

Board of Health

**Regular Called Board Meeting Minutes**

**March 26, 2020, 3:00 p.m.**

Via TEAMS Conference Call

**Board Members Present**

Clyde Watkins, Jr., M.D., Chair

Mrs. Delphyne Lomax Taylor, Vice Chair

The Honorable Jeff Rader, Parliamentarian

Sonia Alvarez-Robinson, Ph.D.

Camara Phyllis Jones, M.D., M.P.H., Ph.D.

Vasanne Tinsley, Ph.D.

Edward “Ted” Terry\*

\*At the time of this meeting it is unclear whether Ted Terry is an active board member.

**District Health Director**

S. Elizabeth Ford, M.D., M.B.A.

**Staff and Guests**

Names unavailable

**Actions**

**I. Call to Order**

The March 26, 2020, DeKalb County Board of Health board meeting was called to order by Chair Dr. Clyde Watkins, Jr., at 3:00 p.m.

**II. Approval of Minutes**

Chair Watkins asked for the review and approval of the minutes of the May 23, 2019, board meeting. Member Alvarez-Robinson made a motion to approve and Vice Chair Lomax Taylor seconded. Chair Watkins called for a vote. The motion to approve the minutes of the May 23, 2019, meeting was passed.

Chair Watkins asked for the review and approval of the minutes of the July 23, 2019, special called board meeting. Member Alvarez-Robinson made a motion to approve and Member Terry seconded. Chair Watkins called for a vote. The motion to approve the minutes of the July 23, 2019, meeting was passed.

Chair Watkins asked for the review and approval of the minutes of the November 21, 2019, board meeting. Vice Chair Lomax Taylor made a motion to approve and Member Rader

**DeKalb County Board of Health**

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seconded. Chair Watkins called for a vote. The motion to approve the minutes of the November 21, 2019, meeting was passed.

Chair Watkins asked for the review and approval of the minutes of the January 23, 2020, board meeting. Member Jones made a motion to approve and Member Alvarez-Robinson seconded. Chair Watkins called for a vote. Member Rader abstained because he was not present at the meeting. The motion to approve the minutes of the January 23, 2020, meeting was passed.

### **III. District Health Director's Report**

In lieu of the Director's Report for January through February 2020, Dr. Ford presented: (1) a special COVID-19 report, (2) DeKalb County Chief Executive Officer Michael Thurmond's March 23 executive order declaring a state of emergency, and (3) a draft Board of Health resolution to declare a public health emergency. The board approved the resolution for a public health emergency.

Dr. Jones had questions about several matters. First, she asked about taking a testing versus surveillance versus a case-confirmation approach. Second, she asked whether any conversations had taken place concerning people being in jail because they cannot afford bail. Third, she asked whether the legislature or the governor have brought back the issue of Medicaid expansion. In response to the first question, Dr. Ford said that the Board of Health is already sort of doing that since we lack tests. The agency is trying to manage symptomatic folks based on their severity. Secondly, she has suggested to DeKalb County Chief Executive Officer Michael Thurmond that he recommend to the sheriff that anyone who has a low-level offense not be incarcerated to facilitate social distancing. Finally, Dr. Ford could not speak to the issue of Medicaid expansion, but confirmed that the governor had relaxed the rules so that seniors could have a 90-day supply of medicine.

Dr. Jones asked for Dr. Ford's thoughts on a shelter-in-place order or curfew. Dr. Ford responded that this type of order must come from the governor and/or the Georgia Department of Public Health and that sheltering in place is recommended in the DeKalb County executive order. She encouraged individuals and families to shelter in place as much as possible. In addition, the curfew is just to keep people off the street and decrease social interaction and physical contact. Dr. Ford reaffirmed that this is a voluntary curfew.

Member Terry followed up on Dr. Jones' comments about sheltering in place and asked for any additional recommendations or guidelines to support folks who may live in apartment complexes or in smaller residences. They can probably still go outside, but not to a park or an area where a lot of people are congregating. He asked if there was any talk about the shelter-in-place idea while still getting out for some fresh air and trying to stay active and healthy. Dr. Ford responded that we want to defer this type of behavior; this is the reason to shelter in place as much as possible. Parks have been closed so no gathering is taking place there. Plus, people should social distance by staying six feet or more apart for their safety.

Member Terry asked about National Takeout Day. To some small businesses and restaurants, takeout is a big deal. Since people are being asked to order takeout, Member Terry asked

whether restaurant scores are available for people who decide on a takeout option. Dr. Ford offered the Georgia Department of Public Health's website and DeKalbhealth.net (the Board of Health's website), where current inspection scores are provided.

Dr. Jones asked about houses of worship and the very loose language in the executive order. She noted that other states have stricter guidelines and she asked for a stronger approach to houses of worship here in Georgia. Dr. Ford mentioned that mega churches in DeKalb County have decided to voluntarily close and hold services remotely. She couldn't speak to whether other churches were holding services. She stated that it doesn't make sense to have a DeKalb County-specific regulation, which doesn't stretch to neighboring counties, because people don't always worship where they live. This type of directive concerning stricter guidelines needs to come from the governor.

Member Terry mentioned the executive order and stated that he fully supported the declaration and the resolution that have been put forth and that he appreciated Dr. Ford, the whole team and everyone on the frontlines. He agreed with Dr. Jones and her earlier suggestion about having more immediate action than what is currently being done.

#### **IV. Financial Report**

Chief Financial Officer Brenda K. Smith presented the Financial Report.

#### **V. Public Comments**

On behalf of Dunwoody Mayor Lynn Deutsch, a guest said that a lot of Dunwoody churches have offered their locations as drive-thru COVID-19 testing sites, should they be needed.

#### **VI. Board Comments**

On behalf of Dr. Watkins (who had to return to his practice), Vice Chair Lomax Taylor thanked everyone for participating in this important meeting and expressed the hope that everyone remains safe and adheres to all the safety guidelines.

#### **VII. Adjournment**

Vice Chair Lomax Taylor said that if there were no other comments and no objections, the meeting stood adjourned at 3:55 p.m.

Submitted by

Approved by



India Dyer, Recording Secretary

Clyde Watkins, Jr., M.D., Chair

