Rio Grande County Board of Health

Wednesday, April 06, 2020

The meeting of the Rio Grande County Board of Health was called to order at 10:34 AM.

Members present were Chairman John Noffsker, Commissioner Suzanne Bothell, Commissioner Gene Glover, Emily Brown, Rio Grande County Public Health Department Director, and County Administrator Tricia Slater.

Approval of Minutes

Minutes were not available for approval.

Public Comment

Commissioner Noffsker asked if there were any comments. There were none.

General Business and Administrative Items

At 10:35 AM Emily Brown, Department of Public Health Director, said there is a regional call-line for COVID-19 questions. There have been several calls from tourists and seasonal homeowners wanting to know travel restrictions in Rio Grande County. Ms. Brown has looked to see what other Colorado counties have done. Dan Hicks, Town of South Fork Manager, said an order restricting travel would have a negative impact on the town's economy. He would like any public message to state a date travel restrictions would be lifted. Forrest Neuerburg, City of Monte Vista Manager, suggested Memorial Day, May 25, be listed as the date. Mr. Hicks said Fun Valley officially opens May 15, but the RV parks usually don't have many residents before mid-June. Ms. Brown said the County does not have to put travel restrictions in place; it can continue following the State's stay-at-home and social distancing guidelines. Gary Sabrowski, Town of Del Norte Council, suggested a public message advising visitors to check back for updates, rather than stating a specific opening date. Eugene Farish, Town of South Fork Attorney, said the Town's economy is completely dependent on tourism. Many tourists are making their summer plans now, so the wording of a public message is very important. Commissioner Noffsker said some businesses in Rio Grande County never recovered after closures during the West Fork Fire, so the BOH needed to consider both the health and economic effects of travel restrictions. Commissioner Bothell agreed, and said the Governor may put restrictions in place that would supersede any County restrictions. Commissioner Glover also agreed, but said stating an "opening" date on any public messaging might help tourists trying to make plans. Commissioner Noffsker asked Ms. Brown to give updates to the municipalities.

At 11:12 AM Ms. Brown presented the MOU with Dr. Helgeson as Rio Grande County Medical Officer. Commissioner Glover made a motion to approve the MOU with Dr. Helgeson. Commissioner Bothell seconded the motion, and the motion carried.

At 11:14 AM the BOH discussed the MOU with Area Health Education Center (AHEC) for the SLV Health Access Risk Reduction Project (SHARRP) Harm Reduction program. The program was approved by the BOH in December 2019. Commissioner Bothell voiced concern that the MOU does not provide for annual review from the BOH. Ms. Brown said the MOU needs to be signed by the BOH before the program starts. She will rework the MOU to include an annual review, and present it at a future BOH meeting.

At 11:21 AM the BOH discussed the Monte Vista nuisance order. Ms. Brown said Mr. Dunn received confirmation that the owner of the house picked up the mailed notice. Mr. Neuerburg had a phone call with the owner who said he had not received the notice, but was working with a contractor to clean the property. Mr. Neuerburg said after the phone call, he researched the contractor and found he was not licensed or bonded. Mr. Neuerburg told the owner he must use a licensed contractor, but has not heard back from the owner. Ms. Brown said the BOH needs Mr. Dunn to advise it on the next legal step. She recommended tabling discussion until the meeting on April 8, 2020, when Mr. Dunn would be available.

At 11:29 AM the meeting was adjourned.

Attest:

John Noffsker, Chairman
Chairman of the Board

Emily Brown, Director
Public Health Department

DeAnn Jacobs
Clerk of the Board

Date

Rio Grande County Board of Health

Wednesday, April 08, 2020

The meeting of the Rio Grande County Board of Health was called to order at 10:36 AM.

Members present were Chairman John Noffsker, Commissioner Suzanne Bothell, Commissioner Gene Glover, Emily Brown, Rio Grande County Public Health Department Director, and County Administrator Tricia Slater.

Approval of Minutes

There were no minutes available for approval.

Public Comment

Commissioner Noffsker asked if there were any comments. There were none.

General Business and Administrative Items

At 10:37 AM Emily Brown, Department of Public Health Director, said she has been researching State and Colorado county websites to learn how they are crafting public messaging concerning COVID-19. Commissioner Bothell said that, since the State already has travel guidelines, she did not think a County message should restate any travel restrictions. Commissioner Noffsker said he would like to research more about tourists who are already visiting the County, as well as ones who are predicted to visit before crafting a public message. Mr. Dunn said enforcement issues would need to be considered before putting out any messages. Ms. Brown will continue her research. Commissioner Noffsker said other County departments, such as Land Use, and Municipalities can be asked for data on tourists and seasonal residents also.

At 10:51 AM Art Wittner, Emergency Management, said he has been sending email guidelines to first responder agencies, such as law enforcement, on preventative COVID-19 care. He said the Sheriff's Department would like to know whether employees would receive workman's comp if they contract the virus through work related duties. Ms. Brown said the DPH is not restricted by HIPPA, and is able to provide first responders with some information concerning individuals they may contact who have been diagnosed with COVID-19. Mr. Dunn said it would be difficult to prove a first responder who may contract COVID-19 was infected at work. Mr. Wittner said in other such situations, dispatchers have been provided with a list of diagnosed individuals, and passed that information on to first responders. Ms. Brown will provide information to local emergency dispatches.

At 11:08 AM Ms. Brown informed Mr. Dunn of the BOH discussion at its last meeting on April 6, 2020 regarding the Monte Vista nuisance order. She will set up a meeting with Mr. Dunn, Forrest Neuerburg, City of Monte Vista Manager, and herself to discuss the next steps.

At 11:18 AM Mr. Dunn suggested that when emergency dispatches contact DSS, information about addresses with diagnosed cases of COVID-19 be passed on. Ms. Brown said the Coroner's Office should also be in the information loop.

At 11:25 AM Ms. Slater said she is creating a website page for County COVID-19 information.

At 11:26 AM the meeting was adjourned.

Attest:

John Noffsker, Chairman
Chairman of the Board

Emily Brown, Director
Public Health Department

DeAnn Jacobs
Clerk of the Board

Date

Rio Grande County Board of Health

Monday, April 13, 2020

The meeting of the Rio Grande County Board of Health was called to order at 10:26 AM.

Members present were Vice Chairman Suzanne Bothell, Commissioner Gene Glover, Emily Brown, Rio Grande County Public Health Department Director, and County Administrator Tricia Slater.

Approval of Minutes

There were no minutes available for approval.

Public Comment

Commissioner Bothell asked if there were any comments. There were none.

General Business and Administrative Items

At 10:27 AM Emily Brown, Department of Public Health Director, said the County may keep its health order in place longer than the State's order, because health impacts in the San Luis Valley often lag behind those in more populous areas of the State. She also said an alternative option to ordering travel restrictions could be implementing self-quarantine for travelers. At the time of this meeting, Ms. Brown did not feel the need to impose any more health orders; she will revisit the County's order nearer to the State's April 26 or the County's May 10 end dates.

At 10:40 AM Ms. Brown asked if the Commissioners had any input from the public about restrictions. Ms. Slater is working on a COVID-19 information page on the County's website. It can be found at www.riograndecounty.org/covid. Further discussion on public messaging will be tabled until the next meeting on April 15, 2020.

At 10:48 AM the meeting was adjourned.

Attest:

Suzanne Bothell, Vice Chairman
Chairman of the Board

Emily Brown, Director
Public Health Department

DeAnn Jacobs
Clerk of the Board

Date

Rio Grande County Board of Health

Wednesday, April 15, 2020

The meeting of the Rio Grande County Board of Health was called to order at 10:06 AM.

Members present were Chairman John Noffsker, Commissioner Suzanne Bothell, Commissioner Gene Glover, Emily Brown, Rio Grande County Public Health Department Director, and County Administrator Tricia Slater.

Approval of Minutes

There were no minutes available for approval.

Public Comment

Commissioner Noffsker asked if there were any comments. There were none.

General Business and Administrative Items

At 10:07 AM the BOH discussed tourism, second residences, and short term rentals. Ms. Brown said she has been keeping in touch with other San Luis Valley counties to find out how they are handling the issue. Currently, the Governor's order for stay-at-home and social distancing will stay in place until April 26, 2020, and Rio Grande County's social event size order will stay in place until May 10, 2020. Ms. Brown will reevaluate the order as the end date approaches. She did not feel any other restrictions needed to be done at this time.

Commissioner Glover said he has received several messages from South Fork that indicate they would like restrictions lifted as soon as possible. He also said the BOH would need to consider how law enforcement should handle order violations.

Commissioner Bothell said the current orders are working well; additional orders should not be added unless the local COVID-19 situation worsens. She asked who vets COVID-19 information shown on the SLV Health website. Ms. Brown said the regional PIO gathers the information and sends it to county public health directors to check before publishing it.

Commissioner Noffsker concurred with the other Commissioners and Ms. Brown.

Art Wittner, Emergency Management, said he spoke with Dan Hicks, Town of South Fork Manager. Mr. Hicks told Mr. Wittner that the May 10 end date works well for the Town, and it is understood restrictions may continue or increase if the COVID-19 situation worsens.

Ryan Dunn, County Attorney, addressed the issue of law enforcement for order violations. A public health order is valid when put in place by the director of a Public Health agency. Violation is a Class 1 misdemeanor under C.R.S. 25-1-5-16, subject to the penalties outlined in the criminal code, Title 18. The penalty range is a minimum jail stay of six months, fine of $500, or both, and a maximum jail stay of eighteen months, fine of $5,000, or both. It is contained in the State statute, so it does not need to be stated in any County orders.

Commissioner Noffsker asked if it was the consensus of the BOH to make no changes to the County Public Health order at this time. The Board agreed it was.

Ms. Brown said she is preparing a one page letter to be sent to the Municipalities and other entities getting questions from the public. It will include both the State and the County order end dates. It will also state the BOH is in agreement with advice from the Public Health Director.

At 10:34 AM Ms. Brown shared anticipated next steps for COVID-19. She was reading from literature put out by the National Corona Response. She said right now the County is in Phase 1: "Slow the Spread", which includes staying at home and physical distancing. There are four triggers for getting into Phase 2:"Reopen". 1: Sustained reduction in cases for 14 days. 2: Hospitals are safely able to treat without resorting to crisis standards of care. 3: The ability to test anyone with symptoms. 4: Ability to actively monitor all known cases and their contacts. The next phase is not a complete reopening, but a gradual one. Ms. Brown asked the BOH to keeps these triggers in mind when deciding how to handle large events, such as town parades, Rhythm on the Rio, and Stampede. Phase 3 is "Establish Protection and Lift All Restrictions". Phase 4 is "Rebuild Readiness for Next Pandemic".

At 10:41 AM Ms. Brown asked that BOH discussions on COVID-19 be held once weekly, on either Monday or Wednesday. The Commissioners felt two weekly meetings have been beneficial, but said they would plan on Ms. Brown normally being available only on Wednesdays.

At 10:47 AM Ms. Brown said other SLV counties are discussing extending their emergency declarations. Rio Grande County's Local Disaster Emergency Declaration is due to expire April 18, 2020. She asked if the BOH wanted to extend the declaration. Mr. Dunn recommended extending it for 30 days. Commissioner Bothell reminded the Board the declaration has to do with receiving emergency funding. Ms. Slater said the County is just starting to receive funding from the State and FEMA. Commissioner Bothell made a motion to approve extending Rio Grande County's Local Disaster Emergency Declaration for another 30 days. Commissioner Glover seconded the motion, and the motion carried. This will extend the declaration to May 18, 2020. Mr. Dunn will draw up the document.

At 10:52 AM the meeting was adjourned.

Attest:

John Noffsker, Chairman
Chairman of the Board

Emily Brown, Director
Public Health Department

DeAnn Jacobs
Clerk of the Board

Date

Rio Grande County Board of Health

Wednesday, April 22, 2020

The meeting of the Rio Grande County Board of Health was called to order at 10:31 AM.

Members present were Chairman John Noffsker, Commissioner Suzanne Bothell, Commissioner Gene Glover, Emily Brown, Rio Grande County Public Health Department Director, and County Administrator Tricia Slater.

General Business and Administrative Items

At 10:31 AM, the Board discussed general business regarding COVID-19. Emily Brown, Rio Grande County Department of Public Health Director, said counties are expecting more guidance from the Governor's Office and the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) this week. She expected business and event openings to be a gradual process. Commissioner Glover said it might be helpful to meet with all San Luis Valley Commissioners to discuss putting out a consistent Valley wide public message. Ms. Brown said the Governor's Stay at Home order will expire April 26, and the order regarding businesses reopening is set to expire April 30. Rio Grande County's order limiting gatherings to ten people is set to expire May 10. She has issued a public message with these dates from the County's Department of Health. The BOCC will also put out messages in the local newspaper, on the local radio, and on the County website. Ms. Slater will get a message to the Commissioners and the media today. A similar letter will also be sent to Fun Valley.

At 10:58 AM, Ms. Brown talked about the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) TB contract. The contract is a grant opportunity for tuberculosis testing and tracking with Valley Wide Health Systems. Commissioner Glover made a motion to approve the contract. Commissioner Bothell seconded the motion, and the motion carried.

At 11:02 AM, the meeting was adjourned.

Attest:

John Noffsker, Chairman
Chairman of the Board

Emily Brown, Director
Public Health Department

DeAnn Jacobs
Clerk of the Board

Date

Rio Grande County Board of Health

Wednesday, April 29, 2020

The meeting of the Rio Grande County Board of Health was called to order at 11:51 AM.

Members present were Chairman John Noffsker, Commissioner Suzanne Bothell, Commissioner Gene Glover, Emily Brown, Rio Grande County Public Health Department Director, and County Administrator Tricia Slater.

General Business and Administrative Items

At 11:51 AM, Mr. Dunn gave an update on 606 Adams Street in Monte Vista. Yesterday, April 28, He spoke on the phone with the property owner, Kent Taylor. Mr. Taylor said the property had been cleaned up, and sent photos to Mr. Dunn. Mr. Taylor said Monte Vista's safety compliance officer has a key to the back door. Mr. Taylor gave his permission to the Board of Health to contact the officer and put a lock on the property if necessary. Ms. Brown said she and Mr. Dunn had scheduled a meeting with Forrest Neuerburg, City of Monte Vista Manager, for May 6, 2020, and asked that the topic be added to the BOH agenda for that day.

At 11:57 AM, Commissioner Bothell moved to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Glover seconded the motion, and the meeting was adjourned.

Attest:

John Noffsker, Chairman
Chairman of the Board

Emily Brown, Director
Public Health Department

DeAnn Jacobs
Clerk of the Board

Date