nutrition and preventive medicine were going to be huge areas, especially since our area had a poor doctor to patient ratio. She stated she would like to see more education on bolstering the immune system via nutrition.

Commissioner Brooks commented that he would like to see development of more cooperative relationships between PHD and the community, rather than the adversarial ones most recently in evidence.

Ms. Underdahl expressed her agreement with his remark. She said effective handling of disagreements on that scale was very important.

Ms. Underdahl asked how the PHD Board interacted with the BOCC.

Commissioner Brooks explained that the members of the PHD Board were drawn from five counties: two from Bonner County, two from Kootenai County and one each from the other three. He said he had attended a number of meetings over the past year via Zoom and he felt there was not enough discussion between different points of view.

Chairman Fillios further explained that a County would offer one or more candidates for the PHD Board and then all fifteen Board of County Commissioners members from the five counties would vote, with a simple majority deciding the question.

Ms. Underdahl exited the meeting at 10:54 a.m.

- D. Public Comment:** This section is reserved for citizens wishing to address the Board regarding a County related issue. Idaho Law prohibits Board action on items brought under this section except in an emergency circumstance. Comments related to future public hearings should be held for that public hearing.

Kootenai County Resident Sandy White asked whether members of the PHD Board of Health were paid for their participation.

Chairman Fillios confirmed that they were not paid.

Ms. White asked whether Commissioner Brooks was on the PHD Board.

Commissioner Brooks said he was the liaison, not a member.

Ms. White asked the Commissioners to respond to the statement by one of the people that had been interviewed that an unvaccinated person puts people at risk. She asked how vaccinated people could be put at risk by someone who had not had the vaccine.

Chairman Fillios said he thought Dr. Edwards had said something to that effect. He remarked that there was speculation that the length of time a vaccination provided protection could be six months to a year, with a possible booster needed.

Ms. White asked if the BOCC had a job description for the PHD Board positions. She asked if there was a list of things the BOCC would expect from their representative.

Commissioner Duncan said that, once a person has been selected by District One, the BOCC should discuss its expectations with its representative about communication and other issues. She pointed out that Kootenai County was the largest contributor to their budget, so she felt it was important that they were looking out for citizens of the County.

Ms. White asked if the person would be representing what the BOCC wanted or their own views on issues.

Commissioner Duncan said that it should be what the BOCC wanted.

Ms. White asked if the Commissioners felt that Jai Nelson and Dr. McLandress represented the BOCC adequately.

Chairman Fillios said he felt that they exercised their best judgement. He stated that he did not have the medical qualifications to question their judgement and neither did the other two Commissioners. He said that the regulations had changed since the original mask mandate and now the PHD Board would make a recommendation, but the actual mandate would come from the BOCC.

E. Adjournment (Action): Chairman Fillios adjourned the meeting at 11:00 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

JIM BRANNON, CLERK

CHRIS FILLIOS, CHAIRMAN

BY: _____
Tina Ginorio, Deputy Clerk
