

BRANT COUNTY BOARD OF HEALTH
Wednesday, October 20, 2021, 9:30 a.m., Zoom
MINUTES

PRESENT: John Bell (County), Chair
Susan Brown (Province), Vice-Chair
Michael Bodnar (Province)
David Bailey (County)
Nancy Church (Province)
Kevin Davis (City)
Joy O'Donnell (Province)
John Sless (City)
Brian Van Tilborg (City)

Dr. Rebecca Comley ((A)MOH)
Jo Ann Tober (CEO)
Brent Richardson (Director, HR)
Lisa DiDonato (Director, Finance)
Alexey Babayan, (Director, Foundations)
Lorraine Johnson (Exec. Asst.) (recorder)

ALSO PRESENT: Rob Hunter, Delegation

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Bell called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m., and welcomed Mike Bodnar to the meeting. (See Item 7.7.)

2. CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Chair Bell reminded Members to declare a conflict of interest, if one so arises, at the time the item is discussed.

3. DELEGATION

Chair Bell introduced Rob Hunter, County of Brant resident, who presented information against masking for school children ages 4-5 years. The delegate asked the Board to direct the Health Unit to provide updated, data-driven guidance to the school board on mandatory masking of 4 and 5 year-olds for 8 hours per day. Members noted authority under the Health Protection and Promotion Act, provincial directives to Medical Officers of Health, the Board of Health's role in operations under the Ontario Public Health Standards.

Rob Hunter left the meeting at 9:45 a.m.

Moved by: David Bailey
Seconded by: Brian Van Tilborg

“THAT the Board of Health receive the presentation for information and forward it to staff for consideration.”
Carried.

4. ADDITIONS TO AGENDA

Moved by: John Sless
Seconded by: Susan Brown

“THAT the Board of Health approve the Agenda as presented.”
Carried.

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

5.1 Brant County Board of Health Minutes of September 15, 2021

Moved by: David Bailey
Seconded by: John Sless

“THAT the Brant County Board of Health Minutes dated September 15, 2021, be approved.”
Carried.

Members inquired about feedback on the COVID-19 marketing plan by the hired public relations firm. Members asked that staff provide them with the after-hours phone number to reach Health Unit management.

6. FINANCIAL REPORT

6.1 Financial Position Report ended August 31, 2021

Lisa DiDonato presented the Financial Position Report ended August 31, 2021, as distributed with the agenda. Lisa advised that there are no areas of major concern. Lisa responded to questions: overtime worked for COVID is an insignificant amount as additional staff were hired for mass immunization clinics. COVID hours worked are recorded and reported to the Province. The Ministry is expected to flow the remaining 51% of the requested COVID budget funds once they have reviewed the 2021 Q2 financial reports. BCHU has made all necessary payments with available funds. The over-expenditure of \$347,870 for COVID costs in the first 8 months of 2021 is expected to balance within the year. Overall, BCHU is in line with 2021 projections. It is premature to predict a year-end surplus, as Ministry direction to mass immunize 70+ ages for Dose 3 and Doses 1 and 2 for children aged 5-11 years is expected in 2021.

6.2 Finance and Audit Committee Report

John Sless presented the Finance and Audit Committee Report, as distributed with the Agenda, summarizing discussions at the October 7, 2021, Committee meeting. Nancy reported that all Finance and Audit materials are available to the full Board, and the meeting was held sufficiently ahead of the regular Board meeting to assure the availability of a written report. Nancy agreed to continue to assist the Finance and Audit Committee.

Moved by:

Joy O'Donnell

Seconded by:

Susan Brown

“THAT the Brant County Board of Health receive the financial reports 6.1 and 6.2 as presented.” Carried.

7. BUSINESS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES

7.1 Report from the Chair

Chair Bell and Vice-Chair Brown met with Dr. Comley after her first month at BCHU to reinforce support from the Board, recognize her presence in local media, and invite her to meet County Council at a future date.

Chair Bell, Vice-Chair Brown, and Nancy Church met with the Culture Committee on October 19. A wide range of topics were covered, leading to a better understanding of the Committee's purpose and responsibilities, and their leadership opportunities in this role. Culture is recognized as an important organizational priority. Improvements have been made. It was recognized that COVID demands have impacted on meeting regularity, and that staff are feeling fatigued.

7.2 Report from the Acting Medical Officer of Health

The Medical Officer of Health's (MOH) report was provided to Members in the agenda package. The report summarized recent activities: COVID consumed the major amount of time. Partnership meetings have occurred with the school boards and primary care regarding COVID and other program areas. Dr. Comley and Dr. Lock will participate in the County of Brant's Emergency Management Training and Exercise Day on October 21. Dr. Comley expressed appreciation for the transitional guidance from Dr. Malcolm Lock, and advised that Dr. Joyce Lock, MOH at Southwestern Public Health, is her official mentor and will be meeting with her regularly.

In response to the masking presentation by Rob Hunter (see Item 3), Dr. Comley advised that Public Health Ontario (PHO) published updated guidelines for masking young children in July 2021, and continues to look at data. It is a controversial issue. MOH's may enhance provincial guidelines for local application, but not lessen them. It is difficult to make predictions for when masking may become optional; it would be premature to state an exit strategy at this time. Dr. Comley stated that she would look into the matter in more detail and will prepare a formal response.

7.3 Report from the Chief Executive Officer

Jo Ann Tober presented the Chief Executive Officer Report as distributed with the agenda. The report included an update on seasonal influenza clinics, school immunization program activities, and Ontario Health Team matters.

7.4 Food Safety Disclosure Report

No report.

7.5 COVID-19 Reports

7.5.1 COVID-19 Case Management Report

Dr. Comley presented information for the COVID-19 Case Management Report at the meeting. Brant's status mirrors that of the Province. There was a decline in cases in September. Reproductive number is consistently below 1. The majority of cases are in younger people and in schools. On October 3, an outbreak was declared at St. George-German School with multiple cohorts affected and the school was closed. All students were encouraged to be tested on Day 7 regardless of risk. Voluntary mobile testing was conducted on October 18 when the school re-opened. As part of a provincial pilot, rapid antigen testing can be offered for ongoing monitoring at schools or other areas where children may congregate to isolate cases early.

Dr. Comley explained that adverse reactions to a vaccine are self- or physician-reported to the Health Unit, where staff investigate and analyze the data. When the effects meet the provincial criteria for an Adverse Effect Following Immunization (AEFI), the case is classified and submitted to PHO. Most reactions are mild. Local AEFI cases are <1% and are in line with provincial numbers. In response to Members' inquiries about responding to vaccine-hesitant people, Dr. Comley encouraged Members to focus on the large number of healthcare professionals vaccinated and the healthcare community as a whole that has embraced vaccinations. Resources can be found on the BCHU website, via Scarborough Health Network resources, and the Hospital for Sick Children's Vaccine Consult Service. Many pharmacists are taking time to explain the vaccine to clients who then proceed with the immunization.

7.5.2 COVID-19 Immunization Report

Jo Ann Tober presented the COVID-19 Immunization Report, as provided with the Agenda. Current coverage rates are 82% and 78%, and continue to grow in the younger populations. The report included information on vaccine hesitancy, accessibility, levers to enhance uptake, and communications and marketing. The Mall clinic continues to be a well-accessed site. An increase in clinic attendance is expected as mandatory vaccination policies take effect in October and November. BCHU reached out to manufacturing plants and responded with on-site clinics as requested. BCHU updates the website and Frequently Asked Questions regularly, and tries to correct/respond to erroneous information when staff become aware of it. The services/resources of the Scarborough Health Network and the Hospital for Sick Children are publicized widely for access by all. The messaging campaign by the public relations firm, Letter M Marketing, is entitled "Just Get the Shot". It has been fully rolled out along with a toolkit to enlist the participation of community partners. As well, the Province will be rolling out a campaign targeting the same age demographic: "Sexxy Vax—It's the thing to do".

Jo Ann reported on Dr. Kieran Moore's address to the Ontario Public Health Association's Annual General Meeting. Public Health is still in COVID response mode, while other sectors are into recovery. Public Health will be doing case management and vaccine delivery well into the future. Public Health people are tired and burned out. The recovery period for Public Health will be at least 1.5 years to re-build from the severe programming disruption of COVID. Numerous investigations and reports are anticipated post-COVID to inform improvements and planning for the next pandemic.

Members inquired about a policy requiring Board Members to be vaccinated against COVID-19. The BCHU agency policy does not list Members, as the Health Unit does not have that authority. It is recommended that Members be vaccinated.

Moved by: Kevin Davis
Seconded by: John Sless

"THAT the Brant County Board of Health Members be incorporated into the Brant County Health Unit COVID-19 vaccination policy." **Carried.**

7.6 Mental Health and Addictions Work Group Update, Brantford-Brant Ontario Health Team

Jo Ann Tober presented the Mental Health and Addictions Work Group Update provided by the Brantford-Brant Ontario Health Team (OHT), as distributed with the agenda. This information was provided by the Mental Health and Addictions Work Group, in response to the Board's request from a previous meeting. The OHT focuses more on treatment and service provision while linking with public health activities. There will be a lot of work to do in the coming years of recovery from COVID. The Drugs Strategy work plan continues within its timelines.

7.7 Provincial Appointee New Appointment and Re-Appointment

Chair Bell announced that Michael Bodnar has been appointed to the Board of Health for a two-year term commencing immediately; this appointment fills the provincial appointee seat vacated by Mario Colombo. As well, confirmation was received regarding the re-appointment of Nancy Church for a two-year period, commencing in November at the conclusion of her current term.

Moved by: David Bailey
Seconded by: Joy O'Donnell

“THAT the Brant County Board of Health accept reports 7.1 through 7.7 as presented.” Carried.

8. NEW BUSINESS

8.1 Brant County Health Unit 2020 Annual Report

Jo Ann Tober presented the Brant County Health Unit 2020 Annual Report, distributed with the agenda. The content requirements of annual public health unit reports is set by the Ministry of Health. In 2020, most COVID activities were based in case management.

Moved by: Susan Brown
Seconded by: John Sless

“THAT the Brant County Board of Health accept the 2020 Annual Report as presented.” Carried.

8.2 Strategic Planning

Chair Bell introduced discussion regarding the Board's intent to revise the BCHU Strategic Plan in 2022, and suggested that the coming months be used to prepare for this. High-level Board involvement is expected along with participation by all staff. The proposed 2022 budget includes funds for strategic planning. Members' comments noted ongoing COVID demands, timing, priorities and impact, capacity and burnout, availability of funds, continuing with the current Plan for now, etc. Alternatively, it could be beneficial to have a new Strategic Plan in place as regular programming resumes. If strategic planning is delayed until late 2022 or into 2023, provincial post-pandemic reviews and more information about potential public health modernization will be useful. Chair Bell asked Members to reflect on this matter in order to make a decision at the next meeting, and suggested that funding for strategic planning be included in the 2022 budget.

9. CORRESPONDENCE *(Board members may request a copy of items that are not attached from Board of Health Secretary)*

9.1 Correspondence received from City of Hamilton, dated Sept. 15, 2021, re support for a local board of health.

9.2 Correspondence received from Premier of Ontario, dated Sept. 8, 2021, re proof of COVID-19 vaccinations.

9.3 Correspondence received from Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge District Health Unit, dated Sept. 16, 2021, re ongoing financial government support.

9.4 Correspondence received from Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development, dated Sept. 20, 2021, re paid sick leave.

9.5 Correspondence received from Health Minister Elliott, dated Sept. 27, 2021, re Expositor article on mental health issues.

9.6 Order in Council from Province of Ontario, dated Sept. 16, 2021, re appointment of Michael Bodnar.

9.7 Order in Council from Province of Ontario, dated Sept. 29, 2021, re re-appointment of Nancy Church.

Moved by: Nancy Church
Seconded by: Brian Van Tilborg

“THAT the Brant County Board of Health receive the correspondence for information.” Carried.

Joy O'Donnell left the meeting at 11:53 a.m.

10. IN-CAMERA MEETING

Moved by: **David Bailey**
Seconded by: **Nancy Church**

“THAT the meeting move to In-Camera at 11:53 a.m. regarding risk management issues.” **Carried.**

The regular Board of Health meeting resumed at 12:31 p.m.

During the Incamera session, a motion was passed on item 3.1.

11. QUESTIONS/ANNOUNCEMENTS

12. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Kevin inquired about when Board meetings might return to an in-person format. The City will be using a hybrid format from November forward. The County has not considered resuming in-person meetings. The state of emergency remains in place. Chair Bell suggested that virtual meetings continue until early in 2022, as was the recommendation of the MOH earlier in the year.

13. NEXT MEETING DATES

Wednesday, November 17, 2021, at 9:30 a.m.
Wednesday, December 15, 2021, at the call of the Chair.

14. ADJOURNMENT

Moved by: **John Bell**

“THAT the Board of Health meeting be adjourned at 12:32 p.m.” **Carried.**

Chair

Date

Secretary

Date