

cyorkfrench@outlook.com

From: Heidi Beidinger <hbeiding@nd.edu>
Sent: Thursday, December 17, 2020 9:06 PM
To: Jason Marker
Cc: Robert M. Einterz
Subject: Re: Board of Health

Good evening. Jason, thanks for taking the initiative to better inform this group of physicians. I couldn't agree more ... I'm willing to rock the boat w you!

I don't know that it will matter whether we offend the commissioners or not since two of three have all declared their anti sci sentiment UNLESS Andy can reel them in.

Let's get on a zoom in Jan and plan for some concrete action steps.

Talk to you both soon,
Heidi

On Thu, Dec 17, 2020 at 4:56 PM Jason Marker <jmarker@beaconhealthsystem.org> wrote:

I prefer these conversations to happen in a dark corner of a local pub, but since you and Heidi and I can't quite get away with that, we'll have to consider alternatives! 😊

I don't want to speak for Heidi (though I fear I'm about to) but I suspect that she and I are willing to rock whatever boats we need to in the interest of public health advocacy if that gives you cover to do whatever needs to be done. We are public servant volunteers and appointees by some who we rail against. The downside of being fired is only to lose ONE pulpit from which to affect change and I don't mind flitting close to that flame.

I'll await Heidi's input on the matter, but other than the unknown about the public health opinions of new Dr. Shoemaker, 2021 looks to me like the year when the the stars may have aligned for bold Board advocacy.

Cheers,

Jason

From: Robert M. Einterz [mailto:reinterz@sjcindiana.com]
Sent: Thursday, December 17, 2020 3:18 PM
To: Jason Marker <jmarker@beaconhealthsystem.org>; hbeiding@nd.edu
Subject: RE: Board of Health

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Thank you, Jason, for your leadership and your comments. The Elkhart doc's lack of understanding of the role of elected officials is disappointing, and his attitude toward the DoH is a bit demoralizing. He should be spewing his venom toward the legislature at local and State levels. Holcomb's hands, too, are tied by an increasingly conservative State legislature that will likely try to restrict his authority even more in the upcoming session. And they will have no appetite for funding public health. Of course, we should still try. Your suggestion of a letter from the Board +/- Department has merit; but, we will need to be careful not to alienate certain Commissioners even more. Two of three commissioners are on the record with their anti-science sentiments, and the most recently elected commissioner is of the mistaken belief (based on comments he made in a candidates forum before the election) that the DoH is already overfunded. As the Health Officer, I can be "political" but not partisan. Perhaps the Board members have more leeway.

Bob

From: Jason Marker <jmarker@beaconhealthsystem.org>
Sent: Thursday, December 17, 2020 1:49 PM
To: Robert M. Einterz <reinterz@sjcindiana.com>; hbeiding@nd.edu
Cc: Jason Marker <jmarker@beaconhealthsystem.org>
Subject: FW: Board of Health

Bob,

At today's weekly "BMG Provider COVID Huddle" an Elkhart physician stated (in more words than this) "Our county health departments are impotent to do the right things to help us out and we need to put more pressure on them". I politely interjected that his point was as far from the truth as the vitriol that I've had to endure from the anti-maskers, and proceeded to "drop some truth" on the meeting which they found quite illuminating.

I have sent the following message to the Chair of that meeting and he will forward this along to the rest of the attendees.

A) I wanted to let you know I had done that and allow you to see the letter, and

B) I wonder if early January might be a good time for an open letter from the Board +/- Department to the greater medical community outlining some of the points in my letter regarding 2020 and letting them know about our general plans for 2021 and what we would encourage them to do to support us.

Thoughts?

Jason

PS: I'll now be going to take a Xanax and find the drywall patch kit! 😊

cc: Heidi

From: Jason Marker
Sent: Thursday, December 17, 2020 1:36 PM
To: Christopher Hall <CHall@beaconhealthsystem.org>
Cc: Jason Marker <jmarker@beaconhealthsystem.org>
Subject: Board of Health

Chris,

Feel free to pass along to this group of physicians...

The St. Joseph County Board of Health meets on the 3rd Wednesday of every month at 4:30pm. There is a new Zoom link for each of these meetings, but these are posted with the agenda which is, by law, available to all here: <https://sjcindiana.com/1733/Meeting-Schedule> . In our county, there is an opportunity for 3-minutes of public comment from any who wish to speak at the end of the meeting (though the Board members can not engage in any back-and-forth during this time). Our Board includes (among others) myself, Dr. Michelle Migliore and Dr. Ilana Kirsch. Dr. Shoemaker from the St. Joe ER will join us in January.

Contrary to what may be generally believed, we and our Health Officer, Dr. Robert Einterz, have pushed extremely hard for Draconian restrictions on business activities, broad “fining” authority for mask non-use by anyone and a host of other well-researched public health interventions. In exchange, the public has given us hours of crude, anti-science, willfully ignorant and grossly ill-informed opinions of our work including

personal threats and numerous broadly encompassing law suits to slow us down. Certain members of our County Council and County Commissioners are happily in their camp and have blocked our efforts to make progress in these areas while stripping the “teeth” from all of the interventions that they have been willing to pass to appease us. At no time have we had physicians or other healthcare personnel present counter-arguments during this time of public comment.

The physician-leaders at Beacon and St. Joe support our work, but have been no more successful than we in moving the needle with our county government. Dr. Lanciewicz, CMO at St. Joe, is the only one who has engaged directly with the Board of Health to come and address the assembled citizenry with a medical opinion as a guest speaker (not during the public comment time). Now that the anti-mask advocates have essentially won their battle my watering down the county mask mandate to fines only for businesses who do not require their employees to wear masks (and by complaint only, not through direct enforcement), they have quieted down. At last night’s meeting however, one of the anti-mask advocates presented information signaling that they will now begin advocating that there be no mandatory vaccination requirement for anyone, including from healthcare businesses or schools, as the vaccine becomes available (and a host of other process demands around vaccine administration designed to decrease vaccine administration rates).

What can a community physician do:

- 1) Attend a meeting and get informed about the work of your county Board of Health. Here again is the St. Joseph County link: <https://sjcindiana.com/1733/Meeting-Schedule> I do not know what the Elkhart or Marshall County schedules are or how they conduct their meetings, but I’m sure that can be found online. Marshall County’s Health Officer and Board President are physicians, but I’m not sure about Elkhart.
- 2) Speak out during your civic right to voice your opinion. You don’t need stats and data...all you need is the passionate stories of patients and COVID that you are living every day.
- 3) Be vocal with your elected county officials about your expectations of them regarding support of their local health department in the matter of COVID policy. Here is a link to those people in St. Joseph County: <https://www.sjcindiana.com/402/Board-of-Commissioners> and <https://www.sjcindiana.com/404/County-Council>
- 4) When you’re talking with them you might mention that Indiana is #49 in the nation in per capita public health funding (and St. Joseph County is one of the lowest in Indiana) and that they (not the Board of Health) have the power to change that statistic while, as reported by the South Bend Tribune, Indiana is #2 in the nation in per capita COVID deaths. This is not a coincidence.
- 5) Continue to be a role model of responsible mask wearing, physical distancing, hand hygiene, holiday decision-making discipline, and need for patience.

Thank you for letting me onto my soap box and giving you this public service announcement!! ☺

Jason Marker, MD, MPA, FAAFP

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