

Minutes of the
Chicago Board of Health Meeting
March 16, 2022 at 9:00 am
Virtual Meeting
By Remote Means

Pursuant to applicable law, the President determined that an in-person meeting was not practical or prudent. Accordingly, attendance at this meeting was via remote means only.

I. Roll Call

Quorum was established based upon the following:

Present: Carmen Vergara, MPH, RN-BSN
Carolyn C. Lopez, MD, President
Janet Lin, MD, MPH, MBA
Joel Johnson, M.Ed
Matthew M. Davis, MD, MPP
Steve Rothschild, MD
Debra Wesley, MSW

Absent: Rosa E. Martinez Colón, MS
Horace E. Smith, MD

For the Department

Allison Arwady, MD, Commissioner,
Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH)

II. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Carolyn C. Lopez, M.D., President.

III. Approval of Minutes

The Board voted and approved the February meeting minutes.

IV. Commissioner's Update

Commissioner Arwady provided both non-COVID and COVID updates:

- March 16, 2022 marks the two-year anniversary of the first COVID death in Chicago. Since then there has been more than 7500 deaths. On March 15, 2022 the department held a conversation with the Mayor and Ayesha Jaco, Executive Director of Westside United to discuss continued COVID-19 strategies with an intentional emphasis on community and improving equity and efficiency. Also some of the conversation surrounded not building temporary scaffolding.
- COVID continues to surge in Asia, which is not surprising as they are just getting Omicron in a serious way. What is a little more concerning is that it continues to surge in Europe. As the department looks ahead on COVID, Chicago is in a dramatically better place in regards to preparedness in terms of Genomics, labs,

and variants. Prior to COVID, the department had zero capacity to look for variants. There has been a commitment to building the structure for testing across the country. In Chicago, the regional innovative, primary partnership with Rush University Medical Center allows us to collect samples from across the City and pull them in to make sure that we are testing or whether they are in a large academic center. This capacity is important as the department monitors antibiotic resistance and other emerging things as we move forward.

- The department has also been expanding some of its newer surveillance techniques, particularly wastewater. This is an area that the Midwest is leading in: Illinois, Missouri, and Wisconsin have made some big commitments. Though some of the science is in its infancy stage, there has been some opportunities to learn from it. The Facebook Live scheduled for March 17th at 11:00 am will be devoted to variants and wastewater surveillance.
- On Monday, March 14th we hosted a symposium on Trauma-Informed Response to Violence which specifically pulled together community leaders and providers (people working on the ground) in Mental health, Substance Use, and Violence Prevention services in the fifteen communities that are most impacted by violence. The all-day event consisted of conversation about both the problem and solutions. The Mayor was in attendance at the event.
- There's a new tree equity initiative called Our Roots Chicago to prioritize the planting of trees in historically marginalized neighborhoods. There are three desired outcomes increasing the use of 311 for call to actions (story telling around why are trees important). The pilots will take place in North Lawndale and Little Village. This project represents some of the behind the scenes work and will help to address some of the longer term inequities of physical spaces and aligns with the Healthy Chicago work.
- The department's Family Connect program collaborated with dozens of organizations and individuals across Chicago on a maternal and child health book, Bringing Baby Home. The books come in five languages and is filled with resources and information. For more information about how the department promotes the health of infants, visit www.onechifam.org. Additionally, the department will begin using the NowPow platform to create a better system for organizing all the maternal child health services and making the linkage to resource more seamless.
- The department is looking for a new Board of Health President. Dr. Carolyn Lopez, current President of the Chicago Board of Health, will be stepping down when her term expires (officially May 2022, but she'll stay on until we have a replacement identified). She has been a dedicated and passionate Board member since 2003 and President since 2009. We are truly grateful for the leadership, time and expertise she so graciously shared throughout the years. Current members are encouraged to self-nominate.
- Jesse Lava, Director of Policy is leaving the CDPH. The department is looking to fill this role as well as an open policy analyst and Director of Health Care System Coordination position.

- Commissioner Arwady introduced Mary Emanuel, Deputy Commissioner of Finance to respond to the letter addressed to the Board of Health from the AIDS Foundation of Chicago regarding the procedures and timeliness of delegate agency payments.
- Mary Emanuel noted that the department’s budget has grown substantially since COVID as the result of an influx of federal funds awarded specifically to the department of Health. The budget is between 1.2-1.5 Billion in funds. This lead to a large increase in the volume of contract transactions that is beyond some of the department’s capacity. We are currently hiring for positions that will help the department address the administrative capacity. Additionally, the department will work across departments to create a more streamlined and efficient process. Additionally, the department is working to address the outstanding payments to delegate agencies. Currently, approximately half of the payments have been cleared by the Comptroller’s office.

Board Member Comments & Questions:

- **Dr. Rothschild** – It may be too soon for an After Action Report. Possibly in the future take a look at the successes and failures of public health. This type of deep reflection can lead to rich discussion. This would be a good agenda item for future meeting, possibly before Dr. Lopez leaves.
- **Dr. Lopez** – It would also be interesting to look back at the Crimson Contagion exercise done in 2019 to see how well we did.

V. Board President’s Comments

- Dr. Lopez expressed her concerns about local and national conversations regarding Public Health, its necessity and the provision of the tools that are necessary for Public

VI. Presentation

Sarah Gilen, MPH	Laurie L. Call
Public Health Consultant	Director
Illinois Public Health Institute	Illinois Public Health Institute

Title: CDPH: Five-Year Strategic Plan:

Creating an Equitable, Safe, Resilient, and Healthy Chicago

- The presentation provided an overview of the Chicago Department of Public Health’s five-year strategic plan. The purpose of the plan is to use data, staff and stakeholder input to inform priorities and plans to improve the organization and the community. The plan will also be used to guide decision-making, resource allocation, policy, alignment, and partnerships. The goal in creating the plan was to develop a meaningful, actionable plan that the organization is committed to implementing and to critically reflect and strategically take advantage of the opportunities available with the elevation of public health.

Actions teams will help the department achieve its top strategic priorities: Racial Equity, Workforce Capacity and Ongoing Development.

VII. Public Comments

- **John Peller, President and CEO, AIDS Foundation of Chicago** expressed a desire to work in partnership with CDPH and officials citywide to improve the contracting and payments system. Outstanding payments for the organization have been approved and are expected to be received within a few days. Additionally, he emphasized the importance of timely payments as well as how much organizations such as the AIDS Foundation and even smaller organizations rely on well-timed receipt of funds. As a result of broken systems, agencies are reluctant to even apply or do business with the City. He encouraged the Board of Health to ask for reports and updates on contracts and payments, the number of vacancies in Finance and Contracts, and the hiring process.
- **Vanessa Smith, Executive Director, South Side Help Center** communicated that contracting, budgeting, and reimbursement delays have put a huge burden on their organization. They have been put in the position of borrowing money in order to meet payroll. Additionally, the timeliness of payments have caused them issues with auditors because they do not see the cash flow. Consequently, they don't get a clean audit. The City also needs to do a better job with transparent communication. It was also recommended that the City implement a 25% cash advance system similar to the one they had in the 1990s. She also noted the need for increased flexibility in the ability to submit budget revisions.
- **Vivian Funches, VP-Finance, Illinois Public Health Institute (IPHI)** thanked Commissioner Arwady and CDPH for their exemplary leadership and work during the COVID-19 Pandemic. It was acknowledge that IPHI has received funding from CDPH to provide critical public services to Chicago's most vulnerable residents. Additionally, the organization serves as a fiscal agent and back office support to numerous smaller non-profits. When considering a new fiscal client the organization is concerned about whether or not they intend to seek City funds because too many grants from the City of Chicago would bankrupt their organization. Without timely payments from the City there are many organizations that will not be able to provide critical services to people. Though IPHI can utilize a line of credit to help sustain during slow payments, they are unable to bill back for the interest accrued on these funds. Upfront payments and restructuring of the City of Chicago's payment systems is a must.

VIII. New Business

John Peller, President and CEO
AIDS Foundation Chicago
Letter to the Board of Health

- Addressed the timeliness of City delegate agency payments and the lengthy contracting process.

Board Member Comments & Questions:

- **Dr. Lin** applauded CDPH on its high-level prioritization of racial equity, workforce, and administrative systems improvement priorities outlined in its Five-Year Strategic Plan report. The commitment speaks strongly to the current issues outlined in the delegate agency letter. It can take those impacted speaking up for the Board to realize the implications of the backend processes. It is important to prioritize the key areas that the organizations have articulated.
- **Dr. Davis** extended his gratitude to those who came forward during the public comment period. He noted that their suggestions regarding measures that the Board could ask for from CDPH are reasonable and consistent with Dr. Arwady's expectations of having a data-driven department.
- **Dr. Lopez** described several ways that the Board can address the issue: they can issue a position statement, provide requested information regularly (i.e., stand-alone agenda item), or combine it with the Commissioner's update.
- **Dr. Rothschild** presented a pre-motion whereby the department develops financial metrics outlining the time to payment on invoices and reports back to the Board at least quarterly on progress.
- **Dr. Lopez** introduced the motion based upon Dr. Rothschild's statement about developing a report, initially every month until stability is found and then no less than quarterly. It was amended and motioned by Dr. Rothschild; it received a second motion by Joel Johnson and then the Board unanimously approved it.
- **Dr. Lin** stated the importance of communicating the information to the Board and to the public.
- **Dr. Lopez** noted that meetings are public and that any reporting on the metrics would be part of the public record.
- **Dr. Davis** clarified whether the information should be included in a dashboard or reported in the public minutes.
- **Dr. Lin** commented that how information is shared out is as important as what is shared out. She also added that it is necessary to include the components of invoicing and contact to execution time.
- **Dr. Vergara** noted the importance of having stated goals and a reasonable payment timeline to ensure a standard for measuring future payments.

IX. Old Business

There was no old business.

X. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 10:15 am by Dr. Carolyn C. Lopez.