



Macon County  
Public Health

**MACON COUNTY BOARD OF HEALTH  
MINUTES  
6/23/2020**

**Members** Melissa Bell, Pharmacist and Chair, Nathan Brenner, Dentist and Vice-Chair; Teresa Murray, General Public; Jeff Todd, Veterinarian; Paul Higdon, County Commissioner; Mitchell Bishop, Engineer; Gosia Tiger, General Public; Dr. Kevin Foley, General Public, Ellen Shope; Nurse Representative and General Public, Ross Dodge

**Members Absent:** Paul Higdon and Mitchell Bishop

**Staff Present:** Kathy McGaha, Jennifer Garrett, Carrie Pazcoguin, Melissa Setzer, Drew Gretz, Izabelle Evans and Emily Ritter

**Guests:** None

**Media:** Jake Browning (Franklin Press)

**Public Comment:** None

**Call to Order:** Meeting was called to order at 6:16 p.m. by Melissa Bell.

**Welcome/Intro:** Kathy McGaha introduced Drew Gretz and Izabel Evans as new employees.

**Approve Agenda:**

Dr. Jeff Todd made a motion to approve the agenda with one change by moving the closed session until after the Discussion. Ross Dodge seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

**Presentations: None**

**Approve Minutes from Previous Meetings:**

Ross Dodge made a motion to accept the minutes. Dr. Jeff Todd seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

**Old Business:**

**A. COVID-19 Update – Jennifer Garrett, Nursing Director**

Jennifer gave an update on Macon County's confirmed positive COVID cases. Macon County has a total of 262 confirmed cases, a significant increase from the 18 confirmed cases at the time of the May meeting. This number is broken down as 181 active cases, 80 recovered individuals, 1 death and 159 pending results. Macon County Public Health is testing all day on Monday, Wednesday, Friday, and will begin this week testing for two hours on Thursday. The schedule for each testing day is full, we are testing anywhere from 112-115 individuals. Due to individuals

coming off of isolation MCPH is scheduling two sets of testing times. It has been taking longer for some to come off isolation. This is one reason why MCPH has scheduled retests for two hours on Thursday. This will open up the schedule on the other three testing days for individuals needing to be tested and leave Thursdays for retests only. MCPH is still having confirmed positive cases, but they are not rising as fast. The number of confirmed cases a day has decreased. MCPH was receiving pending test back in 2-3 days, now that there is increased testing across the state that the turnaround time has slowed. LabCorp has experienced some computer problems as well. Ellen Shope asked how much success has MCPH had with contact tracing. Jennifer Garrett stated that there are several staff members dedicated to doing contact tracing, and most people have been forthcoming. MCPH has been dealing with a language barrier, and in order to have more support in that area two additional interpreters have come in through the EOC. Dr. Foley asked about the two negative tests that are being done to release someone from isolation. Jennifer stated that employers are asking for two negative tests before they will allow someone to return to work. Dr. Dewhurst did change MCPH's algorithm to where an individual showing no symptoms after 14 days can be released from isolation. Dr. Foley stated that having two negative tests is not the current guidelines from the CDC. Gosia Tiger stated that hospitals are also implementing testing for two negatives. Dr. Foley stated that the employers cannot discriminate by making employees have the two negative tests before they can return to work. Dr. Foley asked if individuals were okay coming back for the extra tests. Jennifer stated that they have not had an issue with individuals having to come back except for the ones that state they are unable to return. Melissa Bell asked if many of the employers in Macon County were asking for the two negatives. Jennifer stated that most businesses are requiring them to have the two negative tests. Dr. Foley asked who is paying for the tests? Jennifer stated that MCPH is filing patience's insurance then LabCorp is billing the patient. Jennifer explained that LabCorp is using the CARES Act, for those who are underinsured or uninsured. Dr. Foley disagrees and states that it is against the CDC guidelines, he would like to know who wrote the policy requiring the individuals have two negative tests? Jennifer said that Dr. Dewhurst makes those policies as the Medical Director, and that Dr. Dewhurst receives his guidance from the state. Dr. Foley stated that he would like to speak with Dr. Dewhurst tomorrow. His concern is that this is an extra expense to the patient and extra work for MCPH. Kathy stated that she would send the guidance that MCPH receives from the state to Dr. Foley can review them.

## **B. Board of Health Training Update, Kathy McGaha, Health Director**

Kathy asked the board members if they were able to access the online trainings and if they had success completing those. Ellen Shope stated that she had started the intro but was having problems printing the certificate. Kathy stated that this was a new way of training due to COVID and if they have any issues in completing the training to please let her know and she will contact UNC.

## **New Business:**

### **A. Carrie Pazcoguin, Finance Officer – Fee Schedule and Billing Codes**

Carrie asked the board to refer to the handout that was sent out by email to all board members and displayed on the monitor. This is a table of the new proposed fees that the Finance Committee developed for Telephone visits with a provider. The Finance Committee has met and agreed that these fees need to be added to the MCPH fee schedule, in order to offer this service. At this time MCPH does not have fees or billing codes for Telephone visits. MCPH would like to offer Telehealth to patients as an option to minimize patient contact, however a fee will have to be in place prior to going live with telehealth. The next code to be discussed is for COVID testing. This code will be used when MCPH start billing for COVID tests instead of LabCorp. MCPH Finance Committee is currently in the process of developing additional fees that will be presented at the next board meeting in July. Ellen Shope stated that she thought there was money for COVID testing and that would take care of the COVID bills. Carrie stated that the CARES Act could be used for patients that are underinsured or uninsured. Ellen replied that she thought the HD's would be receiving funds to cover patient testing. Kathy stated that each county would receive a certain amount of funding, these funds are to be used for supplies and staffing. All funds received are a part of the CARES Act, which are channeled into different line items, for example: funds for testing, funds for the Health Departments, staff testing and other county entities.

Ross Dodge asked what the bottom line is if someone who does not have money to be tested, can they be tested for free. Kathy stated that anyone can be tested and that would be billed from LabCorp to Cares Act for anyone unable to pay.

Ellen Shope stated that Communicable Disease testing is free and would COVID testing not fall in that category as well. Kathy replied that at this time we do not have any guidance to that.

Ross Dodge asked if they have people that don't show up because they know they are being charged for the test? Kathy replied that all billing and insurance is disclosed to them when they contact the call center to make an appointment. Insurance information is collected from them at the time of scheduling and if they do not have insurance that test is covered by the Cares Act.

Ross Dodge wanted to confirm that the test is free for those that do not have insurance. Kathy replied that if there is no insurance LabCorp will file the fee with Cares Act. The Cares Act is funds set aside for that purpose as long as funds exist. In addition, there is no copay for anyone with insurance.

Ellen Shope asked if insurance information was collected at the COVID testing clinics that were held in Highlands. Kathy replied; yes, insurance information was collected on individuals that had insurance. The most time consuming aspect of testing whether it be at the HD or an offsite location is the collection of paperwork that has to be completed in order to be tested.

Jennifer stated that MCPH has staff working until 8:00 to 9:00 p.m. each night as well as working weekends keying information into the system, so that LabCorp can run the test. Another large component for our staff is continuing working late nights and weekend for contact tracing and etc.

Melissa Bell stated that the guidance does state two tests 24 hours apart when testing for negative test. Kathy stated that a lot of those being tested for the two negative tests are essential workers who are out and about in the community.

Ross Dodge asked about the test if it is painful? Kathy McGaha explained the testing process.

Motion to go into closed session made by Dr. Jeff Todd, Dr. Kevin Foley seconded that motion. Motion to go into closed session passed unanimously.

Time into closed session 7:06 p.m.

**Closed Session:** Discussion recorded in separate confidential document.

Motion to go back to open session made by Nathan Brenner. Dr. Kevin Foley seconded that motion. Motion to go back to open session passed unanimously.

Time back into open session 7:22 p.m.

**Discussion:**

**Announcements:** None

**Next Meeting Date** 7/28/2020

**Adjourn**

Motion to adjourn made by Dr. Todd. Ross Dodge seconded that motion. Motion to adjourn passed unanimously.

Time Adjourned 7:38 P.M.

**Minutes Recorded by: Melissa Setzer**