



Grays Harbor County Board of Health

PEARSALL BUILDING
2109 SUMNER AVENUE, ABERDEEN, WA 98520

January 5, 2021 Board of Health Special Meeting

Board of Health Chair Vickie Raines called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m. Commissioner Kevin Pine and Commissioner Jill Warne were also present. The meeting was held electronically through Zoom to allow for social distancing.

Also in Attendance: Cassie Lentz, Healthy Places Division Manager; Kristina Alnajjar, Healthy Families Program Manager; Maranatha Hay, Public Health Incident Commander; Jeff Nelson, Environmental Health Director; Dr. John Bausher, Health Officer, Health; Hanna Cleverly, Emergency Management; Norma Tillotson, County Prosecuting Attorney (Interim); Jon Beltran, Deputy Prosecuting Attorney; Fire District 2 Chief Leonard Johnson; Kimberly McCaw, Public Health Nurse Supervisor; April Heikkila, Community Health Specialist; Wilma Weber Public Health Community Health Specialist. Jenna Amsbury, Clerk of the Board; Joy Carossino, Grays Harbor County Risk Manager; and Alex Vido, Secretary. Members of the Grays Harbor Public Health Department and members of the public were also present. The meeting was held electronically over Zoom to allow for social distancing.

This special meeting of the Board of Health was called to discontinue the Syringe Services Program (SSP) by incoming Commissioner Jill Warne and Commissioner Kevin Pine.

The agenda changed to allow for public comment to be presented before any action was taken.

Health Officer Report – Dr. John Bausher

- Unsure what the urgency is but glad to make comments before any action is taken.
- The Department of Health supports this program through grants. If there are any questions in regards to the cost of the county, we need to look into what exactly is the cost to the county and what the taxpayer burden is.
- It's been proven that drug abuse among participants drops 3 to 5 times as fast as those who do not participate in the Syringe Services Program.
- Not having the Syringe Services Program in a time of crisis, such as the Covid-19 experience we are having now where the hospital is occupied by Covid-19 patients, the added burden of when there is no SSP can be catastrophic with the additional burden on the hospitals and rate of infectious disease. We are already stretched.
- Dr. Basher's concern is if this comes to fruition, we need to have some insight to the complications and the ripple effect of our actions.

- Present today are members of the department of health, health department and the hospital. I hope they can express their concerns on the action to terminate this program.
- Dr. Bausher asks to allow those to give the opportunity to provide insight to the complications or potential difficulties that can be face in the medical community if the Syringe Services Program is terminated.
- Dr. Bausher could not stay for the entire meeting as he has patients to attend to as this meeting was called with short notice.

Commissioner Raines asked if any Commissioners had any questions. No questions were asked.

Grays Harbor County Public Health Program Manager – Cassie Lentz

- Our counties Syringe Services Program is based on over 30- years of research and best practice across the state and the nation to maintain and improve community health.
- We have Tim Candela, a representative from the Washington State Department of Health, who would like to share a brief statement from the Department of Health in regards to their perspective on this topic
- Our website offers a lot of information and frequently asked question about the Syringe Services Program at www.healthygh.org.
 - Located in the directory under Syringe Services Program
 - Provides several reports and resources linked here as well for those who would like more information.

Drug User Health Coordinator, Washington State Department of Health – Tim Candela

- Read a brief letter to the Commissioners on behalf of Secretary of Health Umair A. Shal that strongly supports the Syringe Services Program.
- The Syringe Services Program is an essential component to a comprehensive response in addressing substance use, opioid and other drug overdose crisis and preventing infectious disease.
- This program provides a range of services that reduce community health concerns such as cost, access to disposal of sterile syringes and injection equipment, vaccination, testing, infectious disease care and substance use treatment.
- The Syringe Services Program also provide naloxone to help decrease opioid overdose deaths for all law enforcement units in Grays Harbor and Pacific Counties.
- Ending this program will end the contract with the University of Washington Alcohol/Drug Abuse Institute and end naloxone through the Syringe Services Program and to Law enforcement.
- Upon completion of a 2019 assessment with the University of Washington, Grays Harbor County was considered especially vulnerable to the infectious disease consequences of opioid and other drug injection as well as opioid and other drug overdose morbidity and mortality.
- Grays Harbor County Public Health plays a key role in mitigating these infectious disease consequences and preventing overdose.
- The closure of the Syringe Services Program may increase overdose deaths and infectious disease transmission.

- The Department of Health has two contracts with Grays Harbor County Public Health for the Syringe Services Program.
 - One \$125,000 of general fund dollars to support operating expenses and supplies.
 - The other \$67,250 of CDC Overdose Data to Action funds three years to support half-time case manager to link and navigate Syringe Services Program participants to health and social services in the community.

Public Comments and Questions:

Commissioner Raines stated the Board of Health received several e-mails regarding comments about the Syringe Services Program. They have been disseminated as required to the Commissioners.

Board Secretary Alex Vido stated there were a total of 14 e-mails with 5 opposing the Syringe Services Program and 9 approving the Syringe Services Program. Alex forwarded the e-mails received to Commissioner Raines, Commissioner Pine, and Commissioner Warne including the few that were received since the start of this meeting.

- Becky Walsh, Grays Harbor Public Hospital District Commissioner, retired RN: Spoke in favor of the Syringe Services Program
- Susan Kingston, State Department of Health, oversees contract with University of Washington and Grays Harbor County Public Health: Read a statement from the State Department of Health about unintended consequences by ending the Syringe Services Program could have with naloxone distribution and Law enforcement.
- Zach Lynch, Substance Use and Prevention Coordinator, CHOICE Regional Health Network: Spoke in support of the Syringe Services Program.
- Wilma Weber, Community Health Specialist, Grays Harbor County Public Health: Spoke in support of the Syringe Services Program.
- Cash M., Grays Harbor County Resident: Spoke in support of the Syringe Services Program
- Devonna Rowlette, Substance Use Disorder Professional, Willapa Behavioral Health: Spoke in favor of the Syringe Services Program
- David Quigg, Relator, Hospital Commissioner, Chairmen of the Quality Community of Grays Harbor Community Hospital: Spoke in favor of the Syringe Services Program.
- Tom Hubbard, Aberdeen and Hoquiam Fire Chief, Rural Response to Opioid Epidemic Steering Committee, Executive Committee: Spoke in favor of the Syringe Services Program
- Kristen Phillips, Grays Harbor County Resident: Asked the question: “As a Grays Harbor county resident, I would like to submit comments on the proposed resolution. However, I am unable to stay in this meeting due to prior appointment commitments. How can I submit comments to the public record outside this meeting?”
- Keeley Parker: Thanked Dr. Bausher

- Becky Walsh: Stated the GHCPHD2 Commissioners sent a letter of support for the Syringe Services Program in 2019 and will send another in favor of the program.
- Tom Jensen, Grays Harbor Community Hospital: Spoke in favor of the Syringe Services Program.
- Kacey Ann Morrison: Sent in a letter on behalf of herself, SOAP, and Holly Shuck in support of the resolution as-is to the Board of Health.
- Melanie Grant, CNO Grays Harbor Community Hospital: Commented in support of the Syringe Services Program.
- Ann Marie Wong: Commented in favor of the Syringe Services Program
- Callie, Grays Harbor County Resident: Spoke in favor of the Syringe Services Program
- Michael Bruce: Commented asking the Commissioners to pause, take no action today and research this program.
- Rob Clarkson, Grays Harbor Resident, EMT volunteer: Spoke in favor of the Syringe Services Program.
- Nik Ay, Grays Harbor County Resident: Commented in support of the Syringe Services Program.
- Kristin Phillips, Grays Harbor Resident: Commented in support of the Syringe Services Program.
- Caitlyn Moore, Substance Use Response Program Manager, CPAA: Commented in favor of the Syringe Services Program.
- Sarah Channel: Wrote in a question “Will comments emailed to Alex be shared?”
- Commissioner Raines responded stating they have been shared with the Commissioners and it was decided in the morning that the comments would not be read out loud and disseminated as received.
- Cash M.: Wrote in a question “If the county terminates the program is there anything stopping another entity from taking it up? How would that affect law enforcement access to overdose medication?”
- Commissioner Raines responded by stating there was a discussion a few years ago to terminate the Syringe Services Program in hopes we would have another entity that would take on the Syringe Services Program. Very similar to what was done in Cowlitz County. Unfortunately, we do not have an entity in Grays Harbor County that was willing to step up to the plate to take on the responsibility and duty. It is unsure if there was any discussion about how the funding for access to Law Enforcement overdose medication would be made available. It is something we would be willing to chat about.
- Keeley Parker: Commented in favor of the Syringe Services Program.
- Rob: Commented about the concern this program has on the community.
- Jennifer Brackeen, Director of Innovation, Summit Pacific Medical Center: Commented to request this decision be put on pause.

- Sagi Ayakon: Commented in favor of the Syringe Services Program.
- Lauren: Commented in favor of the Syringe Services Program.
- Lisa Zaborac: Asked a question: “most people here appear to be on the job. are there public meetings during evenings for people who have jobs not in this field?”
- Grays Harbor Democrats: Posted a weblink to: <https://app.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=70.05.060>

3:02 p.m

Executive Session

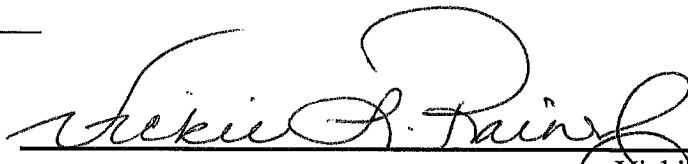
At 3:02 p.m, Commissioner Raines announced the meeting would move into an Executive Session for litigation under RCW 42.30.110 (i). She stated the session would last 10 minutes. Commissioner Raines, Commissioner Pine, Commissioner Warne, Jon Beltran, Jenna Amsbury and Joy Carossino were present at the session.

At 3:12 p.m. Commissioner Raines announced a 10 minute ten-minute extension.


At 3:22 p.m. Commissioner Rained moved back to regular session and announced no decisions were made.

The meeting adjourned at 3:25 PM.


Approved on this ____ day of _____, _____



 Vickie Raines, Chair



 Jill Warne, Commissioner First District



 Kevin Pine, Commissioner Second District

ATTEST:



 Alex Vidd, Board Secretary