

Carolyn Edmonds, *Board of Health Chair*

**BOH Members:**

Richard Conlin  
George W. Counts  
Jan Drago  
Carolyn Edmonds  
Ava Frisinger  
Larry Gossett  
Steve Hammond  
David Hutchinson  
David Irons  
Kathy Lambert  
Frankie T. Manning  
Bud Nicola  
Julia Patterson  
Alonzo Plough  
Tom Rasmussen

**BOH Staff:**

Wendy Roark

**King County Board of Health**

**Friday, April 15, 2005**

**King County Council Chambers**

**MEETING PROCEEDINGS**

Members Present: Richard Conlin; George Counts; Jan Drago; Larry Gossett; David Hutchinson; Bud Nicola

Members Absent: Carolyn Edmonds; Ava Frisinger; Steve Hammond; David Irons; Kathy Lambert; Frankie Manning; Julia Patterson; Tom Rasmussen

Staff: Alonzo Plough and Jane McKenzie

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 9:43 AM by Board Vice Chair, David Hutchinson.

2. Announcement of Alternates

Vice Chair Hutchinson indicated there were no alternates present.

3. Approval of Minutes

Minutes were not approved as a quorum was not present.

4. General Public Comments

None.

5. Chair's Report

Carrie Cihak, Staff for the King County Council, briefed the Board on the status of the Public Health Operational Master Plan (PH OMP). Staff from the Council, the Office of Management and Budget, and the Department of Public Health have worked collaboratively to develop a work plan for the PH OMP. This plan is being transmitted in writing to the Council and the Board today with a formal presentation to the Board in May for its input and approval.

6. Board Member Updates

None.

7. Director's Report

Dr. Plough gave an overview of the *Guide to Community Preventive Services*, completed by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Task Force on Community Preventive Services. Dr. Plough was appointed to the Task Force this year and reported that the Department will be using the presented results to guide approaches to public health practice in the Department.

Board Member Counts commented that the report raises the issue of promoting diversity in the health care work force. While the Guide states that insufficient evidence exists to conclude definitively that there are health benefits from promoting diversity, this does not mean that we should discontinue the effort. Dr. Plough concurred, adding that other studies outside of the scope of the Guide do demonstrate the positive impacts of diversity within the health care field.

Dr. Plough updated the Board on the status of the walking challenge currently taking place between the City Council and King County Council. The launch on April 6<sup>th</sup> was successful and included a brisk one mile walk around downtown Seattle. The Department has the ability to post updates on its website and Dr. Plough encouraged council members to send in their step counts.

#### 8. Briefing: Governor's Budget

Mr. Tom Bristow, Government Relations Associate for King County, provided an update on the state legislative session. A bill that would develop a comprehensive look at public health needs and funding, House Concurrent Resolution 4410, is expected to move forward and pass. With an anticipated decrease of \$82 million in federal revenue over the next two years, based on changes to the federal spending guidelines for mental health, some backfill funding is being recommended in the respective budget proposals--the Governor is proposing \$80 million, the Senate \$82 million, and the House \$70 million. The actual amount is anticipated to be between \$78 and \$82 million. Chemical dependency spending may actually increase by \$29 to \$30 million.

After the conclusion of the legislative session, Mr. Bristow will return to provide the Board with a more comprehensive look at the final budget and legislative changes that pass this session.

#### 9. Briefing: Pandemic Flu

Dr. Plough introduced Dr. Steve Helgerson, Director of the Department's Prevention Division who provided an overview of the panel discussion. Dr. Helgerson introduced Dr. John Neff, of Children's Hospital and Medical Center, who began the presentation on pandemic flu. Dr. Neff discussed some traits of the influenza virus, presented a historical view of past pandemic outbreaks, and outlined susceptible populations. The flu virus can infect multiple species of animals, including birds (avians), the largest source of the influenza virus. Birds can transmit the virus to humans, as exemplified by the avian influenza strain active in Southeast Asia, where humans and birds are often in close contact. Based on information from the World Health Organization, Dr. Neff reported that there is now a grave danger of a pandemic flu outbreak and he described the challenges presented by such an event.

Board Member Conlin asked about King County's capacity should a pandemic occur. Dr. Neff replied that he was not sure as this depends on flexibility in the capacity of our health care system; flexibility that is decreasing with increasing hospital efficiency.

Board Member Conlin asked about raising public awareness with regard to a possible pandemic. Dr. Neff replied that the Emergency Preparedness Program is working toward this goal through the development of effective communication networks.

Board Member Drago asked how long people were contagious prior to exhibiting flu symptoms. Dr. Neff replied that individuals are contagious approximately one day prior to exhibiting symptoms. Board Member Drago asked what work was being done relating to planning for school closures and travel limitations. Dr. Plough replied that the Department is working with private and public organizations to develop a cooperative strategy to best implement the powers of the Health Officer should such a pandemic arise. Dr. Plough added that these issues would be more thoroughly addressed in the next component of the presentation by Mr. Michael Loehr.

Board Member Nicola asked if we could expect the pandemic to follow the seasonality of influenza epidemics. Dr. Neff was unable to speak to this specific point. Board Member Nicola asked whether antiviral prophylaxis has reached an operational stage for use in conducting contact investigations here as it has in Asia. Dr. Neff replied that it is likely that prophylactic agents would be most useful in preventing the disease from becoming severe or infectious and would likely be most effective for those with a high level of exposure.

Board Member Counts asked whether human-to-human transmission of H5N1 (the avian influenza virus) had been established. Dr. Neff replied in the affirmative; however, he indicated that such transmission has occurred only on a very limited level. Dr. Plough noted that transmission had been established in at least two cases in Thailand, but this was a case in which individuals lived on a chicken farm and were in extremely close contact with birds. Board Member Counts added that he understood the fear to be that H5N1 might genetically combine with other influenza viruses that routinely spread between humans to pose a pandemic threat.

Dr. Helgerson introduced Michael Loehr, who directs the Preparedness Program at Public Health – Seattle & King County. Mr. Loehr proceeded to discuss the possible impact of a pandemic on the continuity of government and business operations. There is a critical need to identify appropriate organizations and individuals to examine the shared authorities of the Health Officer and elected officials and develop a strategy to shape the authority of the Health Officer so that pandemic infections can best be restrained.

Using the National Pandemic Influenza Plan as a guide, the Preparedness Program is working to create networks of affected organizations to minimize social disruption should a pandemic flu emerge. The Preparedness Program has briefed medical service providers, emergency managers, city managers and law enforcement officers county-wide to address issues of staffing shortages while maintaining core systems. The Preparedness Program is striving to engage private, local business as well as local governmental entities, in the planning and capacity development process. If agencies and businesses are prepared for a pandemic, they will be more able to respond proactively to an emergency rather than

reacting to events as they unfold. The Preparedness Program will maintain this focus for the next year.

Vice Chair Hutchison asked about the Preparedness Program's progress in communicating the threat of pandemic flu to elected officials. Dr. Plough indicated that city managers have been briefed and the Preparedness Program has been working to schedule briefing appointments with elected officials, as well.

Board Member Conlin asked Mr. Loehr about planning related to possible litigation for social disruptions in a pandemic flu crisis. Mr. Loehr replied that his program has been working with the Office of the Prosecuting Attorney to identify legal authorities responsible during a crisis response but that litigation related to possible interruptions in service had not been discussed.

Vice Chair Hutchinson asked if a list had been created of individuals located within government organizations important in the communication network required to maintain services. Mr. Loehr replied affirmatively.

Board Member Drago cited this year's initially limited, and later over-abundant, vaccine supply and queried, in light of the additional information presented today, whether getting a flu shot this year would help matters. Dr. Plough replied in Seattle and King County approximately the same amount of vaccine was administered this year as was the year prior. However, such a crisis does point out an issue: if the adult vaccine distribution system is unable to handle the garden variety influenza on a seasonal basis, how will it handle the strains of a serious pandemic flu? Dr. Plough promised to keep the Board up-to-date in developments in the preparedness activities and possible spread of a pandemic flu virus.

#### 10. Briefing: Local Hazardous Waste Fees

Vice Chair Hutchinson began the discussion of the subcommittee's deliberations over the fees for the Local Hazardous Waste Management Program.

Board Member Nicola elaborated on the process that is underway. The subcommittee has met several times to discuss the programs, revenue sources, and expenses that comprise the Local Hazardous Waste Management Program, in addition to the new fees. The subcommittee thought it would be appropriate to make sure that periodic review of the program's fees occurred at least every five years.

Vice Chair Hutchinson added that some program fees had not been raised since 1995, while others had remained untouched since 1991.

Mr. Ken Armstrong, Administrator of the Local Hazardous Waste Management Program, began his briefing to the Board by highlighting recent activities. In January, the Program provided the Board with a general overview of the Program's finances, indicating a fee increase would be sought to

supports its activities. Mr. Armstrong reviewed the fees an average household would pay into the Program's fund, the benefits provided and stakeholder feedback. The Program's fees derive primarily from solid waste and sewer fees, as originally set by the Seattle and King County Boards of Health in 1991. In 1995, the commercial solid waste account fees and the waste water treatment fees were raised by the Board of Health (additional information was included in a hand-out). The program is proposing that:

- The residential solid waste account fee increase from \$0.60 per month to \$0.80 per month.
- Commercial fees rise from \$6.77 per month to \$9.07 per month.
- Passenger vehicles at transfer stations pay \$1.34 per visit; non-passenger commercial self-haulers pay \$3.50 per ton.
- Sewer fees increase in 2006 to the monthly residential equivalent of \$0.32 per month and again in 2007 to \$0.34 per month.
- The fee increase commence in January 2006.

If the fee increase is not approved the Program's fund would be depleted sometime in 2006. Adoption of the package would generate approximately \$2.9 million per year for the Program and allow its continued operation for the next three to five years without a subsequent fee increase.

Mr. Armstrong discussed outreach activities his staff has completed with stakeholders and ratepayers. Meetings were held with stakeholders over the last four months and letters were sent to the mayors of each suburban city within King County. Electronic copies were sent to city managers and key staff in each of these suburban cities. Few written comments were submitted but those that were supported the proposed fee increase. Surveys of residential and commercial ratepayers were completed in 2004 to obtain feedback about the fee increases. The results indicated that ratepayers were willing to pay an even higher rate than the one being proposed in return for the services they receive.

Board Member Gossett asked about the timeline for a vote on the fee increase.

Vice Chair Hutchinson replied that the vote would occur at the next meeting, after a public hearing.

Board Member Gossett asked a question to clarify the calculation methodology for the amount of increased revenue that would be generated by the proposed fee increase. Mr. Armstrong responded, saying that \$2.9 million of additional revenue would be generated. Presently, the Program is spending between \$2.2 million and \$2.3 million more than it is collecting. The fund had sufficient reserves to support this spending pattern in the past, however such practices are no longer sustainable.

Board Member Gossett further inquired whether the fee increase would allow the Program to maintain a level of reserve funding while still covering its costs. Mr. Armstrong replied affirmatively, adding that the Program was looking to prevent the build up of a large reserve, and maintain enough of a

cushion for unforeseen needs and increasing labor costs without having to return to the Board every year for a fee increase. The Program expects to come back to the Board on a three to five year basis.

Vice Chair Hutchinson clarified that the subcommittee recommended that the issue be revisited every three to five years in order to prevent the 10- to 14-year lag in review period that occurred in the past.

#### 11. Adjournment

Vice Chair Hutchison adjourned the meeting at 11:43 AM.