

**Wisconsin State Laboratory of Hygiene
Board of Directors Meeting
June 22, 2021**

APPROVED MINUTES

March 23, 2021

1:00 P.M. – 3:00 P.M.

**Wisconsin State Laboratory of Hygiene
2601 Agriculture Drive
Madison, WI 53718**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chair Charles Warzecha, Vice-Chair James Morrison, Secretary Dr. James Schauer, Dr. German Gonzalez, Dr. Richard Moss, Dr. Robert Corliss, Gina Green-Harris, Greg Pils, Gil Kelley, Jeffery Kindrai,

WSLH STAFF PRESENT: Jan Klawitter, Kevin Karbowski, David Webb, Dr. Vanessa Horner, Allen Benson, Dr. Kaitlin Sundling, Steve Strebel, Cynda DeMontigny, Amy Miles, Tip Vandall, Dr. Errin Rider, Dr. Allen Bateman, Jim Sterk, Kristine Hansbery and Nathaniel Javid

DNR STAFF PRESENT: Zana Sijan, Steve Geis

GUESTS PRESENT: Dr. Ryan Westergaard, Dr. Keith Poulsen

Chair Charles Warzecha made a motion to call the meeting to order at 1:00 P.M. Jeffery Kindrai seconded the motion. The meeting commenced at 1:00 P.M.

Item 1. ROLL CALL

Chair Charles Warzecha initiated the roll call of the Board. Nathaniel Javid conducted the roll call of the Board members. All Board Member seats or their designated representatives were present except Barry Irmen. There were no attendees on the public telephone line.

Item 2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Approve the minutes of the December 15, 2020 Board Meeting as submitted. **Chair Charles Warzecha** entertained a motion to approve the minutes, so moved by **Jeffery Kindrai**. **Charles Warzecha** seconded the motion. The voice vote approving the minutes was unanimous.

Item 3. REORGANIZATION OF AGENDA

There was no request to reorganize the agenda.

Item 4. PUBLIC APPEARANCES

There were no public appearances.

Item 5. BOARD MEMBERS' MATTERS

Charles Warzecha noted that state agencies are rapidly moving forward in their planning to bring staff back to the offices at a certain level. We will start at 10% capacity, but this will increase as more staff are vaccinated and the situation improves. We will likely continue remote meetings for a while. Mr. Warzecha noted the possibility of having remote access for meetings in the future. Dr. Schauer responded that the June Board Meeting will be remote and we will evaluate as things progress for September.

Item 6. COVID-19 RESPONSE IN WISCONSIN

■ Dr. Ryan Westergaard

Chief Medical Officer and State Epidemiologist for Communicable Diseases, Wisconsin Department of Health Services

Mr. Warzecha introduced Dr. Ryan Westergaard, Chief Medical Officer and State Epidemiologist for Communicable Diseases at the Wisconsin Department of Health Services, to provide an update on the COVID-19 response in Wisconsin. Dr. Westergaard noted the collaborative nature of the COVID-19 response activities between the CDC, the WSLH, and WI DHS in regards to novel outbreak investigations, statewide seroprevalence surveys, and evaluation of testing strategies. Dr. Westergaard noted how these activities fulfill the Wisconsin Idea. Every aspect of our response has been statewide. Dr. Westergaard highlighted an outbreak they were involved in analyzing at an overnight summer school retreat. In this outbreak, there was a cluster of three adolescent cases detected in a rural WI county of 152 students from 21 states and three countries. Universal antibody testing was administered one week before arrival. Multiple symptomatic staff and students were not tested but there was a mass quarantine, which meant no movement in or out of the camp, but no masks or social distancing inside. The result of this study ultimately showed that testing alone (with the absence of masks and social distancing) will not prevent outbreaks. The genome sequencing of this showed that this outbreak was the result of one student.

Dr. Westergaard next discussed the Wisconsin Seroprevalence Survey (SHOW) for antibody testing to track the prevalence of antibodies in confirmed cases. Dr. Westergaard presented the different waves of testing as part of the Survey of the Health of Wisconsin performed over the last several years. The preliminary results show that there is a 1.6% antibody prevalence overall. Dr. Westergaard reviewed campus outbreak investigations and testing strategies. This included a cohort study measuring SARS-COV-2 seroconversion and correlates of protection in university students along with the performance of an antigen-based test for asymptomatic and

symptomatic SARS-COV-2 testing at two university campuses. Essentially, the results showed that not everyone who had a positive PCR developed antibodies. Dr. Westergaard also noted studies that include behavioral risk factors such as participation in fraternity or sorority events, frequency of consumption of alcoholic beverages, social distancing and mask wearing. Dr. Westergaard next reviewed the performance of antigen based testing, since there was not much real world data about this, particularly in asymptomatic individuals.

Dr. Westergaard noted that vaccine distribution is moving along well. Overall, we've administered 2,350,826 doses so far. To develop and distribute such an effective and safe vaccine has been a significant accomplishment. To date, 25.3% of the population has been fully vaccinated. It is promising that 72.5% of those age 65 and older have received at least one dose. The challenge going forward will be to continue to encourage people to get vaccinated – not necessarily supply issues. Also, addressing racial disparities is an important concern. Dr. Westergaard lastly discussed the significance of variants, particularly the B.1.1.7 variant.

Charles Warzecha thanked Dr. Westergaard for his presentation. Mr. Warzecha asked Dr. Westergaard if he can speak on how the pandemic will end. Dr. Westergaard said the exact specifics of this are unknown, but we should proceed with optimism. There is a chance of things getting worse before they get better, with upswings coming and going. The main factor is if people are vaccinated. We also do not know the duration of protection from vaccination. We won't be able to eradicate SARS-COV-2 entirely, but with all measures in place we can minimize threat.

Item 7. WVDL and CAMPUS COVID-19 TESTING

■ Dr. Keith Poulsen

Clinical Associate Professor, Large Animal Internal Medicine
Director, Wisconsin Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory (WVDL)

Dr. Schauer introduced Dr. Keith Poulsen to the Board. Dr. Poulsen has been a great partner with the WSLH and this pandemic has shown the importance for our partnership with the WVDL. Dr. Poulsen provided some background on the WVDL noting the two laboratory facilities. The WVDL is significantly smaller than the WSLH but they have a large caseload. The vast majority of why the WVDL is here is to serve Wisconsin veterinarians and Wisconsin agriculture. A great majority of this focus is on Holstein bovines. The caseload for this includes managing infectious disease research. Wisconsin poultry is growing as well. Dr. Poulsen provided some background on the accreditation of the WVDL and the networks of laboratories across the country. This network is important in keeping laboratories from being sidelined so they are not completely overwhelmed. The WVDL is designed to handle thousands of samples per day. They are set up like this so that things such as milk supply are not being disrupted when dealing with a pathogen. They needed to have a CLIA accredited laboratory so that they could make a decision in real time. They were also paying a third party \$100 per sample and were already working with COVID-19 on campus as soon as they started testing animals and finding PCR positive results. As they were developing this and doing COVID testing, mink outbreaks occurred in the Netherlands and Denmark. We had two mink outbreaks in Wisconsin.

We received approval to build a diagnostic lab the first week of July and started testing six weeks later. This was a monumental task including obtaining CLIA licensure. We hired 10-12 new scientists and were able to work and build within our quality system. One challenge we had was finding microbiologists that were highly trained to step into this. To go from a strictly

research based science to a high throughput and high stakes environment was difficult. A lot of our testing was during the early dormitory outbreaks in the beginning of the fall. We were exceeding about 6,000 tests per week. We had to have things run for a second shift to keep up with mission critical work and the increase in testing volume. Dr. Poulsen presented graphs on testing, noting some of the volatility due to when students went to get tested. We expect to see a surge of testing in May surrounding graduation, with things slowing down thereafter. September 2021 to January 2022 is an unknown at this point, and largely dependent on the vaccine.

Dr. Poulsen noted that ultimately this partnership has built stronger collaborations. The challenges we've faced are maintaining mission critical work, dealing with high consequence capacity, and figuring out the supply chain to maintain testing. The benefits, however, have been more training, better equipment, brand awareness, and electronic quality management. Although we are not out of the woods yet, we have come out a lot stronger.

Chair Charles Warzecha thanked Dr. Poulsen for his presentation and the work the WVDL has done in collaborating with the WSLH.

Item 8. FINANCIAL REPORT

■ Kevin Karbowski, Chief Financial Officer, Wisconsin State Laboratory of Hygiene

Mr. Karbowski updated the Board on the income statement, working capital, and budget. Year to date, we expected a loss of \$145, 832. Our actual loss year to date is \$346, 314. Considering COVID-19, we are doing well. We are 72% over budget for DHS. This is due to increased work from COVID-19 related activity. Where COVID-19 has increased testing, other areas of the lab have seen less activity due to lockdowns. We are continuing to build our cytotechnology testing and customer base. As a result, we had increased their budget and they have been outperforming their budget.

Our available working capital is \$4,997, 569 as of January 31, 2021 compared to \$6,854,967 on June 30, 2020. This is a decrease of \$1,857,398. This is due to our need to hold more contingency funds due to increased revenue combined with spending of necessary capital purchases and other losses we experienced due to COVID-19.

We have signed \$5.1M of contracts since the last Board meeting. Mr. Karbowski had the Board refer to the packet for more details on these contracts including DHS, Coverdell, and APHL.

Dr. Schauer noted that although the preliminary budget was not included in the slide presentation, we will send this to the Board for review. Mr. Karbowski noted that we are budgeting a net loss of \$1.4M, which is expected at this point. We have an expected cash income of \$600K. Between now and the June Board meeting, we work on this budget. We may have a slightly negative bottom line, but a slightly positive cash flow. We will present this to the Board in June.

Item 9. HR UPDATE

■ Cynda DeMontigny, HR Director, WSLH

Ms. DeMontigny provided the HR update to the Board. We had nine recruitments from the period of December 5, 2020 to March 19, 2021. There was one each in our Disease Prevention Division, Laboratory Improvement Division, and Administration. There were two in our Environmental Health Division, four in our Communicable Disease Division, and none in our Occupational Health Division. Ms. DeMontigny noted the hires, resignations, and retirements for this period as well. Overall, there were 19 hires, 4 resignations, and 3 retirements.

Item 10. DIRECTOR'S REPORT

■ Dr. Jamie Schauer, Director, WSLH

Dr. Schauer noted that the water boil notice was not available at this time, but we will follow up if we receive more information. Dr. Schauer next had Ms. Klawitter present the Public Relations Report to the Board. Ms. Klawitter had the Board refer to the packet for more details about the recent events that include a new WSLH Communicable Disease Division Director, a UW-SMPH COVID-19 pandemic expert panel discussion, a National Resource Toxicologist Pilot Program, WI Public Radio's *The Morning Show* – COVID-19 whole genome sequencing, a DNR Fish Consumption Advisory booklet, and a NewSTEPS newborn screening grant, among others.

Dr. Schauer provided an update on the FY19-FY21 Strategic Plan. We developed a three-year strategic plan that was adopted in June 2018. We've had steady progress on all eleven strategic initiatives even with the COVID-19 pandemic. We plan to report on the progress and new three-year plan at the June 2021 Board Meeting. For the next three-year cycle, we will focus on nine strategic initiatives. Two initiatives have been addressed and can be sustainably addressed within WSLH units. Also, three initiatives have evolved in response to rapid developments over the past three years. Dr. Schauer reviewed the original list of strategic initiatives for FY19-FY21. The strategic initiatives that are sustainably being addressed by the WSLH units are the Master's Degree in Cytotechnology and the Cytogenetics Business Plan. Also, strategic initiatives that have evolved due to rapid developments over the past three years are sensors and point of care testing (with a focus on point of care testing) and bioinformatics including an integrative approach to genomics and bioinformatics. Dr. Schauer noted the strategic initiatives for FY22-FY25 that we will formally present to the Board at the June 2021 meeting. These include Point of Care Testing, Clinical Biomonitoring, Genomics and Bioinformatics, Advancing the Public Health Mission of SMPH, eBusiness and Web Portals, Outreach, LIMS expansion, Space, Scientific Investment, and a new item developing a strategic initiative in Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity for WSLH.

Dr. Schauer noted that we submitted several requests to the Governor's Budget. One was to hire a faculty member with CALS on campus. This is related to soils health, which is critical to some DNR activities. We also submitted a request addressing PFAS and emerging contaminants and increased rent coverage. We will see how this moves forward with negotiations.

Dr. Schauer noted that we made some important IT investments that will help us improve operations. Dr. Schauer introduced WSLH IT Director, Allen Benson, to update on two new systems. We replaced Microsoft Great Plains with a cloud based ERP system called Acumatica. We went live at the end of February. This was extremely successful. The other system we went live with is OnBase, which is a document management system. We've had a lot of information to move into a new system so this has been a long process, but already this is making a notable difference for us.

Item 11. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Chair Charles Warzecha opened the floor for nominations for the Election of Officers. James Morrison who is currently Vice-Chair is set for nomination for Chair. Secretary Schauer's nomination is set for Secretary. The Vice-Chair seat is currently open. Jim Morrison nominated Greg Pils for the position of Vice-Chair. The Board unanimously voted in favor for James Morrison for the position of Chair, Greg Pils for the position of Vice-Chair, and Dr. James Schauer for the position of Secretary.

Chair Charles Warzecha made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 3:00 P.M. **Jeffery Kindrai** accepted the motion and **Greg Pils** seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously and the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted by:



James J. Schauer, PhD, P.E., M.B.A.
Secretary, Wisconsin State Laboratory of Hygiene Board of Directors