

The Fayette County Board of Health met on Tuesday, January 9, 2001 at 7:30 a.m. in the public meeting room in the Fayette County Administrative Complex, 140 Stonewall Avenue, Fayetteville, Georgia.

Board of Health Members Present: Dr. John DeCotis
Nancy Neff
Lynette Peterson
Lyn Redwood
Dr. Michael Strain

Staff Members Present: Dr. Michael Brackett
Laurie Cook
Merle Crowe
Rick Fehr
Cynthia Grant
Dennis Davenport, Attorney

Dr. Strain called the meeting to order at 7:40 a.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

On motion made by Lyn Redwood, seconded by Nancy Neff to approve the Board of Health Minutes for November 14, 2000. The motion carried unanimously.

UPDATE ON LAKE EDITH:

Environmental Health County Manager Rick Fehr stated that since the last Board meeting he had been working with Laurie Cook and Lyn Redwood to try and bring this situation along. He said Ms. Redwood had gathered quite a bit of information.

Lyn Redwood remarked that Mr. Fehr had asked if she had some free time and would like to look into the Lake Edith issue. She said she had started with a site visit. She presented some pictures of Lake Edith to the Board. She discussed the holding pond and pointed out that it had a lot of cracks. She said they were unable to get an accurate record of the gallons of affluent coming from this facility. She said they would have to wait until the weather improved to have this corrected. She said the actual outflow of affluent leaving the facility was green in color. She pointed out a float from a septic tank that had made its way through the facility. She said this was the stream bed of Pelham Creek and it was completely filled with foam. She said the foam indicated there was high organic lead in the stream. She said there was also a green discoloration on top of the foam. She said this was where Pelham Creek actually feeds out into Lake Edith. She said if the Board looked closely in the picture

it would see a fishing cork hanging in the tree. She said that indicated that there were recreational activities such as fishing going on there.

Ms. Redwood said at this point she contacted Todd Bethune, at the Georgia State Environmental Protection Department, to review the current consent orders that are in place against this facility. She said Mr. Bethune had updated her on the progress being made in attempting to correct some of the problems. She said there was a long-standing history of violations as evidenced in the files. She said they then spoke with Madeline Dominey, who is with the EPA, regarding the NPDS permit. She said she voiced her concerns to Ms. Dominey, as well as drafting a letter to Mr. Hankenson (attachment #1), who is the Regional Administrator of the USEPA Region IV. She said she copied the letter for review to Governor Roy Barnes, Mac Collins, Max Cleland and Public Health District IV Directors. She said according to Madeline Dominey, all waters in the State are classified by use as recreational, fishing, or industrial. She said that based on those classifications there were water quality criteria that they have to meet in the State Rules and Regulations. She said those regulations were just revised in July, 2000. She said pages 6 - 12 dealt with the actual parameters that are required for fishing and recreational uses. She said this lake was actually too small to be classified by the EPD, but all lakes that are unclassified seemed to fit the fishing and recreational category. She said one of her recommendations was that the EPD get involved in doing water quality testing, or for the county do the testing. She said Ms. Dominey suggested that sampling be done upstream at the discharge site, and then at the lake. She said if those parameters were not being met, the Board would need to take further action. She said Ms. Dominey was very sympathetic and wanted to hear back from the Board. She said Ms. Dominey would also follow up with EPD; she recommended calling Jim Summerville at EPD Permitting and Compliance as well.

Ms. Redwood said she had also spoken with Sheldon Hammond, at the Georgia State Extension Service, about getting some testing done through the State. She said Mr. Hammond remarked that they had an excellent testing program. She said Mr. Hammond had spoken with Rick Fehr and he talked to Dr. Paul Bendrel about what testing that the county could do.

Mr. Fehr remarked that he had spoken with Dr. Bendrel, who indicated that if the Health Department worked with the Extension Service, the sampling could be done through them at no cost for the testing, as long as there was not an excessive number of samplings. He said that he had indicated that the county would probably want 15 to 20, which would be all right. He said Dr. Bendrel had further indicated that these samples needed to be at their laboratory at the University of Georgia within six hours of collection.

Ms. Redwood said the other question she had asked regarded toxic organics and some of the metals. She said they had recommended that analysis of some of the fish in the lake would better assess those levels. She said she would also like to follow up to see what the cost would be for that type of testing.

Mr. Fehr said he had also been in contact with Mr. Bethune of the EPD, and had learned that there was a similar situation in Coweta County four years ago. He said Mr. Bethune had indicated yesterday that he would be contacting an associate to see if he could come and also look at the situation. He said Mr. Bethune reaffirmed that the mobile home park was still under a consent order, but the Weir situation was primarily what was holding them up from being released from the consent order. He said he had inquired if there was any possibility of the EPD requiring an upgrading of the facility. He said Mr. Bethune had indicated that this just did not seem to be in the picture. He said the county could proceed with the testing of the water and the fish.

Ms. Redwood asked about transportation of the samples to UGA in Athens within the six hour window.

Mr. Fehr said he was looking to see if there was anyone in the county who might be traveling to that location, although the likelihood was small.

Ms. Redwood said the EPD had said one of the best times to make comments about this type of facility was during the repermitting process. She said in April, 1999 the county had requested that the Georgia EPD require any facility that had public access to must meet strict reuse standards. She said the standards that are currently in place for this facility are the lowest that she had ever seen. She said this facility does no chemical treatment of the wastewater. She said also in the letter the county asked to be notified about the renewal of any NPDS or LAS permits in the county. She asked Mr. Fehr if any notification had been received, because the permit was just recently renewed.

Mr. Fehr replied that the county had been receiving reports on permitting from the EPD, and he did not recall seeing anything regarding that facility. He said the reports covered all counties, not just Fayette County.

Dr. DeCotis remarked that the YMCA was also pursuing this through its own avenue, but he was not sure of the final result.

Ms. Redwood said she was shocked at the number of children who were served at this facility during the summer. She said they measure their children in terms of

units. She said a unit was one camper for one week. She said there were approximately ten or eleven weeks of camping during the summer, and that last summer they served 23,000 camper units. She said she had also found that there was a case of Hepatitis A several summers ago, which was a concern as well.

Chairman Strain asked if the county was waiting to hear from anyone else on this problem.

Ms. Redwood replied that the only other person she had not spoken with was Jim Summerville. She felt that since the EPA was the supervising agency over the EPD, that contacting the EPA and requesting their assistance would be the next step to take. She suggested that the Board draft a letter to EPA addressing its concerns.

Ms. Redwood said the YMCA had informed her that the county had done previous testing on the water. She asked Mr. Fehr about this.

Mr. Fehr said there had been one sample collected by the Fayette County Water System. He said he recalled that one sample collected near the outfall had a fecal chloroform count of 920 or 945 colonies per 100 liters.

Dr. DeCotis asked what was considered safe.

Mr. Fehr said that one sample was not sufficient datum to say that the water was unsafe; that an unsafe level was 200 colonies, which would be the total number average over days or months. He said that one sample was reason enough for concern, and to proceed with additional examinations. The sample proved that potential existed for excessive levels of chloroform and other contaminants.

Ms. Redwood said she would like to add that information into the letter, because she did not have it at the time she drafted the letter. She said she would like an additional sentence to be added, stating that the initial screening test had made this discovery, which was the reason for the recommendation to ask the YMCA to restrict exposure to the water until conclusion of the investigation.

Chairman Strain asked when the samples would be taken and sent to UGA.

Mr. Fehr replied he would have to confer with Dr. Bethune about that.

Chairman Strain said a culture would not take long to run. He asked if the Board should do an initial letter, and then a follow-up letter letting them know the results. He asked if the Board needed to make a motion to send the letter.

Attorney Dennis Davenport replied that would be a good idea.

On motion made by Lynette Peterson, seconded by Lyn Redwood to send a letter with the additional sentence suggested by Lyn Redwood about the level of fecal chloroform. The motion carried unanimously.

Lynette Peterson said if it would help she could take some aerial photographs. She said she had flown over the area, but the frozen area made it difficult to see. She said she could take some photographs and they should show the spread pattern really clearly.

Ms. Redwood remarked that now might be a good time to do that, because the area where Pelham Creek enters the lake was fairly wooded, and without leaves the area should be clear.

Ms. Peterson said she would try and take the photographs this week.

FLU VACCINE UPDATE:

County Nurse Manager Cynthia Grant updated the Board on flu vaccine. She said the Health Department had three shipments of vaccine for a total of 3,000 doses this year. She said they had to cut back because of the timing of the shipments, and because of vaccines being given at other locations. She said she determined later that some of those facilities had been premature in announcing that they would be giving flu vaccine. She said the Health Department was not able to plan for outside flu clinics this year as in years past, because it was not known when they would receive the vaccine or how much they would receive. She remarked that last year the Health Department gave 1,000 flu shots just in offsite clinics; which was not possible this year, resulting in a loss of revenue for this year. She said in an effort to make sure that the elderly were served, she went out and did flu shot clinics in three assisted living facilities and the senior citizens program here in Fayetteville on-site, which worked out very well. She said planning clinic services around the flu vaccine was also a problem. She said usually the schedule would be closed to anything but flu vaccine for several days, but they were not able to do that this year. She said the normal clinic was continued, and they had the flu vaccine clients to just walk in. She said this was challenging, but they did get out most of the vaccine. She said they originally only received 600 doses of flu vaccine; in less than five hours this was all gone and people had to be turned away. She commended the staff for a magnificent job. She said at the current time there were only approximately 150 shots still available. She said she had put out another article just to let people know that these were available. She said the CDC was recommending that the Health Department continue giving the vaccine during January. She said

they would be able to return approximately 10% of the total order without penalty, if unused.

Chairman Strain asked Ms. Grant how many cases of flu she had seen. He said at the hospital they had not seen influenza yet. He felt the influenza had not hit yet.

Ms. Grant replied she had not seen any cases.

Dr. Brackett said there were several physicians in the State of Georgia who saw cases that they felt were influenza on a routine basis. He said this had occurred during the past week and mostly in the metropolitan Atlanta area.

Chairman Strain said they had not seen it clinically. He asked what the estimated financial impact of the loss of the flu clinics, etc. He asked Ms. Grant if she had been able to calculate that figure.

Ms. Grant responded that was a loss of approximately \$7,150.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Chairman Strain asked if there was any public comment and there was none.

NEW BUSINESS:

LYN REDWOOD: Ms. Redwood remarked that one of the news channels last night there was a story about contamination of some wells in Peachtree City, and that they were being taken off line. She asked if the Board of Health could get any additional information concerning that story.

Mr. Fehr responded that he would certainly check on that. He said he believed that Robert Kurbes had been advised about the situation, and that it had come to the attention of Peachtree City and the Fayette County Water System. He said they would certainly ask for more information and get a status on the situation.

Ms. Redwood said she had received some inquiries from residents in that area who use well water. She asked for information regarding any possible health concerns that the Board should be made aware of, including a copy of the well tests, and possibly further information from the Fayette County Water System.

Attorney Davenport added that County Attorney Bill McNally had been involved in this issue over the last couple of weeks, with the Fayette County Water System as well as with Peachtree City. He said there were some reports coming into his

office, as well as actions on the county's behalf, about bringing in a consultant to verify results. He said he would be glad to get that information back to the Board.

Dr. DeCotis asked if that pertained to drinking water in Peachtree City.

Attorney Davenport remarked that the well in question provided water for the Peachtree City Library, City Hall and Police Station complex, as well as feeding to two hydrants there where the church was located on Willowbend Road. He said the issues were more than well-related. He said they were infrastructure-related, due to the time of construction of the facilities, pre-dating Federal regulations prohibiting lead sautering pipes, and things of that nature. He said it was not just the well but also the infrastructure from the well to the point where the water was consumed.

Lynette Peterson remarked that the news story said that the public drinking fountains in the complex had been turned off for the last year.

Ms. Redwood remarked that she had heard that there were actually two wells that were involved. She said one well was located at the City complex and another well was a residential well near the Log House Road area.

Attorney Davenport said there were two wells, but the well specifically being researched and tested now was the Willowbend well. He said the reason the Log House well was mentioned was because wells in that area tend to have a low PH reading, and the low pH was what causes and exacerbates the problem when there were copper or lead pipes. He said this would cause a corrosive environment and allow that lead or copper to leach into the water supply. He said there were things that could be done to treat the low pH to bring it up to a level where there was no corrosive ability of the water. He said he did not know whether the Log House well was shut down. He said he knew for a fact that the Willowbend well was shut down. He said they were both mentioned because they have low pH, as do most well in North Georgia.

Nancy Neff said she had heard on the news report last night that there was no way of telling how much lead the people at City Hall had ingested because of this situation. She asked if this would not leave it wide open for lawsuits and so forth.

Attorney Davenport agreed. He said when there was a positive test result, the parameters used to determine how the water was tested would have to be reviewed. He said a lot of the information he had seen pointed toward problems with the hydrant flow having lead content. He said generally there was always lead content at the hydrant because the components there were going to yield some lead content.

He said with respect to water fountains there were issues as to whether a water fountain was on a Federal list of known lead-containing fountains. He said apparently these fountains were not; however, whenever there was any kind of issue regarding possible lead, the initial water flow coming out of the fountain or tap would yield the highest possible reading of any contaminant that might be there, versus allowing the water to run a few seconds. He said there were different protocols to consider when reviewing the actual test results.

Chairman Strain asked Rick Fehr to keep the Board posted.

STAFF REPORTS:

Merle Crowe remarked that another clerk would be leaving the Health Department. She said the clerk had been offered a job in private industry making considerably more money. She said she had just finished the interviewing process and would soon be making a decision on a replacement.

Dr. DeCotis asked Ms. Crowe what the starting pay was for this position.

Ms. Crowe replied it was approximately \$17,000.

RICK FEHR:

Mr. Fehr updated the Board on staffing concerns. He said he had interviewed several people and unfortunately did not find them suitable for the Health Department's needs. He said it had been a month since the interviews were finished and he would start the process again to see if he could find some capable people. He said the Environmental Health Specialist II position did require a certain amount of job experience and training. He commented that the staff member who had injured his hand after starting his employment was still recuperating from his injury. He said the gentleman had hoped to come back to work the first of January and now indications were that it might not be until the first of February.

Mr. Fehr said he would like to commend Jeff Kilgore and Robert Kurbes, whom had worked so hard during the staffing problems. He said they had worked many extra hours so that the Health Department could keep up with its responsibilities. He said as far as he knew there had been no complaints about the Health Department's services, but this would be a challenge with the current staffing situation.

Dr. DeCotis asked Mr. Fehr for the starting salary for the Environmental Health Specialist II.

Mr. Fehr replied that the target hire was \$26,000.

UPDATE ON GRAHAM LAWSUIT:

Attorney Davenport said he had reported to the Board at the last meeting that the lawsuit with Mr. Graham had been completed. He said he had spoken too soon. He said this related to the property located in North Fayette County and the failed septic system. He said within the last several weeks Mr. Graham had lodged a complaint with the Georgia Commission on Equal Opportunity, which automatically files with the Department of Housing and Development, alleging that he was being denied housing due to his race. He based this complaint upon the decision of the Board of Commissioners to not allow him to hook onto the Clayton County sewer line. Attorney Davenport said this must be responded to, whether or not it was deemed to be a frivolous complaint. He said he would be spending time and resources over the next thirty days responding to subpoenas and the complaint, while the department investigates whether this was a valid complaint. He said it was his understanding that there was no longer an active septic failure there; there is very low water usage because of close monitoring of the folks at the residence. He said that monitoring had helped out tremendously but it still had not solved the problem. He said he would keep the Board updated on this situation.

There being no further business to come before the Board, Chairman Strain adjourned the meeting at 8:15 a.m.

Merle Crowe, Director of Administration
Prepared by: Karen Morley

Dr. Michael Strain, Chairman