

BOARD OF PUBLIC HEALTH MEETING
Meeting Minutes for March 8, 2022

Members Present:

James Curran, M.D., M.P.H., Chair
John Hauptert, F.A.C.H.E., Vice Chair
Major General Thomas M. Carden, Jr.
Kathryn Cheek, M.D., F.A.A.P.
Sangmin Ryan Shin, M.D., M.A., F.A.A.O.S.
Tamica Valliere-White, M.D., F.A.C.S
Robert Cowles III, M.D., F.A.C.S

Members Absent:

Misael Rodriguez, M.D., Secretary
Cynthia A. Mercer, M.D

The Board of Public Health held its monthly meeting on March 8, 2022. The meeting was a virtual meeting and was led by Chairman James Curran, M.D. An agenda and a list of attendees are attached hereto and made official parts of these minutes.

I. Call to Order and Roll Call:

The meeting was called to order at 1:04 p.m. by Dr. Curran, following a roll call, all members were present except Dr. Rodriguez and Dr. Mercer.

II. Approval/Adoption of Minutes:

Dr. Curran presented the minutes of the February 8, 2022, board meeting for discussion and approval. There was no discussion. The minutes passed unanimously.

III. New Business:

A. 2022 Legislative Session Update- Megan Andrews, J.D., Office of Government Relations

Megan Andrews, Assistant Commissioner for Policy, gave an overview of the legislative schedule. Today is day 25 of 40 days in the legislative session. March 15 is Crossover Day when any piece of legislation that does not cross over from one chamber to the other chamber is considered dead. She said the last day of session or Sine Die is set for April 4.

Megan said that four bills were passed by the House during session; those bills were EMS Rapback (SB404), Childhood Lead Exposure (HB 1355), Smokefree Air Act (HB 1348), and the Filming of Patients Prohibited in Healthcare Facilities. She said there are 203 bills and counting in the 2022 Legislative Session of which 77 of those bills are considered direct impact bills. Other bills that survived Crossover Day include:

Georgia Raw Dairy Act (House Bill 1175):

This bill will allow raw milk to be sold to consumers for human consumption.

HIV Medicaid Wavier:

This waiver allows anyone with HIV to qualify for Medicaid.

Dog menus (House Bill 1376):

If dogs are allowed at restaurants, restaurants will begin to provide menus to patrons to order food for their dogs.

Food trucks (House Bill 1443):

This bill states that food trucks can operate in other counties opposed to being permitted in every county.

Vaccine Passport Bill (Senate Bill 345):

Prohibits vaccine passports.

Maternal Autopsies:

Autopsies would be done to review the unknown causes of deaths of pregnant women.

B. Epidemiology Update: COVID-19- Cherie Drenzek, D.V.M., M.S.

Dr. Cherie Drenzek, State Epidemiologist and Chief Science Officer gave an update on the future of the COVID-19 pandemic in Georgia. Dr. Drenzek said that the Omicron variant that began in early December has now retreated. She said it's unknown when the next variant will emerge or surge, but as of now cases, hospitalizations, and outbreaks have decreased by 50%-60% in the past two weeks, and the number of deaths has dropped about 25%. She said that 55% of the population in Georgia is fully vaccinated and 22% of fully vaccinated people have had their first booster. Dr. Drenzek said that COVID prevention remains a priority, and to see continued declines vaccinations, boosters, surveillance, testing, and traditional mitigation are critical.

IV. Board Comments

Dr. Curran asked Megan Andrews about Governor Kemp's \$5k proposed pay raise for state employees. She said that the governor's recommended \$5k pay raise was passed by the House and Senate, and that County Board of Health employees would receive the pay increase as well.

V. Additional Comments

Commissioner Toomey gave the closing remarks by sharing her concerns about COVID. She said that the pandemic is not over, and we must continue to vaccinate and educate people. She also briefly discussed the bills that Megan Andrews presented, particularly the HIV Medicaid waiver. Dr. Toomey said the importance of this cannot be understated. She said the south reports the highest HIV rates in the country, and Atlanta reports the highest HIV rates in any county. With this waiver in place and continued treatment, this is one of the real keys to ending the HIV epidemic in Georgia.

VI. Adjournment:

There being no further business to be brought before the board, Dr. Curran motioned for adjournment of the meeting. The motion passed unanimously. Dr. Curran adjourned the meeting at 2:03 p.m.

THESE MINUTES ARE HEREBY APPROVED AND ADOPTED THIS THE 12th DAY OF APRIL 2022.



James Curran, M.D.
Chair



Misael Rodriguez, M.D.
Secretary

Official Attachments:

1. List of Attendees
2. Agenda

March 8, 2022

Board of Public Health Meeting Attendees

Board Members

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Attendees

Public virtual meeting.