

**Skokie Board of Health**  
**Thursday, May 11, 2023**  
**7:00 pm**

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**Conference Room D&E, Village Hall, 5127 Oakton St**

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**MINUTES**

Present: Dr. Swapna Dave, Dr. Bruce Gaynes, Margaret Keeler, Dr. Girija Kalyan Kumar, Dr. Edward Linn (Chair), Jan Shiffman, Dr. Kyungran Shim, Rohit Pandya, Patricia Urbanus, Irtaza Usman, Ruth Varma, Dr. William Werner, Dr. Larry Williams, Sibyl Yau; Staff: Mike Charley, Melissa Versch

Not Present: Heidi Nickisch Duggan, Juliet Haido, Maureen Hanlon, Dr. Jeremy Schwartz, Romil Sood, Trustee Liaison James Johnson, Trustee Liaison Keith Robinson

- I. **Call to Order @ 7:00 pm.**
- II. **Approval of Agenda:** Approved
- III. **Approval of Minutes:** April 13, 2023: Approved
- IV. **Skokie Health and Human Service Presentation, SHIP/Open Enrollment/Benefit Access/Income Tax Preparation/Will Program**

Melissa Versch, Social Worker from HHS presented on the following programs:

- **AARP Tax Assistance:** With this program individuals schedule an appointment to meet with IRS-Certified volunteers. The program offers free income tax assistance. The program is targeted at low-income seniors and people with disabilities. The program only provides assistance for simple tax forms. Appointments are available February – April only. Over 180 individuals were serviced over the last fiscal year.
- **Wills Program:** Individuals contact the HHS Department to schedule an appointment to meet with an elder law attorney. The program offers assistance with Simple Wills, Powers of Attorney and Living Wills. The initial meeting is a free consultation. If agreed upon, the individual will return for a second meeting and there is a reasonable charge for follow-up. The program is targeted to low-income seniors in suburban Cook County, however any Skokie resident can utilize this service. In FY23, 80 appointments were made.
- **Benefit Access Program:** Individuals can make appointments through HHS to meet with a volunteer or staff member that will assist that individual to apply for a State of Illinois license plate discount or RTA Free Ride Pass. To be eligible the individual must be 65 years or older and the previous last year's income must be

less than \$33,562 for one person or \$44,533 for two people.

- Senior Health Insurance Program (SHIP): HHS has two staff and three volunteers trained to provide SHIP counseling. This program provides free Medicare counseling to Skokie beneficiaries and their families. The program offers help for individuals new to Medicare or retiring individuals. The program helps individuals understand coverage and options, billing and claims, Medicare savings programs and Medicaid. HHS does community outreach and education with this program. Medicare Open Enrollment is October 15 - December 7

Rohit Pandya asked about whether HHS still was offering hearing screenings. Mike Charley responded that HHS no longer offers this service. It ended when we lost a staff position due to attrition. Melissa Versch mentioned that the Boomers and Beyond event is scheduled for November 3 and it's possible to investigate providing hearing screening at that event.

Several BOH members noted that these are excellent programs and encouraged HHS to actively promote them to the community. Dr. Larry Williams recommended that HHS use master's in public health students needing experience to promote programs, and recommended the students visit senior facilities. Dr. Swapna Dave mentioned she would be willing to donate some of her time with outreach. She communicated she speaks several different languages (Urdu, Hindi, Gujarati, Murathi). Ruth Varma communicated she speaks Hindi, Gujarati and Swahili. Dr. Kyungran Shim communicated that individuals she works with also need help navigating Medicaid, it's very complex.

#### **V. BOH Recurring 3 Minute/Person Introductions:**

Dr. Larry Williams: Dr. Williams is from East Tennessee, the Knoxville area. Dolly Parton is his cousin. He went to dental school at the University of Tennessee and graduated in 1982. He was a Navy reservist while going to school. Spent 30 years in the navy and retired in 2012. A highlight of his career was he was the only dentist to be selected as a Public Health Emergency Officer for the Midwest region. He just got promoted as of yesterday to full-professor at Midwestern University. He teaches dentistry to first- and second-year students and clinical. He has a master's in public health. He is the Advisor for Public Health for Midwestern University. He was previously in a barbershop quartet and gospel quartet.

#### **VI. Chair's Report, Dr. Linn**

Dr. Linn presented that on May 5, 2023, WHO Director-General determined that COVID-19 is now an established and ongoing health issue which no longer constitutes a public health emergency of international concern (PHEIC). Dr. Linn presented that this does not mean that it's the end of the pandemic, it doesn't mean that COVID-19 is gone and it doesn't mean that we can go back to pre-pandemic times. With the end of the Federal Public Health Emergency on May 11, 2023 there is specific data that will no longer be available due new laxer reporting requirements. There will still be wastewater and genomic surveillance and collection of emergency room data. The CDC will no longer provide test positivity rates and vaccination coverage will be spotty. The CDC is still recommending that individuals stay up-to-date with their vaccinations. The

CDC will no longer report COVID-19 transmission/COVID levels, but will move towards using hospitalization data to inform decisions.

**VII. Director’s Monthly Report, Mike Charley, Director of Health and Human Services**

Mike Charley presented that the on May 5 the World Health Organization declared an end to the global health emergency for COVID-19 that was in place since January 30, 2020. Also, on May 11, the National public health emergency and statewide disaster declarations end. Mike related that Dr. Linn covered many of the updates and changes due to the Federal Emergency Declarations ending.

Mike communicated that the federal government has a “Bridge Access Program”, designed for the uninsured to have access to vaccine, testing & treatment services moving forward. The program will create a unique \$1.1 billion public-private partnership to help maintain uninsured individuals’ access to COVID-19 care at their local pharmacies, through existing public health infrastructure, and at their local health centers. The Skokie HHS will continue to offer free COVID vaccine to everyone as long as there are supplies and will continue to receive vaccines for the uninsured through both the Vaccines for Children Program and Adult 317 program. The CDC will establish contracts with pharmacies to enable them to continue offering COVID-19 vaccines and designated treatments with no out-of-pocket costs to uninsured individuals, maintaining this critical access point for this population.

Mike shared that today May 11th, IDPH in partnership with Gov. Pritzker recognized the work of public health and health care workers across the state. This recognition comes as the Public Health Emergency (PHE) and national emergency declarations ended today. Illinois Public Health and Health Care Hero Day is an opportunity to express gratitude to all the public health and health care heroes for their sacrifices and actions that guarded the health of our state and its citizens. Skokie HHS celebrated today with staff with food & drink and each staff member received a Public Health t-shirt.

Mike shared the local Skokie COVID-19 data. The case rates are the lowest they have been since July of 2021. Skokie HHS has administered close to 35,000 doses to date.

Other updates included the annual Unite Against Racism event held on April 25, 2023 that HHS participated in District 69’s Spring into Wellness Fair on May 6.

**VIII. Ongoing/New Items of Business**

A. BOH Onboarding Subcommittee: Sibyl Yau communicated that the onboarding document is pretty much done. There are few changes to be made and those changes will be made prior to the next meeting. Dr. Werner recommended to link the BOH document to the Village’s website calendar. Patricia Urbanus recommended providing a link a BOH member’s list, since it changes. There was some discussion about what BOH contact information should be included in the onboarding document for privacy reasons.

B. IPLAN Update, Sibyl Yau showed the board a “Your Voice is Needed” document

that will be used to recruit residents to participate in the IPLAN process. The form asks if the individual has had any challenges with accessing healthcare, behavioral health and/or affordable housing and if so to scan a QR code to answer a few questions and get involved. Individuals will help in identifying barriers. Action teams are meeting on all three priorities with the goal to finish the IPLAN community health needs assessment document for submittal to the BOH in August.

- C. BOH Vacancies: There are two vacancies. Mike recommended recruiting a veterinarian. It was also discussed recruiting someone from the faith-based community.

**IX. Public Comments: None**

**X. Adjournment @ 8:30 p.m.**

**Next Meeting: June 8, 2023 @ 7:00 p.m.**