

COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

PORTSMOUTH

Health Department



Charting a Course for Good Health

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Portsmouth Community Health Advisory Council

Wednesday, October 18th, 2023
10:00am – 12:00pm

Minutes

Call to Order and Introductions:

Dr. Michelle Pyka, called the meeting to order and introductions were made of all members present in the room or online.

Members Present:

Member	Organization
Dr. Michelle Pyka, MD	Bon Secours Maryview Medical Center
Delores Adams	Portsmouth Redevelopment and Housing Authority
Donice Libby, MD	Bon Secours Maryview Medical Center
Dr. Nathan Woodard, PhD	Portsmouth Behavioral Healthcare Services
James Overton	Portsmouth Civic League
Rev. Suzanne Stierwalt	St. Andrew Lutheran Church
Gina Harris	Portsmouth Department of Social Services
Dr. Cynthia Burwell, Ed.D	Norfolk State University
Amy Paulson	Healthy Portsmouth Coalition
Avanti Allen-Benson	Portsmouth Health Department
Dr. Kavita Imrit-Thomas, DO	Director, Portsmouth Health Department
Dwight Richards	Portsmouth Health Department
Michelle Winz	Portsmouth Health Department

Infectious Disease Updates:

Health of the City:

Michelle Winz provided a brief statistical update about ongoing meningococcal vaccination efforts that are underway in areas where outbreaks have been observed. Additionally, information was presented on COVID-19, Influenza, and Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) observations, trends, and containment efforts. Opioid overdose activities and abatement efforts were also reported on. Members presented offered



The Portsmouth Health Department received accreditation through the Public Health Accreditation Board by meeting national standards for high quality public health services, leadership, and accountability.

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additional resources, opportunities for collaboration with ongoing efforts, and venues to educate and serve the broader community.

Review and Approval of Minutes:

The minutes of the July 19th, 2023, meeting was reviewed. James Overton motioned to approve the minutes as written, seconded by Dr. Libby. The motion passed unanimously.

Old Business:

Follow-Up/Reports:

- James Overton reiterated the availability of his online radio forum, *Portsmouth Coffee Talk*, as a medium to share health information to a wider audience, thereby creating greater awareness of issues improved opportunities to address them. He also invited council members to actively participate in that forum.
- **Opioid overdose incidents:** Michelle Winz described the efforts to provide harm reduction kits to citizens of Portsmouth at various events and venues, including Save-A-Life Day events when more than 200 kits were distributed. Dr. Donice Libby, MD, asked about sharing overdose data with school officials and military partners to aide in address the issues. Dr. Michelle Pyka, MD, asked about after action efforts to reach the community following overdose incidents. Dr. Cynthia Burwell offered that Residential Aides at Norfolk State University are trained to administer Narcan should an overdose event occur in the dorms.
- **Portsmouth Community Health Assessment:** Dr. Kavita Imrit-Thomas, DO, and Michelle Winz offered a status report on the Community Health Assessment that is being worked on.

New Business:

- **Breast Cancer Awareness Walk:** A breast cancer awareness walk will take place on Saturday, October 21, 2023, at Festival Park in Portsmouth. Bon Secours Health Hub is available to provide education on breast cancer and other health related topics to community members and organizations; as well as, vaccination clinics.
- **Opioid work (PHD/BSMH):** Dr. Imrit-Thomas expressed gratitude for the ongoing collaborative work that is taking place between the health department and Bon Secours. Dr. Pyka provided information on the Peer Counselor positions that will be open soon and encouraged council members to share the information with anyone who may be interested in those positions. Amy Paulson expressed concerns about pediatric exposure to cannabis and its relationship to other misused or abused substances. Dr. Burwell offered that many of today's vaping apparati are easily disguised as other objects and youth may be using in the

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classroom or at home without an adult being aware. Dr. Imrit-Thomas offered the availability of the VDH's Tobacco/Vaping Cessation program for anyone who desires to quit using those products.

- **Issues Facing PHD:** Dr. Imrit-Thomas reported that there is a severe staff shortage across VDH and at Portsmouth Health Department. She asked council members to share the availability of open positions across their networks to help to fill some of the open positions. Several ideas for recruitment, including colleges, universities, military installations, and others were offered by council members.

Round Table:

Johnita Coston, Assistant City Attorney, offered that some educational opportunities, especially for youth offenders, may be possible through the courts. PHD will follow-up on those opportunities and report back at a future meeting.

Dr. Imrit-Thomas asked if Bon Secours could assist with reporting of RSV related mortality data. This data is not readily available through the VDH reporting system.

Delores Adams offered that Portsmouth Redevelopment and Housing Authority can assist with advertising clinics and other health information to their residents, in each of their communities.

Amy Paulson reported on the Million Hearts project and the Breast Cancer initiative that are being led by Healthy Portsmouth.

Dr. Imrit-Thomas reported on the addition of a Nurse Practitioner to the PHD's clinic, resulting in increased opportunities for screening and treating patients.

Next Meeting:

The next council meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, January 17th, 2024.

Adjournment:

Meeting adjourned at 11:45 am.