

Middle-Brook Regional Health Commission
Meeting (via phone)
October 5, 2020

1. Call to Order

The meeting of the Middle-Brook Regional Health Commission was held on the above date via phone and called to order by President Mr. Greg Riley by reading the Sunshine Law Statement at 7:05 pm

2. Roll Call

Green Brook: Dr. Jon Fourre
Warren: Mr. Greg Riley, Mr. Malcom Plager
Watchung: Ms. Julie Gunther
Others in attendance: Mr. Kevin Sumner, Health Officer

3. President Opening Remarks

President Mr. Greg Riley welcomed Commission members and advised that this meeting will follow the similar format as prior remote meetings, with reports being given followed by an opportunity to ask questions.

4. Minutes

- a. M. Plager moved to adopt the minutes of the June 1, 2020 meeting as presented, second by J. Fourre. All in Favor
- b. J. Gunther moved to adopt the minutes of the July 7, 2020 meeting as presented, second by J. Fourre. All in Favor

5. Finance Reports

- a. May 2020 – M. Plager moved to adopt with second by J. Fourre. Inquiry was made about payment to Warren Township. K. Sumner advised it was quarterly payment for gasoline. All in Favor
- b. June 2020 – J. Gunther moved to adopt with second by J. Fourre. All in Favor
- c. July 202 – M. Plager moved to adopt with second by J. Fourre. All in favor
- d. August 2020 – J. Gunther moved to adopt with second by J. Fourre. All in favor
- e. September 2020 – M. Plager moved to adopt with second by J. Fourre. Inquiry was made about payment to GovConnections. K. Sumner advised this was payment for updating computer hardware (desktops and laptops) and operating software. He further noted these are costs to be covered by COVID grant. All in favor

6. Old Business

- a. Bridgewater 2021 – Benefits of Commission – K. Sumner advised that Bridgewater is seriously considering joining the Commission beginning 2021 and as part of that process the proposal must be presented to the Bridgewater Shared Services Committee.

Bridgewater requested information on the benefits of the Commission and they were provided the summary document of history, benefits and authority of the Commission along with supporting information including annual reports and state health department evaluation outcome. G. Riley added he has had conversations with the Mayor who seems very favorable to joining the Commission. M. Plager expressed the need for this agreement to occur for the continued viability of the Commission and urged continued efforts to make it happen.

7. New Business

- a. Skuse v. Pfizer – G. Riley briefly reviewed the legal findings of the case and pointed out the relevance as it relates to requiring vaccination. In this case the employee was required to obtain certain vaccinations and when she did not she was terminated. He also expressed that arbitration requirements in employment settings have prevented certain disputes being tried in court. This information is relevant to the need to continue efforts to assure vaccinations.
- b. Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids Annual Report – Information was provided to members.
- c. American Lung Association Report on Electrical Vehicles – This topic has been addressed at the Commission and Warren Board of Health previously due to the climate change and air quality impacts of gas powered vehicles. Members expressed this report supports electrical vehicles, but that the results and science were not as rigorous as some would like. There are questions about the impact of electric generation on the environment and the practicality of electric vehicles. While in favor of improving air quality and reducing impact on the environment more information is needed.

8. COVID-19 Update

- a. K. Sumner reviewed the current data of cases and demographics impacting the Commission service area. He advised that while cases are fairly low compared to months ago, we are seeing an uptick, especially in younger individuals. He advised that current activities are focused on the schools and their many questions related to cases and possible exposures. Many hours are spent daily reviewing different scenarios and advising on actions to be taken. For example, this resulted in suspending a High School Football program for 14 days to reduce spread. The health department is also fielding questions from the public and responding to complaints. K. Sumner provided a brief update on all the unknowns about a COVID vaccine. While states are required to submit a plan for distribution of a vaccine to CDC by October 16, they and the local health department are at a loss due to all the unknowns, such as cold storage requirements from delivery to distribution, number of doses required, date of vaccine availability, priority of population to receive vaccination, acceptance of vaccine by the public, etc. Hopefully more answers will be provided shortly, but the anticipation is that if any vaccine is available prior to the end of the year; it will be very limited.

9. Commission Q & A

- a. J. Fourre reported on the CDC's recent announcement of MISA, a multisystem inflammatory syndrome in adults that impacts adults after infection with COVID-19. It is

a rare, but severe condition that is similarly found in children, but recently identified in adults.

- b. M. Plager asked about any impacts on the Commission as a result of the President's fundraiser in Bedminster. K. Sumner advised that a couple individuals who reside in the Commission are being followed up as possible close contacts of White House staff and are being asked to quarantine for 14 days. It appears most of the contact tracing is being done by the County and State Health departments.
- c. J. Gunther expressed concern about COVID fatigue. She is sensing that people are tired of being isolated and the restrictions and as a result are resisting recommendations. She expressed the need to keep vigilant and encourage cooperation.
- d. J. Fourre spoke vaccine development and the concerns of political influence. He noted that the major vaccine manufacturers have all stated they will not release a vaccine until it has been fully vetted and approved.
- e. G. Riley asked about the source of the Commission data reports. K. Sumner advised that the data is retrieved from the state communicable disease database and provides information on cases that have been reviewed and confirmed by local staff and the state. The report is only of verified cases confirmed by laboratory analysis.

10. Public Portion – No public present

11. Addenda

- a. K. Sumner advised members that a request had been received from Watching for the Commission to review and possibly address concerns about a motor vehicle safety issue on Hillcrest Road with overweight trucks. More information was pending and will be provided if and when it becomes available. While motor vehicle safety is a public health issue, this case may be challenging due to County and State, and possible federal jurisdictions being involved.
- b. G. Riley reported that South Bound Brook officially left the Commission effective August 1.
- c. G. Riley expressed a concern about the invisibility of public health and the Middle-Brook Regional Health Commission. He wants to pursue a branding/marketing campaign with a professional firm and asked for feedback. All members were in favor of investigating and expressed that now is a great time to do so.
- d. G. Riley addressed the disheartening potential for political influence in COVID-19 response. He advised that previously the state reported details about COVID-19 disease activity in long term care facilities on their website, but it has subsequently been removed. The State Health Commissioner has stated that it is more important to focus on current status as opposed to dwelling on the past information. Mr. Riley felt that information should be available for public access.
- e. G. Riley reminded that the Commission budgeted for a financial audit that is now required annually. He asked that this be pursued. K. Sumner advised he would get quotes from the firm that previously audited the Commission and at least one more from an auditor that does a local municipality of the Commission.

There being no further business Mr. Malcolm Plager made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:15 pm, seconded by Mr. Jon Fourre. Vote: All in favor. Motion adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kevin G. Sumner', written over a horizontal line.

Kevin G. Sumner, Secretary