



# CATTARAUGUS COUNTY BOARD OF HEALTH

1 Leo Moss Drive, Olean, NY 14760, Tel. (716)373-8050, Fax (716) 701-3737



**Public Health**  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.  
**Cattaraugus County**  
**Health Department**  
Established 1923

*Joseph Bohan, MD, President*

*Giles Hamlin, MD, Vice-President*

*Zahid Chohan, MD*

*Sondra Fox, RN, MSN, C.S.*

*Richard Haberer*

*Theresa Raftis*

*David L. Smith, Mayor*

*James Snyder, Legislator*

*Kathryn Cooney Thrush, NP, MSN*

MINUTES

May 6, 2020

The 884<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Cattaraugus County Board of Health (BOH) was held virtually on May 6, 2020.

The following members were present:

Joseph Bohan, MD

Zahid Chohan, MD

Giles Hamlin, MD

Legislator Kelly Andreano

Sondra fox, RN, MSN, C.S

Dick Haberer

Theresa Raftis

Mayor David L. Smith

Kathryn Cooney Thrush, NP, MSN

Also present were:

Kevin D. Watkins, MD, MPH, Public Health Director

Ashley Milliman, County Attorney

Richard Helmich, Legislator

Amit Benedict, Supervising Community Health Nurse

Raymond Jordan, Sr. Public Health Sanitarian

Debra Lacher, Secretary to the Public Health Director

Colette Lulay-Pound, Administrative Officer

Rick Miller, Olean Times Herald Reporter

Dave Porter, Hearing Officer

Paul Schwach, MD, Clinical Director

Shomita Steiner Ph.D.

Gilbert Witte, MD, Medical Director

Eric Wohlers, Environmental Health Director

The meeting was called to order by Dr. Joseph Bohan. The roll was called and all Board members were present.

Dr Bohan asked the Board for a motion to accept the minutes that were distributed by email. Dr. Hamlin made a motion to approve the minutes of the BOH meeting held on March 3, 2020, the motion was seconded by Mayor Smith and unanimously approved.

**DIRECTORS REPORT:** Dr. Watkins stated that this is the first teleconference meeting during this pandemic and he appreciates all who have agreed to join the meeting during this unprecedented time. Since the last Board meeting the department has opened a COVID-19 command center.

This is definitely a novel time for public health, as COVID-19 has wreaked havoc on New York State (NYS).

The first positive case of COVID-19 in NYS was confirmed March 1, 2020. Since that time 321,192 confirmed cases of COVID-19 and 19,643 deaths have been reported in NYS.

Of the COVID-19 cases reported in NYS, New York City (NYC) is reporting a total of 176,874 confirmed cases which is 55% of all confirmed cases reported in NYS, in addition, NYC reports 13,815 deaths which is 70% of all deaths in NYS.

Cattaraugus County had its first confirmed COVID-19 case on March 27, 2020 and since that time we now have (43) confirmed cases. More than (1,000) residents have been placed in quarantine during this time.

Currently we have (3) residents in precautionary quarantine, and (65) residents in mandatory quarantine. A total of (1,127) individuals have been tested for COVID-19 of which, (1,026) were negative, (44) were positive, and (57) are pending. Of the (44) positive cases, (29) have recovered, (2) deaths have been recorded and the department is actively following (13) thirteen active cases.

Testing has been the biggest handicap for Cattaraugus County, we have just started receiving testing kits in the county and have just begun testing for healthcare workers, first responders, and essential workers.

Looking at the four quadrants that divide the county and based on the population of each quadrant, (1.36%) of the residents in the Southeast quadrant have been tested, (1.34%) in the Southwest quadrant, (1.38%) in the Northeast quadrant, and (1.10%) in the Northwest quadrant of the county have been tested.

Diagnostic testing is being offered by Cattaraugus County Health Department, Universal Primary Care (UPC), and the WellNow Clinic in Olean. Olean General Hospital (OGH) offers Emergency room and in house testing only.

Antibody testing has been conducted on several hundred Cattaraugus County residents and less than 1% of the residents have been positive for antibodies. A number of antibody test kits being offered to the public have not been systematically validated, and it has been reported that a number of antibody test are giving out a large number of false positives results. The low number of positives results in Cattaraugus County leads us to believe that either the prevalence of the virus is low in the area, not enough testing has been conducted to determine the true virus prevalence, or we will have a tough fall ahead of us. Low immunity means that a portion of our population who has not been exposed to the virus can experience severe to critical complications due to their age and underlying health conditions, and this could tax our hospital system significantly leading to an increase in our mortality rate.

We are conducting COVID-19 diagnostic testing at both the Allegany Town Bus Garage located on Maple Road, and the Cattaraugus Little Valley Bus Depot location on Gowin Gulf/ Pleasant Valley Road.

Cattaraugus County has not seen a wide spread prevalence of COVID-19 within its community. Only (44) residents or (3.9%) of those tested have been found to have a confirmed case of COVID-19, (29) of those residents have recovered which is a (65%) recovery rate. The highest number of active cases the department has followed has been (17) and the lowest number has been (9). Based on this, the average number of active cases the department has followed is (13).

The department has noticed that after retesting some residents fourteen days after they have first exhibited symptoms, they are still testing positive for the virus, although the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that a person should have shed the virus by that time. The department is very concerned that we are releasing the residents back into the community too soon. Therefore I have instructed staff to hold these residents for one more week in isolation and then retest again at day 21.

Recently there has been a lot of talk about reopening and everyone seems ready to get back out and enjoy the nice weather, and businesses are eager to get out of the red. In order to reopen, the Governor is asking a region to meet several metrics. The first metric is a decrease in new COVID-19 infections based on CDC's guidelines which includes a fourteen day decline in total net COVID-19 hospitalizations and deaths on a 3-day rolling average. Regionally, Erie County is seeing a surge in hospitalizations and that counts against the WNY region for re-opening. The second metric is that each region has to have at least 30% total hospital and ICU beds available for COVID-19 patients. The third metric states that each region must have the capacity to conduct (30) diagnostic tests for every (1,000) residents per month, which translates to about (2,340) tests a month for Cattaraugus County. The fourth metric states that each region must have (30) contact tracers for every (100,000) residents, or (23) contract tracers for Cattaraugus County. Currently, we have (5) contact tracers dedicated to this task. The State is working with John Hopkins to hire contact tracers for all municipalities. Reopening is doable, but without a vaccine, we can expect an increase in cases, hospitalizations, and mortalities. We will need to continue practicing social distancing and limit our travel at this time.

Dr. Chohan asked why we were asking John Hopkins to hire contact tracers when we could use local college students. Legislator Andreano stated that both her daughters had received applications for this initiative and she had heard that they were being sent out to any local student who had a science background. Dr. Watkins replied that we were not asking John Hopkins to do the hiring, it is part of a \$10.5 million commitment from Michael Bloomberg offering technical assistance to NYS for contact tracers. These contact tracers must be trained and Bloomberg gave the funds to John Hopkins to provide the training and hire the contact tracers and place these contact tracers in all counties to work with local health departments in locating direct contacts of COVID-19 positive people and isolate them.

Dr. Bohan asked how many of the (44) positive cases were found because they were symptomatic, and how many were found on the basis of contact tracing. Dr. Watkins replied that the majority of the (44) were found because they were symptomatic, but then the department has identified (5) five instances where the person was found to be a COVID-19 positive person because they were a direct contact. Dr. Bohan stated that contract tracing would not be possible in regions like NYC. Dr. Watkins agreed that contact tracing in downstate NY would be a much more difficult task but that is why the Bloomberg endowment is so important.

**NURSING DIVISION REPORT:** Amit Benedict, Supervising Community Health Nurse, who was reporting in Lynne Moore's absence, reported that the homecare census for March 1<sup>st</sup> was (270), March 31<sup>st</sup> was (254), April 1<sup>st</sup> was (239), and April 31<sup>st</sup> was (233). These decreases are being seen due to fewer hospitalizations and the elimination of elective surgeries secondary to the COVID-19 pandemic. There were (106) admissions and (60) discharges for the month of March, and (135) admissions and (75) discharges for April.

Personnel changes include the retirement of Sue Feldbauer, Olean Supervising Public Health Nurse on April 10<sup>th</sup>. In addition, the department has transitioned (5) Community Health Nurses into the COVID-19 response team.

The clinic continues to provide all clinic services and the Nurse Practitioner and staff continues to see family planning and immunization clients face to face.

Sexually transmitted infections, there were (19) cases of chlamydia in March, and (14) in April. There were (3) cases of gonorrhea in March and (5) cases in April.

Communicable disease, for the month of March there was, (1) suspected Lyme case; April also included; (1) suspected Lyme case. For the month of March there were (5) chronic Hepatitis C cases, and (1) group A strep case; In April, there was (2) chronic Hepatitis C cases.

There were (49) influenza A's in the month of March, and (29) influenza B's in March and (1) case of salmonellosis, an unknown source, in April.

Five people were treated at the CCHD clinic in the month of March in the expedited partner treatment (EPT) chlamydia program; In April there were (14).

At the HIV clinics Olean tested (11) in March one was positive, in April (7) were tested zero were positive; in Machias (2) tested in March with zero positive (1) tested in April, zero positive; in Salamanca (7) tested in March zero positive, and (1) tested in April with zero positive.

Hepatitis C testing in March there was (1) in Olean, and (1) in Machias, both were negative. There was no Hepatitis C testing the month of April.

There are (81) open lead cases, there were (17) finger stick lead tests done at (5) WIC clinics in Olean and Salamanca, (2) children were identified with elevated blood lead levels and then confirmed with venous draw. Testing percentages have increased minimally with 1 year olds at 62.9% a 0.05% increase seen from 2019, and 2 year olds at 60.04% which is an increase of 1.17% from 2019. A better partnership is needed with providers and parents.

Rabies cases for the months of March through April included (2) cases of rabies post-exposure prophylaxis, one person bitten by a feral cat and (1) person bitten by a dog.

**ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH DIVISION REPORT:** Mr. Wohlers reported that most normal environmental health inspection programs were put on hold during this COVID-19 response. Mr. Jordan and Mr. Wohlers are participating in weekly calls with the Center of Environmental Health as there are many procedural changes to programs while New York is on pause, many of the environmental health program deliverables have been extended.

Environmental Health staff is assisting the COVID-19 response team with following up on quarantined individuals as needed.

New York State Department of Health has given the department approval to renew permits that are expiring monthly. Forms have been developed by the State where operators can do self-inspections of their facility. The operator must sign and attest that they are in compliance with state regulations for the department to renew their permits.

The department is responding daily to county resident complaints about businesses who are not following guidelines during "NYS Pause" complaints received are from those who are not using masks to those who are still having mass gatherings. We have been working with other departments including the Sheriff's department to set up an enforcement task force where these complaints should be channeled. In addition we are fielding a lot of calls, and emails from businesses.

Restaurants are all closed except for take-out services, no inspections are being done by staff at this time.

The one program that is still operating, is the public water supply program. Our operators must still continue their routine sampling and daily monitoring. The department is still collecting the monthly and quarterly drinking samples making sure they are in compliance with State and Federal drinking water guidelines.

The department is still doing some new septic system designs. Contractors who work by themselves are allowed to continue to operate.

The real property transfer program has been suspended, and we are doing only a few limited lead paint investigations. The current case is a child who has an elevated blood lead level over 45ug/dl (normal 0<5ug/dl). Some homeowners have been willing to vacate their home while we are inspecting their home or self-isolate in another room as our inspectors conduct the necessary tests. In addition we have some online training going on in this program.

The latest issues and questions we are dealing with include seasonal campgrounds, NYS has closed all public and recreational campgrounds through the end of May. As of last Friday, we issued six seasonal permits for private campgrounds, stating that they can only open to their seasonal residents with strict COVID-19 related guidelines.

NYS has declared golf courses as non-essential but they are allowing golfers to go out and walk the course for limited availability.

At this time the department is trying to figure out if there will be any children's camps allowed to operate this summer.

The department normally puts on a spring rabies clinic in May which has been cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but we are looking at possibly rescheduling that for June 6. We are developing new procedures for a drive-thru clinic at the Cattaraugus County fairgrounds.

Legislator Andreano stated that by not allowing golf carts on a course couldn't that be a violation of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) for those who need assistance with walking and require the use of a golf cart. Mr. Wohlers responded that this has not come up in any of their discussions, they have tried to get clear guidance on whether golf carts can be used but responses seem to be mixed.

**ENFORCEMENT LIST:** Mr. Porter reported there were no new enforcements this month.

**Old/New Business:** Dr. Bohan asked if there was any other business to discuss. Dr. Watkins replied the Board still needs to approve the monthly operating permit for New Lakeview Chinese Restaurant. At our last meeting the Board discussed that an inspection of the facility must be done monthly and reported to the Board and the Board would then approve or disapprove of the issuance of an operating permit for the facility. The report basically indicates that there were (2) red violations and (2) blue violations found at this inspection. Red violations are considered critical violations, and the blue are non-critical violations. Both critical violations were immediately taken care of, the inspector found there was no thermometers onsite at the time of the inspection, and the operator stated that the thermometer had been left at home, he retrieved it and brought it back into the establishment. Monitoring temperatures was discussed with the operator. The second critical violation found was a large wok with boiled chicken was found at 125 degrees Fahrenheit on the cooking line, and was below proper temperature, the product was reheated and brought back up to 165 degrees Fahrenheit and placed on holding. The two non-critical violations included a cooking board used was in poor condition and had not been properly cleaned and sanitized, and some of the food bags in the freezer were being reused and there is no way to clean and sanitize a bag that is intended for single use. Currently the restaurant is only doing take out, but we must discuss whether to issue a new monthly permit. A lengthy discussion was held amongst the Board members. A motion was made by Dr. Hamlin to give the restaurant a one month permit, and seconded by Dr. Chohan. Dr. Bohan stated that if next month there are more red violations that the permit should be revoked. Dr. Bohan asked that a vote be taken for a one month extension of the New Lakeview Restaurant permit. A roll call vote was called there were (8) ayes and no nays, one Board member Mayor Smith had to leave early and missed the vote.

Sondra Fox thanked Dr. Watkins, and staff for providing great information to the community during this pandemic.

Dr. Watkins reported that he was notified by Mayor Smith that Gowanda is one of NYS municipalities that was awarded \$300,000.00 and that was why he was excused early from the Board meeting to attend a 1:00PM press conference for this award.

Legislator Andreano stated that she received notification from a constituent regarding a facebook post that stated there was no antibody testing being done in Cattaraugus County. She suggested that the post should be updated to state that CCHD is not currently testing but it is offered at WellNow. Dr. Watkins stated that he would have the site updated.

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There being no further business to discuss, a motion to adjourn was made by Dr. Chohan and seconded by Dr. Hamlin and unanimously approved.

After the meeting was over it was confirmed that the Board would be able to schedule a Board meeting for Wednesday, June 3 and an email would be sent to update all participants.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kevin D. Watkins, M.D." The signature is written in a cursive style.

Kevin D. Watkins, M.D., M.P.H.  
Secretary to the Board of Health