

Alexandria Public Health Advisory Commission
Minutes of the Thursday, September 17, 2015 Meeting

5:30 – 7:00 p.m.

Fourth Floor Conference Room
Alexandria Health Department

- I. Welcomes, introductions and attendance – Meredith Taylor

Present

Meredith Taylor
Jessica Hill
Richard Merritt
Arlene Hewitt
Michael Trahos
Stephen Haering, AHD
Diana Sanchez, AHD

Guests

Jennifer Sonderman, AHD
Ron Kagawa, City of Alexandria
Brian Hricik, City of Alexandria
Tamara Wilson

- II. Meeting was called to order at 5:34 p.m. A quorum was not established.

- III. Approval of the meeting minutes from the July 16, 2015 meeting will be held until the October 15, 2015 meeting

- IV. Crumb Rubber Use on City Athletic Fields – Jennifer Sonderman

- We have reviewed various crumb rubber studies, no risks have been found in regards to crumb rubber posing a threat to humans. Studies have found low levels of the chemicals but the difference between what has come from the fields and what is coming from pollution cannot be determined. These studies have all shown that there is no increase risk of cancer.
 - Do we have any literature about inhalation of the chemical while playing games? – Dr. Trahos
- Some of the studies have looked at inhalation and a biomonitoring study was conducted on players who played for 2.5 hours on the artificial field. They conducted this study by testing the urine of the players after playing on the turf for 2.5 hours. The levels they found were low and those who had an increase went out to eat a hamburger and were also exposed to the same chemical from the hamburger.
 - We have asked VDH to partner with the CDC to conduct biomonitoring studies. We have also asked the Virginia Cancer Registry to give us the cancer rates before and after the implementation of artificial turf. If it shows an increase, we will have to conduct additional studies, if it is level, then we know that it may not pose an issue. We addressed the constituent's concerns in regards to the cancer risks. – Dr. Haering
- We started looking at building synthetic infield turfs in 2007. We felt at the time we were getting behind on providing public turf fields. It is equal to 1 to 3 in natural grass. We were re-turfing fields at least once a year. One of the benefits of synthetic turfs was that ankle and knee injuries were far less and there were reduced concussions. Every other year we conduct a survey, a citizen satisfaction survey to see how many people use the fields. - Ron Kagawa
- When the constituent came to us, we took this issue very seriously and contacted Parks and Rec. It is not the Health Department's role to say we should do something; we conducted the research to address the issue. The report we gave to the constituent, we only gave to the constituent. We are looking to put out the

report to submit for publication, so that it can be used for other Health Department's in other areas. –Dr. Haering

- Are there other turfs that can be used, are there alternatives? – Arlene Hewitt
 - In terms of other infill, no studies have been done on other fields either, and there have been no studies of issues, such as mold. – Dr. Haering
 - One of the popular things now is organic infill, but we don't know what is in that either and it is about 100k in addition to what the costs normally are for fields. – Ron Kagawa
 - Meredith, is it our job to address this to City Council? – Jessica Hill
 - We as a commission could act to do so. If we don't want to raise a concern, we could serve as information. What are the inhalation concerns with crumb rubber, what is the exposure beyond the site? Can it be carried in socks, etc? – Meredith Taylor
 - It would only have been addressed in that one study, playing on the field for 2.5 hours. – Jennifer Sonderman
 - This study includes the service for the playgrounds. – Dr. Haering
 - All the risk assessments have been very conservative. Even with all that it has been all negligible risks- Jennifer Sonderman.
 - We are meeting with the constituent on October 9 to review the report. – Dr. Haering
 - When we started our program, we used material data safety sheets. Everything we build has to be complaint with the Chesapeake Environmental Health rules. – Ron Kagawa
 - This began last year because of an NBC report about increase of cancer in players. This study was done by a coach and not Public Health. – Dr. Haering
 - What is the sublimation of the temperatures? – Dr. Trahos
 - The exposures studies that have been done to measure what crumb rubber reached has normally been done in the summer and have been measured under real world temps. – Jen Sonderman
 - Have we heard from any Council members about this concern? – Meredith Taylor
 - We have had interest but no we have not – Ron Kagawa
 - I am trying to be cognitive of the cost factor, health factor, and I believe that there will be more of a risk with anything natural because that opens this up to other problems. – Dr. Trahos
 - The Commission has a responsibility to public health because an issue of health has been brought to us. The community needs to know what they are playing on is a safe field or not so safe field. – Arlene Hewitt
 - That could be by informing Council and giving them information and background on crumb rubber. – Meredith Taylor
 - We as a commission are supportive of the use of crumb rubber due to the methodology used to determine that this, at this time is the safest turf to use. It is also the most cost effective method at this time, while not posing a health risk to our children. We are currently dealing with public fields, and anything we would be commenting on would be on public fields and not private fields. – Dr. Trahos
 - If this issue is something that anyone wants to spearhead please let me know and we will table this until the next meeting. – Meredith Taylor
- V. Discussion Regarding Questions Concerning Gun Violence - Meredith Taylor
- The APD has kindly offered to direct us to the appropriate folks to answer the questions we had. I would like to take a moment tonight to refine what questions we specifically we want to follow up on.

- The APD is working on getting someone to help answer our questions. I have put together packages about how bad the situation is and how to plan to eradicate it in the City. – Arlene Hewitt
- I was delighted that gun violence was put on the agenda. I posed the question when I chaired the commission and asked if gun violence was a public health issue. I strongly feel that guns are a public health issue and I am glad that the commission is taking this on. – Richard Merritt
- We need to address what the City is doing about the way the guns are being sold in the City and what we can do to make the City safer- Arlene Hewitt
- There has been a lot of concern over the gun shots in my neighborhood and this issue has been raised. I think APD should be more on top of their social media in terms of posting more details about the gun violence that is going on. – Jessica Hill
- I think that the APD has to tread carefully in regards to what is posted in social media. APD needs to have the support and until the citizens and the City truly support the APD, they will back off. – Dr. Trahos
- We are connected to Baltimore and DC, I wonder if VA's lax gun laws pose a threat to public health. MD and DC have stringent gun laws, but VA doesn't. Do VA's lax gun laws pose a threat to public health? The real threat is due to suicide. Looking in particular to teen suicide. 82% of teen suicide is due to poorly secured guns and they are heart wrenching because the guns are not being properly secured. – Richard Merritt
- The reason APD withdrew today was because the person who was scheduled was not the one to speak about policy regarding guns and it was not due to lack of support. The institute of medicine had a meeting last December that looks at means of violence and means of suicide. This article states that our homicide rates are very high and suicides in other countries are more successful due to pesticides as they are not able to provide the appropriate medical care needed. California is using the California gun violence restraining order which allows a family member to notify the PD to take a gun away for 21 days. The family member can then call to have the gun removed. – Dr. Haering
 - I am trying to take a step back and focus on the gun itself. I am trying to find out who is in control of sales in City, is it the State or City but I have not been able to get the answer. I would like to have the sales of guns prohibited in the City of Alexandria. It is our responsibility to come up with some thoughts and then bring it to Council. – Arlene Hewitt
 - Has any jurisdiction in VA have banned the sales of guns? – Jessica Hill
 - Not that we are aware of. We can contact the City Attorney's office to find out what we can or can't do in regards to the sales of guns, similar to what we did with e-cigarettes.- Dr. Haering
 - We as a commission can bring up how we are looking for a resumption of Federal Research to look at ways to reduce gun violence in Virginia. – Richard Merritt
 - Would you like to reach back out to APD to find out the answers to our questions? Meredith Taylor
 - I would be happy to work with Arlene to work on a research paper as to what the commission can do. – Richard Merritt
 - We have a lot of communities in our cities and issues in cities such as in Ferguson, Baltimore, etc. In which people are dealing with situations such as losing their jobs and houses and are dealing with difficult situations. These situations have been building for over 20 years, like a pressure cooker. Approaches in which we are putting even more restrictions on people will turn up the pressure on these cookers and that may not be the best method. We

need to look at other methods in which we have a gun turn in day or finding other methods with which to solve this problem. – Tamara Wilson

VI. Alexandria Health Department Update – Dr. Haering

- Our PHEM department of three has only one person right now. EH is about 50% capacity as is our WIC department. We have faced issues of losing people to other jurisdictions, due to those jurisdictions being closer to home. We have also had issues as to how to recruit people and keep them due to money.
 - Does this affect MRC? - Arlene Hewitt
- Yes, the MRC coordinator position is open and we only have one person running the whole division. We will be giving data to the City Manager about these issues. OPM did a study and stated that our turnover is about 10% but this is due to them not looking at the division as a whole. Our food specialists are an example of fully training someone and then they leave to work for other jurisdictions.
 - Is this something that we can bring to Council that wages are causing a high turnover and the inability to keep staff? This in terms then poses a public health problem since we don't have enough staff to continue to protect our health. I would like to bring that to the Commission for consideration. – Arlene Hewitt
 - This is an issue across jurisdictions and not just in Alexandria. Nearly every portion of this City is being redeveloped. Why can't we ask the developers of this area to provide areas that can be set aside for nurses, fireman, etc, so these people do not have to travel from Prince William? – Tamara Wilson
- That is a good point to see how we can look at minimally nominal ways to solve these issues. – Dr. Haering
 - We will make this issue a priority item and come back to that after AHD submits the data to the City Manager's office. – Meredith Taylor

VII. Additional Updates

- Is there an email restriction in regards to email communications for the commissions under city ordinance? In FFX County, under the city ordinance, more than three commissioners cannot communicate via email because it is considered involving commission business. I wanted to see if this is something that applies to us and if we should have an alexandria.gov email addresses. – Dr. Trahos
 - For the EMS, we are under this restriction. Jackie Henderson can do a FOIA meeting and give this information to us – Brian Hrick
- PHA is having a community meeting on 9/29, they will be looking at the CHIP and looking at next steps of implementation and becoming champions of various issues. Katya is also looking at e-cigarettes and AHD reached out to the City Attorney, who came back with extensive information about e-cigarettes. – Meredith Taylor

VIII. Motion to adjourn meeting at 7:08 p.m.

Next Meeting: October 15, 2015

Minutes Respectfully Submitted by:

Diana Sanchez

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