



**AITKIN
COUNTY**
EST 1857
HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES
COUNTY BOARD MEETING MINUTES
November 24, 2020

Attendance

The Aitkin County Board of Commissioners met this 24th day of November, 2020, at 9:05 a.m. as the Aitkin County Health & Human Services Board, with the following members present: Commissioners Bill Pratt, J. Mark Wedel, Don Niemi, and Laurie Westerlund (Via WebEx). Others present included: H&HS Director Cynthia Bennett, Accounting Supervisor Carli Goble, Public Health Supervisor Erin Melz, Riverwood Healthcare Center Dr. David Taylor (Via WebEx), County Administrator Jessica Seibert, Assistant to the County Administrator Angie Sahr, and Jennifer Eisenbart, Aitkin Independent Age (Via Webex).

Agenda

Cynthia asked to make two changes to the agenda.

1. To add item V.B. Approve Community Support Program funding Grant.
2. Remove item VI, Janet Watson WARP program presentation entirely, reschedule for January's board agenda.

Motion by Commissioner Wedel, seconded by Commissioner Westerlund and carried, all members present voting yes to approve the amended November 24, 2020 Health & Human Services Board agenda.

Directors Update:

Erin Melz and Dr. Taylor discussion of COVID-19

Due to time constraints for Dr. Taylor item IV.B was moved up on the agenda.

Cynthia started by remarking that the COVID-19 numbers within Aitkin County are rising and how it has a tremendous impact on our healthcare providers. There continues to be public controversy over following the guidelines given by the governor, the CDC, and MDH. As such Dr. Taylor was invited to help us understand what is happening in our community and what we can do to help in this situation.

Erin thanked Dr. Taylor for joining the Board meeting again and asked him first to give a quick situational update for our area and what he is seeing here.

Dr. Taylor began by stating that we are in the midst of a surge and that 30-50% of the inpatients at Riverwood are there due to COVID-19. An example, he gave, was that on Sunday they had 15 inpatients, of which 8 were there due to COVID-19. Even though the capacity is around 20 inpatients, the COVID ratio has not historically been that high. He also added that the larger hospitals, such as St. Cloud or Abbott in the Twin Cities, have not been able to take transfer patients from Riverwood due to being full themselves. This is not only a problem for COVID-19 patients but more so for the other critical care illnesses such as stroke or heart attack.

Commissioner Wedel inquired as to how many beds maximum the hospital has.

Dr. Taylor said that as a critical access hospital they are licensed for 25 beds maximum. With their COVID-19 surge planning they have been able to push that up to a maximum of 40 beds, although due to staffing concerns it would be hard to handle that many patients at once. As such they have been seeing a normal number of inpatients around the low 20's.

Erin asked several questions that PH has been hearing from community members and DR Taylor answered the questions as posed.

Lastly Dr. Taylor talked about the COVID -19 vaccines. There are three vaccines in development right now and there is intense pressure and competition to be the first to put one out to the public, this leads to many questions about production, data tracking and monitoring. The assurance though, is that the company that gets it done first and right is going to make billions of dollars whereas the company that gets it wrong could be done for. The vaccines all look very effective in comparison to the seasonal flu vaccines we normally get, but he does see a huge challenge with getting the vaccine out to everyone initially.

Commissioner Westerlund asked about the cost of the vaccine and what the plan was for who would pay for it, whether it be the insurance companies, federal, state, or local government?

Dr. Taylor responded that as far as he understands it, insurance companies will be covering the costs for their patients, he was unsure about those without medical coverage.

Minutes

Motion by Commissioner Niemi, seconded by Commissioner Westerlund and carried, all members present voting yes to approve the October 27, 2020 Health and Human Services Board minutes.

Bills

Carli Goble, H&HS Accounting Supervisor noted that there was nothing out of the ordinary for the bills this month.

Motion by Commissioner Wedel, seconded by Commissioner Niemi and carried, all members present voting yes to approve the bills.

Directors Update Cont.:

Cynthia mentioned that there would be an upcoming mask campaign through Public Health that will feature our leaders in masks. It will be posted on the Public Health Facebook page and possibly in the newspaper.

She added that most of the AMC groups have met and so AMC will be packaging their legislative platform in preparation for next month's meeting on December 7th.

Approval of Contracts/Agreements/Policies

Motion by Commissioner Wedel, seconded by Commissioner Niemi and carried, all members voting yes to approve the Children's Mental Health Screening Grant for January 1, 2021 through December 31, 2021.

Motion by Commissioner Westerlund, seconded by Commissioner Niemi and carried, all members voting yes to approve the Community Support Program Grant for January 1, 2021 through December 31, 2022.

Committee Reports

HHS Advisory Committee Report

Commissioner Wedel talked that the group reviewed their work with Suicide Prevention with Brea Hamdorf, Public Health Nurse, from the last year and then heard an update from Lynne Jacobs, Aitkin County CARE Director on what is happening with CARE.

CARE Board Update

Commissioner Westerlund stated that they had a finance meeting, all of their grants are showing up, and she is hoping to have Lynne come, in the future, to give the Board an update.

NEMOJT Update

Commissioner Niemi said that they had a meeting and the main concern addressed was some internal issues and that he felt that it was all under control.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:57 a.m.

Next Meeting – December 22, 2020