

The Fayette County Board of Health met on Tuesday, October 10, 2000 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
Carol Fritz
Nancy Neff
Lynette Peterson
Dr. Michael Strain, Chairman
Linda Wells

Staff Members Present: Merle Crowe
Rick Fehr
Cynthia Grant
Robert Kurbes
Laurie Cook
Dennis Davenport, Attorney

Dr. Strain called the meeting to order at 7:35 a.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

On motion made by Lynette Peterson, seconded by Carol Fritz to approve the minutes for the Board of Health meeting held on September 12, 2000. Nancy Neff said she would abstain from the motion because she was absent from that meeting. The motion carried unanimously.

PUBLIC HEARING TO DISCUSS THE ISSUE OF SWIMMING POOL REGULATIONS:

Chairman Strain asked if there was anyone in the audience who wished to ask any questions and there were none.

Lynette Peterson said that Lyn Redwood had given her some written questions that she had regarding this issue. She said Ms. Redwood questioned the elemental gaseous chlorine. She said Ms. Redwood had raised some points such as ultraviolet light treatment.

Carol Fritz said this would ask people to retrofit their swimming pools. She noted that such retrofitting could be extremely expensive.

Ms. Peterson said Ms. Redwood was just asking if this might be an allowable substitute for people who might need to do this.

Linda Wells asked if this would be an effective treatment or could there be some problems with it.

Robert Kurbes responded that gaseous chlorine was one of the easiest methods of getting chlorine in the water. He said this was what a lot of water systems use to chlorinate drinking water. He pointed out that chlorine was an extremely hazardous substance; that there were not any swimming pools that used gaseous chlorine in Fayette County because of all of the OSHA requirements and the Federal and State safety requirements. He said the State proposal of their requirements and regulations was so restrictive that he did not anticipate anyone utilizing gaseous chlorine, with the possible exception of large facilities. He gave as an example the competitive swimming pool at the University of Georgia, which uses gaseous chlorine. He said he did not ever anticipate this as a problem, simply because of fire safety codes, OSHA codes, Federal regulations and the extensive training that was necessary for anyone to work with gaseous chlorine.

Chairman Strain remarked that this would be covered under other regulations.

Mr. Kurbes remarked that this was covered under other regulations, as well as the county's own code referring to those other regulations.

Ms. Wells questioned using UV light with some ozone treatment. She asked if this was included and was being used.

Mr. Kurbes replied that at this time that treatment was not an approved method by the State, and Fayette County was not including it. He said if he were to receive documentation from the State showing regulations similar to those the county's septic requirements are based upon, where the State says what the county could or could not use, he might look at that method then. He said right now cost factors and training were a big issue. He said the majority of the county's pools are going to be apartment complex pools, subdivision pools and so forth, where there are no trained people to deal with these UV factors. He said there were a couple of the electrolysis-based systems in use, but they were in health clubs which have properly trained personnel. He said he was familiar with two of those clubs; that he had spoken with them because he had received complaints on the two facilities.

Chairman Strain asked if there was room in the document for new technology, such as a sentence which would allow for revised and reviewed from time to time.

Mr. Kurbes replied yes. He further stated that with the county adopting this regulation locally, the Board of Health would become the authority who would say that the Health Department could modify this regulation. He said otherwise, the State would become the authority and the county would have no control over any new technology. He said the underlying goal for getting this approved was to retain the Board's local control. He said he could certainly include new technology on an annual basis, or whenever an item comes forward he could present it.

Dr. DeCotis questioned the one change that had come to the Board in the mail regarding existing pools. He asked Mr. Kurbes to explain this in more detail.

Mr. Kurbes remarked that Attorney Dennis Davenport had the opportunity to review the original draft proposal, that he had questions that he had penciled into the margin, photocopied those sections and sent these back to staff. He said he was very happy to see that the majority of the questions were simply uniformity concerns. He said in one section the term "water closet" and "toilet" was used interchangeably. He said Attorney Davenport had wanted these terms brought together so that they were uniform. He said there were a few sections that needed a semicolon instead of a colon, and some capitalization concerns. He said the item that Dr. DeCotis was referring to was page 12, which dealt with section 5 under Scope. He said Attorney Davenport had raised a very important question regarding the timeline for meeting code requirements. He said Attorney Davenport had looked at this simply on the defensibility issue. He said Attorney Davenport was able to convince him that if this wording was allowed to remain in the regulation, then other attorneys could simply point to that and say they would have two years to do required corrections. He said he could not come up with a clear way to define existing pools which would qualify for grandfathering, versus pools which would be required to meet code. He said this item was simply removed from the regulations. He said there was really nothing in the remaining regulations which would present a hardship for existing pool owners to meet code. He said required corrections could be made within thirty days. He said as long as the problem was not an immediate life-threatening or imminent health threat, staff would be willing to work with and grant time to correct problems, as is done with restaurants. He said it was agreed that the best thing to do would be to remove the statement in question, in order to make the code more clear and concise.

Dr. DeCotis clarified that this would enable the Health Department to say that the individual would have thirty days to correct a situation, rather than the individual dragging this on for two years. He said he agreed with this idea.

Mr. Kurbes agreed that this statement was correct. He said once Attorney Davenport presented his argument it was quite clear that yes, other people could use this as a loophole. He said he wanted to make sure that this loophole was closed.

Dr. DeCotis remarked that he also liked Ms. Redwood's item #6 regarding the phone requirement. He said even though a lot of people carry around cell phones these days, there was still the possibility that someone might not have one. He felt it would be important to have a phone located at a pool in case of an emergency.

Mr. Kurbes stated that this was the one item that he had spoken to Rick Fehr about. He said he was very concerned about the deletion of that item. He said the idea of using a cell phone as a temporary solution was one that had been discussed, because in some cases it was tough to get a phone hooked up in thirty days. He said they felt there were ways around this difficulty, and that existing pools would fall under this safety code and be required to meet that code. He said most existing facilities, with the exception of some subdivisions, already had phones either in the pool area or just outside, and so this would not be a concern. He stated that it was the intention of the Health Department, once this was approved by the Board of Health, to offer courtesy inspections prior to pool openings next year. He said that owners would actually have four or five months to meet requirements.

Lynette Peterson expressed concern about item #8 on Lyn Redwood's list, concerning the right to a preliminary hearing in eight hours. She asked if this would be possible. She asked what if an individual demanded a hearing in eight hours.

Mr. Kurbes replied that since this would be a preliminary hearing, he or Mr. Fehr would be able to fulfill the request. He said to get an eight hour preliminary hearing was feasible, since he lived here in the county.

Mr. Kurbes called the Board's attention to item #9 on the list. He said there was already a checklist that had been put together, intended to be used in the courtesy inspection. He said this list would also allow staff to inventory what the individual pool had at inspection time. He said that owners would not then be able to claim grandfathering privileges and not come up to code.

Carol Fritz said she had a question on item #10. She asked if the county could enforce this and how much additional manpower would be required to accomplish enforcement.

Mr. Kurbes replied that (1) he had spoken to two City Councils, Peachtree City and Fayetteville, and they were willing to support this regulation once it was approved. He said he was on the meeting schedule of the Town of Tyrone's Council on October 19th to present them with a preliminary proposal. He said the Town of Tyrone was not only supportive of this but they also want to adopt the county's sewage, hotel and food service regulations to be prepared for possible later changes and for local enforcement. He said if local municipalities adopt this as an ordinance, enforcement would not be a problem; it would be done through Magistrate Court. He said thus far there had been great success in enforcement, and staff had enjoyed a great working relationship with the local Magistrate Court in getting items corrected.

Mr. Kurbes remarked (2) on the issue of additional manpower. He said at this time the heaviest workload would be the necessary inventories and the initial courtesy inspections, in order to get everybody up and running. He said once the program was in place, routine inspection of a public swimming pool would take anywhere from twenty to thirty minutes. He said this would involve taking a good look at water quality, filtration systems and their records. He said some of the larger complexes with two or three pools would take approximately two or three inspections and require more time.

Mr. Kurbes remarked that if building remained at a high level, the department might have to consider adding additional staff. He said there were approximately 70 to 80 facilities that would need inspection once this regulation goes into affect. He stated that the manpower involved would involve a minimum of two inspections per year.

Dr. DeCotis asked if the county would be required to do something similar under the State's plan if the county did not come up with one on its own.

Mr. Kurbes responded absolutely. He said more importantly, if the county did nothing and was required to follow the State's plan, apartments, subdivisions and country clubs would be excluded; but could still call upon the Health Department to do their inspections with no fees whatsoever. He said these categories of pools were the problem-causing pools for the Health Department. He remarked that at least with this proposal there would be a fee schedule approved by the Fayette County Commissioners and support for costs incurred by the Health Department.

Mr. Fehr interjected that those fees might support possible additional staff as needed.

Chairman Strain asked if item #1 on the list had been answered, regarding meeting or exceeding national safety standard guidelines for swimming pools.

Mr. Kurbes replied that he was not familiar with that particular code, but that this was one of the strongest codes in the nation. He said he had spoken with Tom Bennett, who had developed this proposal for the State, and who was having to rewrite it as the State “whittles” away at it.

Ms. Peterson asked if the Board puts these ordinances in place, if procedure would allow for future changes as necessary. She asked if the Board would be allowed to change these, like it can change other ordinances as deemed necessary.

Mr. Kurbes said this was one of the reasons he had jumped in and asked that the Board consider this so quickly. He said it became apparent that the State’s draft was getting chipped away, and if something was not adopted locally, the county would forever lose the opportunity.

Ms. Peterson asked if anything a year from now could stop the Board from making changes.

Mr. Kurbes replied that such a change would require a public hearing for amendment. He said if this code was adopted locally by the December 31st deadline the county would retain control of the entire program.

Mrs. Fritz asked who would be doing the monitoring of the swimming pools on a daily/weekly basis.

Mr. Kurbes responded that the Environmental Health Department would conduct routine, unannounced inspections of pools, with the exception of seasonal pools. He said he would have to conduct an inspection prior to initial opening. He said once permitting of pools was done for the year, a notation would be made on the master list as to which pools still need inspection. He said these pools would be set up for inspections in January and June for unannounced inspections.

On motion made by Carol Fritz, seconded by Linda Wells to accept these regulations as presented by Environmental Health staff and adopt these into ordinances. The motion carried unanimously.

Linda Wells asked when this matter would be presented to the Board of Commissioners.

Mr. Fehr replied that he would ask that this item be placed on the earliest possible agenda.

UPDATE ON LAKE EDITH:

Director of Environmental Health Rick Fehr updated the Board on the Lake Edith matter. He presented the Board with three proposals for review. He said the proposals dealt with a greater or lesser intensity of study of Lake Edith. He said he would be providing the Board of Commissioners with this information as well. He said there were different costs associated with each study. He said an extensive sampling would be necessary, if there were some legal or anticipated legal action, in order to provide suitable evidence for the action.

Linda Wells asked why this particular person was used for the proposal.

Mr. Fehr replied that in checking around this gentleman and particular company was recommended. He said bids could be secured if necessary, but this was the only one that operated in this area.

Ms. Wells remarked that she would like to secure bids. She said the gentleman listed \$44,000 as the figure if this matter were to go to court. She said in addition the gentleman wanted to charge \$1,200 per day legal expert fees. She said the Board already had legal experts who were far less expensive than that. She said he also wanted to charge 35¢ per mile for travel. She said for something of that magnitude there would definitely have to be a request for proposals. She felt \$44,000 just to take a case to court was ludicrous.

Chairman Strain said the cost of the innerocoxi test was a little over twice the cost of the other test. He said if two or three of the innerocoxi bacteria tests were positive then this could be given to the Feds and let them proceed.

Ms. Wells asked if one of the local Universities might be able to provide testing of this nature and Mr. Fehr said he would certainly check on this.

Mrs. Fritz asked if the Fayette County Water System could do this type testing.

Mr. Fehr replied this matter had been brought before the Water Committee and they essentially said this was not their responsibility.

Chairman Strain said the Board's goal was not for the Health Department to take on Lake Edith and take them to court. He said it was not in the Board of Health's jurisdiction to go and dictate to these people how they run the system, because they are under the EPD. He said the Board of Health's concern was that the EPD may or may not have a realistic picture of what was actually going on out there. He said if the Board was trying to focus their vision, then how this should be done. He said evidence of human fecal contaminant in the lake would be good evidence. He said six choliform tests could be done biweekly for three weeks at \$110 each, or a total of \$660. He said these tests were a lot more accurate and would get things started. He said this would be less expensive and more sensitive.

Mr. Fehr pointed out that staff was trying to get an idea of how serious the problem was. He said the normal course of action by the Health Department was to try and get voluntary compliance; that legal action was used as a case of last resort.

Ms. Wells asked where the county would get these tests performed.

Mr. Fehr said staff would have to determine what companies or universities would be able to do it.

Chairman Strain asked where this type of culture could be done.

Mr. Fehr replied he would have to do some research on this.

Mrs. Fritz remarked that the University of Georgia did a lot of testing.

Chairman Strain suggested that the Extension Office might put Mr. Fehr in touch with the right people. He said he would look to that avenue due to the cost of this testing. He felt more than one sample could be taken, on random days of the week and at random times.

Mrs. Fritz said she was aware that there was some kind of factor involved with this kind of bacteria. She said if it was in the pond too long it would be hard to determine if it was actually human. She said it might be prudent to take the samples directly from the outsource where it was being dumped.

Chairman Strain suggested this issue come back to the Board next month.

Linda Wells said that at next month's meeting, she would like staff to report on where the test can be done, the level of competence, the cost associated with it and to have three or four different quotes.

DISCUSSION OF STATE SALARY/ADJUSTMENT:

Rick Fehr remarked that this item involved presenting to the Board an agreement and action on the part of the District Office, addressing concerns about the current environmental staff compensation. He said the primary problem in compensation for awhile has been salaries and compensation offered by the EPD with the State Department of Natural Resources. He said for years their equivalent positions had been one pay grade higher. He said the Environmental Health Department had lost several staff members; that one staff member had gone to the EPD at a significant pay increase. He remarked that he had made a proposal to the District. He said there was a certain number of staff who had a tremendous amount of experience, two current members have 20 years plus. He said he would hate to lose that kind of experience. He said if one of the present entry level positions that requires a lot of time and training was abolished, there would be an amount of \$39,797.08 that could be used to additionally compensate the current environmental staff. He said District Office had agreed that current staff could be increased by 9%, which would bring the staff up to the current pay level of the same positions at the EPD, and amount to a total cost of \$15,420.40. He said this would leave \$17,376.68 of the original amount in the Health Department budget. He said there was one additional action that needed to be considered, which was to ensure that the staff realized that this position would be abolished for a substantial period of time. He said it had been agreed that this position would be abolished for at least five years. He said this agreement had been signed by all of the current environmental health staff. He felt this was a crucial step in holding on to experienced personnel.

Carol Fritz asked if the balance that would remain in the health department budget was the overall general fund or the environmental health budget.

Mr. Fehr replied that it was the overall general budget. He said this would take effect on November 1, 2000.

Mrs. Fritz said she wondered if that money should be left in environmental health in case someone needed to be temporarily hired.

Ms. Wells remarked that she had a number of problems with this proposal. She said first of all this was not budget time. She said she did not like to look at anything that was not done during the budget cycle. She said it had just been discussed that new staff might have to be hired because of the swimming pool situation. She said she had sat in this seat last Thursday evening at the Commission meeting and listened to the public hearing over the tax increase for the community. She said the citizens were not happy. She said the 22% of the county's 30% of the tax budget had citizens up in arms. She felt this was rightly so and commented that taxes keep going up. She said one of the ways she had responded to the citizens who were at the meeting was that Fayette County was very frugal. She said there were often studies that had been done by the DCA, UGA and different people and repeatedly staff comes to the Board and say that personnel are not getting paid the same and that people are getting paid more in Atlanta. She said this was true, but employees here get to live and work in Fayette County where there are good personnel and a good working environment. She said the Board had recently reviewed health benefits for county employees and many people said they were not getting the same health benefits that could be gotten elsewhere. She said the Board had to make some real tough decisions as to what this county can and cannot afford, and the quality of life here. She said this is not the EPD, it is not Atlanta, it is not some place else; it is Fayette County. She said she did not feel that Fayette County had to keep up with the Jones'. She said Fayette County did not have the same level of problems that the EPD does, nor and we doing their jobs. She said she was not saying that Fayette County employees were overpaid, and she was not saying that they were not appreciated; but she was saying that as fiscally responsible people the Board of Health was here to look out for the public safety and welfare of the people. She said the Board of Health must be really careful as to how it spends money. She said this was not in the budgetary cycle. She said each year the Board and staff very carefully go over the budget, line by line. She stated that any time a department brings to her as a Commissioner a tremendous increase that is not in the budgetary cycle, she could not look at it rationally because that was not the time to bring it forth. She said she could appreciate the fact that there are people who have been working there for twenty years, but a 9% increase when a lot of people are getting a 2%, 2.9% or no increase, she would not be able to support this request. She said she was not saying that the employees were not doing a good job or that they did not deserve more; she was saying that the Health Department had a lot of expenses coming down the pike and there were things that were going to have to be addressed such as unfunded mandates. She said she could not support giving a 9% increase.

Carol Fritz said she had been reviewing this for some time and had gotten some information from Dr. Brackett. She said it was a concern to her that the Health Department was losing quality people. She said employees are leaving for jobs elsewhere because of low pay with the Health Department. She commented on the timing and said things happen outside of the budget cycle that might need to be revisited. She felt the Board needed to take a look at this. She felt there might be a compromise. She felt it was very important to keep good employees; employees who have been here and know the history and who are familiar with the job. She remarked there was a lot coming down the pike, and she did not want to see a lot of entry level people coming in and trying to do a job that the Board needs them to do. She said there was a great discrepancy in wages and it needed to be reviewed.

Ms. Peterson said if this discussion was about experience then there would have to be a 9% increase across the board. She said experience could be rewarded with a sliding scale. She said this would be a 9% increase across the board.

Chairman Strain asked for the five year history in terms of merit raises and cost of living increases.

Mr. Fehr replied that this had typically been 3% to his knowledge.

Chairman Strain asked if this was consistent with what the county had been doing.

Linda Wells replied no, the county's system was based upon merit and evaluations. She said it was possible for an employee to get a 5% increase. She said an employee might be with Fayette County for 20 years but were they doing the job? She stated this was very much like the military, in that was someone could be paid to stay in, regardless of the job they were doing. She said someone who has been with the county for 20 years might have a lot of expertise, may be working hard and doing a phenomenal job; or they might feel they have 20 years and be clicking off the days to retirement. She said a 9% increase across the board was just not good business. She said there was no place that did that. She said county employees get a cost of living increase and the rest of it was based upon evaluation.

Dr. DeCotis asked for the Board's jurisdiction in this issue. He asked if the Board approved it, would it go into effect, or would it have to go to the County Commission.

Linda Wells said this item would have to go before the County Commission.

Mr. Fehr remarked that this would be a budget adjustment, like any another budget adjustment. He no one was asking for more money from anybody. He said this would be redistribution of funds, in a way that was felt would address a very serious problem. He said it was public information that the EPD was trying to hire 120 people. He said not only did they have a higher salary for equivalent positions, but they have more positions to offer, most of which were in the metropolitan area. He said in addition, there had been other counties in the metropolitan area that were making such adjustments.

Ms. Wells asked how many people had left the Health Department.

Mr. Fehr replied that three full-time people out of seven.

Ms. Wells asked if the reason they left was for better pay.

Mr. Fehr replied two out of three left for additional pay and one left for family reasons.

Dr. DeCotis remarked that with the economy as good as it is, one of the things that he was faced with in the School System would be getting enough bus drivers, teachers, substitutes, and administrators. He said they had to offer signing bonuses to get teachers in certain areas. He said because the economy was so good there was a lot of competition. He asked if any study had been done to determine if a raise was given in Environmental Health how it would affect other departments.

Mr. Fehr said it was his understanding that this increase would only use part of the freed-up funds, and would leave the rest to be available for other purposes if needed. He said there would be no additional cost to the taxpayer whatsoever.

Ms. Wells said Mr. Fehr had already said that more personnel were needed and she asked where that money would come from.

Mr. Fehr remarked that this was where the fees that were going to be charged would come in.

Ms. Wells remarked that the fees might not cover it all.

Mr. Fehr said he could not tell the Board that he was absolutely sure that the Health Department would need another person. He said there was that possibility. He remarked that in the last few years employees must be State certified under the new

State sewage regulations. He said now there would be swimming pool regulations, and if the Health Department continued to lose experienced people, the Health Department would have additional pressures in training staff.

Mr. Fehr said this was not his sole decision, but had been discussed with the District and they seemed to feel that this was a reasonable answer to this concern. He said this was the reason he was bringing it to the Board for consideration. He said staff had tried to make this decision in a very prudent manner and it was certainly up to the Board to make a final decision.

Laurie Cook interjected that this was becoming a State-wide issue, and not just in Fayette County. She said Dr. Brackett had been very concerned and had discussed this with other directors throughout the State. She said they had sat down and discussed this with Dr. Brackett; it was a very unusual request. She said they certainly had wanted to wait and bring it up during budget time, but the situation was becoming somewhat of a crisis for the Health Department. She said it was not just in this county, but there was high turnover in other counties as well. She said that exit interviews were done for staff who leave. She said environmentalists' salary was consistently given as the reason that people were leaving, with the exception of one staff member who left due to family reasons. She said Dr. Brackett was in favor of this and saw the need for it. She said the situation was reaching a very critical level, due to the job market and who was recruiting staff. She said it was not just the EPD competing with other State agencies, but generally in the environmental health field across the board.

Ms. Cook further remarked on the Board's concern regarding the hiring of someone and the salary that would need to be put back into the budget to add an entry level position. She said if the residual fund amount was combined with fees that would be charged from the swimming pool program, on the basis of 80 swimming pools her calculation showed that there would be enough money put back into the budget to hire another entry level position, if it became critical. She said she did not anticipate this position being needed. She said one of the things that had been done was a review of the activity numbers and current demands on the staff. She said demand seemed to be falling off. She felt the experienced staff could handle giving up this one position. She said she was aware that this was an unusual request, that Dr. Brackett had supported it, and she was present today to bring that message from him.

Dr. DeCotis suggested the Board look at all options, not just one option. He felt the Board should take into consideration some of the issues that Ms. Wells had mentioned. He said this would also provide an opportunity to other departments and show people in the community that there was a reason for it. He said this would make him more comfortable in voting on it.

Ms. Peterson felt the idea of finding extra money and splitting it up was a dangerous thing for the Board to get into.

Ms. Wells said she would like to know what other counties were paying their environmental people. She said this would be giving everyone a 9% increase and there may be people who have been with the county for 20 years or who have been with the county for 2 years. She asked how the other counties were looking at that. She said she needed a comparison.

Chairman Strain asked Laurie Cook if she knew how other counties in the district were approaching this issue.

Ms. Cook replied that recently in Henry County, which would be comparable to Fayette County, they were experiencing the same problem. She said Henry County had given a 10% across the board raise to all of the environmental health staff. She said in that community they had raised their fees in the onsite sewage program and used that money for that purpose. She said it had been specified by the Board of Commissioners there that the money would only be used to raise environmental health salaries and to plan for the future. She said they had also instituted a program that every five years employees would receive another 10% raise. She said they were trying to build some longevity into their program. She said overall the Health Department was experiencing a lot of turnover. She remarked that Carroll County had recently raised fees for the same purpose. She said this was much more of a crisis across the State and not just this district.

Chairman Strain remarked that Fayette County had just raised its fees last year and Ms. Wells agreed.

Ms. Wells said she could see this for police officers, nurses and for every critical element in the community, but it just was not good business to give someone a 9% or 10% increase just because they say they can go somewhere else and get better pay. She said she had a problem with this.

Mrs. Fritz felt the Board needed to look at this further and do some comparisons. She said this was becoming a crisis and was going to become even more of an issue in the county as it continues to grow. She said this department was a critical department in the county.

Chairman Strain said he would like some financial data and projections. He said by the next meeting he would like to have proposals on money for swimming pools. He said environmental staff was different from police officers because they generate income. He said if environmental staff was going to generate more income then it would be good business sense that they would deserve more of the dollar. He said this was not the case here. He said environmental staff was paid the same regardless of how many sewage systems were inspected each day. He said the question here was where the 9% increase was coming from, and that the Board of Health would have to justify that increase. He said if there were new programs and the employees were working harder that was one thing. He said he was also concerned about cannibalism within the department. He said he needed a number for projections, where this money was going to come from and how these numbers were reached. He also said it would have to be determined if these were appropriate numbers and he would like to have the projected cost. He said the goal for next month would be to see where this money was to come from, not how this money would be acquired by eliminating a position.

Ms. Wells also questioned how this would affect retirement and benefits.

Mr. Fehr responded that the figures listed on the report indicated total compensation and included benefits.

Ms. Neff felt experience was important. She felt that if the environmental staff interacted well and knew the county well the Board should do all it could to keep them, not just be a training ground for Fulton County or somewhere else.

Ms. Peterson remarked that she did not feel it was an idle threat that people were leaving and going elsewhere but she would also have to have a greater reason to recommend a salary increase. She felt it would have to fall more in line with all of the county employees. She said if this came as a recommendation from the Board of Health, she would like to see it come during the regular budgetary time when all employees were considered for raises.

Ms. Neff said this money was already earned and was already in the Environmental Health Department.

Ms. Peterson remarked that the money had been budgeted to the Health Department but this was not a good enough reason to just take it and divide it up.

Ms. Cook remarked that the environmental health staff did not receive a cost of living increase. She said staff strictly gets a pay for performance increase and this was the reason it had only been 3%. She said on top of that, staff did not get another 2% or 3% for cost of living. She said this was a little bit different situation.

Ms. Peterson asked how the 9% figure was arrived at.

Mr. Fehr replied that this was the figure that matched the one pay grade higher that the equivalent EPD position gets.

Ms. Peterson clarified that this as trying to bring the health department's salaries in line with what they actually could get if they went elsewhere.

Ms. Wells remarked this might be true for the EPD but not necessarily for another county.

Mr. Fehr interjected that one of the employees left environmental health to work for Fayette County at a \$6,000 increase.

Ms. Wells remarked that there would always be those situations. She said people could not be paid enough to stay in a job. She said she wanted to reward good employees but expressed great concern over a 9% increase across the board. She said the county also had money in its budget, she also had money in her home budget, but that did not mean that she was just going to go out and spend it because it was left over. She said she would have to have a reason other than somebody might buy the employee off.

Mr. Fehr said he would be glad to address the Board's concerns.

Ms. Cook commented that the point that Ms. Wells had just made was an excellent one. She said she would rather see the Specialist I and Specialist II brought in at the target higher salary and not with this proposal. She said the Board might put

something in place so that when these employees had been with the county for a year or two then at that time their performance could be evaluated.

Ms. Wells asked about benchmarks. She asked if just because the EPD raised its salaries would this mean the Health Department would also have to raise its salaries. She asked if raises would be based upon job evaluations, longevity or what. She said the 9% raise would establish a standard with no definite guidelines. She asked what the 9% increase would be based on other than EPD salaries. She said she did not care what the EPD did. She said it was a governmental agency that was not a very good manager of its funding. She said she did not want to emulate someone who was not necessarily a good manager. She said the Board would need to have some benchmarks and criteria. She said she could not just give 9%. She felt like this would be signing a blank check. She said the Board could not set standards where there were no definitions. She said she was not saying that staff did not deserve it, she was just saying that it was just too murky for her to feel comfortable.

Ms. Peterson said she would like to see what other counties were paying comparable people. She said if surrounding counties were able to pay more, then she would probably be in favor of meeting some of the other outlying areas just so Fayette County did not become a training ground. She said at this point, she knew nothing of these salaries or if they were higher or much lower.

Ms. Wells said she would like to see salaries in all areas in the district, not just the ones at the top of the pay scale. She said people would also have to be evaluated. She said some employees would just tread water for ten or twenty years to get a retirement.

Mr. Fehr said he would bring more information to the Board at the next meeting.

STAFF REPORTS:

UPDATE ON THE FLU VACCINE: Cynthia Grant remarked that the Health Department had not received the flu vaccine yet.

Chairman Strain remarked that the hospital had started giving out the vaccine yesterday.

Ms. Grant replied she had been told that the hospital had only ordered 500 doses.

LITIGATION REGARDING THE CHARIOTS OF FIRE MINISTRY:

Attorney Davenport reported on the litigation regarding the Chariots of Fire Ministry. He said this had been decided approximately two weeks ago. He said the attorney for Mr. Graham had asked the judge to order Fayette County to allow him to tie into the Clayton County sewer line. He said the judge had denied Mr. Graham's request. He stated as far as Mr. Graham and his property were concerned status quo still reigned. He said with respect to his options if any, he had not chosen to exercise any other options. He said he did not know if there had been any other reports of failure. He said he understood that Mr. Graham had taken conservative efforts to reduce the flow into his system, which had been effective. He said if he received any further updates by the next meeting he would bring these to the Board.

SCOLIOSIS TRAINING: Dr. DeCotis said a letter had been received regarding the Scoliosis screening. He said the school system and the health department had worked together on that. He asked if there was any information on this now that the grant had been eliminated.

Cynthia Grant replied that it had been decided that the Health Department would go ahead and absorb the cost and there was enough money in the printing budget to cover it for this year. She said next year this could be looked at as a budget item or to look at the school funding the printing itself.

Dr. DeCotis felt this was a good program and these issues could be discussed to keep this program in place.

On motion made by Carol Fritz, seconded by Lynette Peterson the meeting was adjourned at 8:35 a.m. The motion carried unanimously.

Merle Crowe, Administrative Ops. Coord. II
Prepared by: Karen Morley

Dr. Michael Strain, Chairman