

The Fayette County Board of Health met on Tuesday, July 13, 2010, in the Public Meeting Room of the Fayette County Administrative Complex, 140 Stonewall Avenue, Fayetteville, Georgia.

Board of Health Members Present:

Don Haddix
Robert Horgan
Fred Oliver
Lynette Peterson
Lyn Redwood
Michael Strain, MD

Staff Members Present:

DeNeese Blanton, RD LD
Glenda Bryant, RN, MN, FNP
Merle Crowe, BA
John Darden, District Program Manger
Rick Fehr, BS

CALL TO ORDER: Dr. Strain called the meeting to order at 7:37 AM.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM April 13, 2010: Mr. Horgan made a motion to approve the minutes as written, seconded by Mr. Haddix. The minutes were approved as written with no further discussion.

OLD/UNFINISHED BUSINESS / PUBLIC COMMENT:

District Four Grant-in-Aid (GIA): The board had a number of questions about how GIA is allocated to public health districts from the state level. Another concern was that in Fiscal Year 2010 all counties across District 4 had GIA funding cuts, but the District Office had a nine million dollar increase. The board asked how those district funds were being used. Mr. Darden explained that each county signs a GIA contract with the state every year to receive GIA funding; those funds are sent directly to each individual county, not distributed through the District Office. The GIA formula was set in the 1970s, and attempts have been made to revise it over the years to better reflect current needs and demographics. GIA funding is an economic process based on tax collections, and if tax collections are down it is possible that GIA funding would be reduced. At the end of FY 2010 the district office received direction from the state to cut budgets ten percent without warning, and that could happen again. The board would like to see more transparency in funding allocation, so that budgets could be better prepared each year and costs could be better forecast, although budgets are really a best guess.

Mr. Darden will attempt to get a copy of the GIA formula and provide it to the board. He discussed the services which District Four provides to counties in the district. All counties, including Fayette County, receive support for Nursing, Personnel, Information Technology and pharmacy services; services which are paid for under the budget line item *Indirect Cost*. Charges for those services are pro-rated according to a formula set by the District Office, and refigured every two years, as required by the state. Mr. Darden will provide that formula as well. The board requested that information on the GIA formula be sent as soon as possible.

The board reviewed some figures from previous years, noting that fee income has increased most years, other than in FY 2008. Staff was commended for their work, as shown by increased fee income and client counts. The board expressed concern that staff would not be able to continue to provide current levels of service while faced with continual budget cuts. The board will consider all ways to ensure adequate funding levels. Mr. Darden commended staff in their efforts to have a better business model.

In the future, GIA cuts will probably mean the loss of some programs. *Babies Born Healthy* is one program that has already been eliminated, and there has been discussion that state matching funds might be cut for the Family Planning (FP) program. If tax collections are down next fiscal year, program funding will probably be cut again. Cutting public health prevention programs creates bigger problems two or three years later, when numbers of health problems that could have been prevented spike, especially sexually transmitted diseases. If funding is cut for the FP program, lack of birth control for eligible women will cause an increase in unplanned pregnancies. Some of the funding shortfall is being made up by the *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA)*, but this source of funding is not guaranteed. Some staff hired using ARRA funding might lose their jobs if that funding is not renewed. Fortunately for District Four, Dr. Brackett saw this crisis coming and led the district to put significant changes in place. However, all adjustments and cuts have now been made, and there is nowhere else to cut.

There was no more old business.

There was no Public Comment.

NEW BUSINESS:

Women, Infants and Children Program (WIC):

Ms. DeNeese Blanton provided the board with information on the WIC program, a public health program begun in 1972 and funded by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). The program is designed to help low-income mothers and children stay healthy. It provides supplemental nutrition to pregnant women, breast feeding women, infants, and children up to their fifth birthday. The WIC program provides clients with many benefits, including nutritional assessments, health screening and nutritious foods. Statistics show that children who receive WIC services have better vocabularies, better growth rates and better immunization rates, because WIC staff screens each child's immunization history. Participation in WIC by expectant mothers has been shown to reduce low birth weight babies and the health problems that can occur to those infants. WIC is the biggest public health program in the United States, and roughly fifty percent of US children are enrolled in the WIC program. Nutrition classes are available three times a day by Registered Dietitians (RD LD). The program is growing, partly due to current hard economic times.

In addition to the health and nutritional benefits WIC provides to clients, Fayette County benefits economically. Statistics show that costs to Medicaid for low birth weight babies are about \$2200 per pound the baby weighs. Every dollar spent on at-risk pregnant women saves \$4.00 in Medicaid costs for the newborn and his or her mother; providing nutrition and monitoring the health of pregnant women contributes to those cost savings for the community. The USDA bears all costs of the program and clients are never charged for WIC services. Funding for WIC is based on caseload. Unfortunately, this year's funding for WIC was cut state-wide by \$7 million.

There are eleven vendors in Fayette County, and each vendor cashes about \$5000.00 in vouchers each month, meaning about \$75,000.00 goes into the local economy every month. However, only about 1300 of eligible participants (or about 33%) are reached in Fayette County. If all eligible participants were put on the WIC program, the local economy would benefit by tripling the current dollar amount received. However, given the physical size of the Fayette clinic, it is not possible to increase the caseload to handle all eligible clients. The current caseload is the seventh largest caseload in District Four, and the recent closure of the Stockbridge Clinic site added 700 additional clients to Fayette. The addition of those clients emphasized the pressing need for more space. In addition, the current space has no water source, no restroom, no sinks in the nutrition offices: so nutritionists cannot wash their hands after working with blood.

Space is a big issue and has been for several years. There are options available to relieve overcrowding in the WIC area: space might be located in the current building or in the local area to hold nutrition classes; hours could be extended; or a 2000 square foot modular unit could be located here. That unit was purchased by the state WIC program at a cost of \$75,000 and will be available when the Coweta County Health Department moves into its new building later this year. Use of the modular unit is the preferred solution, but a location must be found if that is the chosen solution, and WIC would pay to move the building, prepare the lot, and for any necessary landscaping or paving. The board offered some alternative suggestions: unoccupied retail space might be utilized; space might be found on Fayette Piedmont Hospital grounds, or even at a local school. Having WIC close to the health department is a definite advantage, so clients can be easily referred, and serving the client is, and must be, the first priority for public health and all its programs.

Mr. Darden said he would get with Coweta County Health Department (CCHD) to see how they got their funding for their new building, and report back to the board as soon as possible. He mentioned that CCHD was willing to allocate 4000 square feet of that building to the WIC program because it brings \$350,000 per month into their community, so they felt that providing space for WIC was a good investment. If Fayette County decided to apply for a grant help would be needed, because a grant writer is not on staff. District staff will help as much as possible with that effort. There are several grants that can be investigated, and a team effort between the Board of Commissioners (BOC), the Board of Health, and the district office would be needed to find the best solution for Fayette. The board emphasized that any grant should incorporate and house the entire health department as well as WIC. Ms. Redwood was very concerned that current conditions mean that nutritionists do not have sinks in their clinic rooms.

Motion was made by Mr. Haddix, seconded by Mr. Horgan to send a preliminary letter to the BOC expressing the concerns of the board of health regarding space for the health department. The letter should ask for any input or solutions the BOC might have to find a solution. Mr. Darden will provide any information he can find on how other county commissioners were able to fund new buildings for their health departments, so the BOH can communicate that information to the BOC, since any grant would be applied for and administered by BOC staff. The board requested that Mr. Darden and Ms. Crowe write the letter and send it to board members by email for approval. After the final letter is approved, Dr. Strain will sign it for forwarding to the BOC.

The board felt that an article might be placed in the local paper to make the community aware of the value of public health and the need for space for the health department.

Staff Reports:

Mr. Fehr said that while it was possible that some programs might be eliminated in the future, within the past few years mandated programs have been added to Environmental Health duties. For example, the pool program was added about 2002. Responsibility for the Emergency Planning (EP) program was also recently added to all staff in the health department. Programs administered by local health departments are very important to the health and safety of the community, but continual adding of unfunded, mandated programs has stressed all staff to the breaking point.

Motion was made by Mr. Haddix, seconded by Mr. Horgan, that a letter should be sent to Governor Purdue and state representatives detailing the board's concern regarding ongoing cuts to public health funding and the addition of unfunded mandated programs.

Ms. Bryant updated the board on recent activities by physical health staff. End of the year figures show that during FY 2010 between 12,000 and 15,000 patients were seen. The appointment show rate has risen to 72%, much improved over previous years. Nurses participated in the *Hispanic Health Fair* sponsored yearly by Holy Trinity Church in Peachtree City; nurses also participated in the *Prevent Child Abuse Event* sponsored by the Department of Family and Children Services, and plan to participate in the *Bridge to School Event* upcoming in August. Beginning September, physical health staff will go to ten local schools again this year to administer flu vaccine to elementary schoolchildren, and this year one middle school will be included in the program. Ms. Bryant has applied for a grant from EMC to help offset the cost of the *FluMist* program this year, and should know by the end of July if the grant is approved.

Recently, ARRA guidelines were loosened to include more people in the campaign to provide TdAP and pneumonia immunizations. The health department will receive Federal stimulus payment for administering those vaccines.

There were no further staff reports.

ADJOURNMENT: Motion to adjourn was made by Ms. Redwood, seconded by Ms. Peterson
The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 AM.

Michael Stain, MD

Merle Crowe, BA
Secretary, Fayette County Board of Health