

## The Health Council of Marin

Minutes of Regular Meeting: Tuesday, May 25, 2021

Meeting via Zoom; the meeting was recorded

**Members Present:** Ginger Souders-Mason (President), Roberta Anthes, Connie Barker, Bobby Moske, Christopher Murphy, Jennifer Rienks, Sandy Ross, Derice Seid Tao, Barbara Wientjes

**Members Absent:** Kevin Hogan

**Guests:** Mark Squire (Good Earth), Loretta Rogers (Secretary)

**Handouts:** *Agenda*

1. **Call to Order:** President Ginger Souders-Mason called the meeting to order at 7:06 pm.
2. **Public Comment Time:** None.
3. **Approval of Agenda:** President Souders-Mason asked the members to review the agenda. Sandy Ross moved to approve the agenda. Roberta Anthes seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.
4. **Approval of Minutes of the April 27, 2021, Health Council of Marin Meeting.** President Souders-Mason asked members to review the April 27, 2021, Health Council of Marin meeting minutes. Barbara Wientjes requested that on Item 5, the sentence “A letter was sent to the Board of Supervisors...” be changed to “A letter will be sent to the Board of Supervisors ...” Derice Seid Tao moved to approve the minutes with Barbara Wientjes’ amendment. Barbara Wientjes seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.
  1. **Sandy Ross** stated that as of June 15 when Governor Newsom declares the state open and the COVID-19 restrictions lifted, this Council may need to return to in-person meetings, following the requirements of the Brown Act. Gov. Newsom may do something to allow Zoom meetings to continue. Jennifer Rienks stated that she understood that there is legislation in process to allow this. Sandy Ross will monitor this situation and keep the Council updated.
5. **County HHS Update – Loretta Rogers:** Loretta Rogers shared her screen and gave a PowerPoint presentation on the HHS update.
  1. She reviewed the current statistics regarding COVID-19 in Marin and vaccination. At present, 86% of residents aged 12 and over have received at least one vaccine dose and 73% have received two doses. 60% of all Marin residents are now fully vaccinated i.e. they have received both doses and are 14 days or more out from their last dose. 16% are partially immunized and 25% are not immunized. Dr. Willis projects that 75% of all Marin residents will be fully immunized by June 15.
  2. She reported that Marin County has been recognized as the most vaccinated county in the United States among counties having populations of 250,000 or more. This is a great achievement.
  3. She reviewed vaccination progress by age and ethnic group, noting that residents aged 65 and over are now 89% fully vaccinated and 9% partially vaccinated. This is very important as this age group is the most vulnerable to severe illness, hospitalization and death. She also noted that great progress has been made vaccinating our Hispanic community. This was important as this community accounted for 54% of cases in Marin while being only 16% of Marin’s population. They are now the most highly vaccinated group in the county, thanks to the tremendous outreach efforts by Public Health and its partners.
  4. She noted the positive effects of HHS vaccination efforts. At the height of the pandemic, Marin was experiencing one COVID-19 death every three days. Now, our last COVID death was over one month ago, on April 17<sup>th</sup>. There was a recent death in a person over

65 years of age and unvaccinated. Also, our hospitalization statistics have gone down. At present, there is only one COVID-19 hospitalization in the county and no one in the ICU.

5. HHS has made great progress vaccinating residents aged 12 to 15. The authorization to use the Pfizer vaccine on this age group came out on May 13<sup>th</sup>. HHS's goal was to vaccinate at least one-half of the estimated 14,000 residents in that age group in the first week following authorization. 10,000 Pfizer doses had been set aside for this purpose. HHS did reach this ambitious goal. As of May 22<sup>nd</sup>, over 7,000 residents aged 12 to 15 received their first dose of Pfizer.
  6. She then reported on Marin's current status with regard to the Blueprint for a Safer Economy. At present, Marin is in Tier 3 (Orange). California requires a county to reach Tier 4 levels for two weeks in a row before it is allowed to go into Tier 4 (Yellow). Marin has already achieved that for one week. If all goes well, Marin will be in the least restrictive tier (Yellow) as of June 1 until June 15<sup>th</sup> when the Blueprint will be abolished, and the economy will be completely open.
  7. She reported on what changes will occur after June 15<sup>th</sup>. They will be as follows:
    1. No more tier system / Blueprint
    2. No more weekly assessments
    3. There will be a uniform state-wide approach to dealing with the pandemic
    4. Capacity limits will be relaxed, and masking guidance will change where unvaccinated people will have to be masked when outdoors in a crowd and when indoors.
    5. New guidance will be forthcoming from the state for businesses, schools, health care, etc.
  8. She reported that after June 15, HHS / Public Health will continue to vaccinate and test, monitor cases, do contact tracing, and provide isolation and quarantine support.
  9. She reviewed the results of HHS / Public Health's Whole Genome Sequencing testing of 10% of positive COVID-19 tests to detect variances. So far, six variances have been detected. Dr. Willis states that the vaccines are effective against all six variances.
  10. At present, HHS is in the process of demobilizing by letting go the contingent hired staff. The help line for seniors will be closed as of 5/29/21 and the COVID-19 information line will revert to the Marin County Fire Department as of 6/30/21.
  11. She then reviewed a few of the efforts HHS / Public Health is planning to assist residents' recovery from the pandemic. This includes rental assistance, continued use of the four zone teams to educate and assist residents in Marin City, the Canal, West Marin and Novato. She stated that one positive result of this terrible pandemic has been the alliances and collaboration between the County and CBO's, faith-based organizations, businesses and other. The goal is to maintain these connections and group efforts for future disasters and public health challenges. Bobby Moske stated his appreciation of these efforts as well.
6. **Update on COVID-19 from Members:** None.
7. **President's Report.** President Ginger Souders-Mason reported the following:
1. She watched the first day of the [Beyond Pesticides](#) National Conference from 10:00 am to 1:30 pm. It was very well done, and she recommended it to Council members.
  2. She reported she is not vaccinated because she feels that she is not fully informed about the safety and efficacy of these vaccines. She feels that the protocol for Emergency Use Authorization which was created after the 9/11 attacks does not provide sufficient protections. She held up the information insert for the Pfizer vaccine and showed that it consists of blank paper. She feels that it does not provide enough information for providers and patients to be fully informed. She stated that her husband but not their children is now vaccinated, but these vaccines do not guarantee that recipients will not get COVID-19 or not acquire the virus to spread to others. She is concerned that her husband could be shedding mRNA strands and unknowingly bringing in the virus which could be passed on to her and the family. She pointed Council members to the website of [America's Frontline Doctors](#) which has expert information about how to stay well. The website also recommends protocols to treat and prevent COVID-19 which she feels are

safe and effective. These include hydroxychloroquine **or** Ivermectin, Vitamin D and other medications and vitamins. She is questioning why the pandemic was handled the way it was. Was this the best choice? She will send more information via email to Loretta Rogers who will forward it to Council members.

3. Sandy Ross mentioned that the binders in vaccines are also a cause of concern and a reason for caution.

**8. Presentation: Health Through Food Choices: Interview with Mark Squire, owner of Good Earth Natural & Organic Foods (28 minutes) followed by discussion:** President Souders-Mason shared her screen and presented a 28-minute video of an interview she did with Mark Squire, owner of Good Earth. After the video, she asked Mark Squire more questions and invited questions from Council members. Mark Squire reported the following:

1. He began Good Earth in 1969 to provide fresh, organically grown food to Marin residents and to promote organic agriculture. He came of age during the Vietnam War, a time of questioning authority. Since that time, the organic food industry has grown enormously, but still accounts for only 2% of the food dollar in the United States.
2. He reviewed the benefits of organic agriculture in enriching the soil and providing healthier foods for consumers. He reported that organic farmers make more money than ordinary farmers and health of the environment and of people improves when pesticides are removed. If organic farming works well, improving health and providing higher profits, one wonders why it isn't more popular. Most American still don't understand its benefits nor the clout of agribusiness.
3. For years, his company sponsored the [GMO Free Marin county ballot initiative](#). The purpose of this project was to educate the public on the dangers of GMO foods.
4. As an example of the power of agribusiness, he cited a critique of organic foods and farming done by Alisa Van Eenamman, PhD of UC Davis. (principle author). This author clearly loves GMO and included no science in her report. But in fact, science is on the side of organic agriculture.
5. He also cited the work of Ignacio Chapela, a microbial ecologist and mycologist at the University of California, Berkeley, who has been an outspoken critic of the connections between UC and agribusiness. He points out that there is a lot of grant money available for research on genetics and hardly any money available for research on organic agriculture. Big agriculture is in control of research and advertising. They have the best PR in the world in favor of GMOs. One of their websites is [GMO Answers](#) in which problems are covered up or explained away. All of these efforts keep us from having systems that work for us. A good source of information is the website [US Right to Know](#). They get a lot of important information through use of the Freedom of Information Act.
6. Bill Gates has caused a lot of damage in agriculture. He promotes GMO crops. He has a technologist's mentality and likes technical fixes. But the use of these products (fertilizers and pesticides) kills micro-flora in the soil. Organic agriculture is more labor intensive and is about feeding the soil which results in healthier and more nutritious foods.
7. **Questions:**
  1. Sandy Ross thanked Mark Squire for his work and his dedication to searching out the truth. Organic agriculture is our preventative medicine. Mark Squire stated that the Marin County health department promotes the use of a sanitation system that is harmful and contains QUATs. Hydrogen peroxide is used for cleaning and is much safer. It also kills germs well. Businesses like to use the commercial product because it has residual antibacterial action.
  2. Ginger Souders-Mason asked if the Good Earth takes EBT cards. Yes, it does. Jennifer Rienks reported that the County has doubled the value of EBT cards.
  3. Roberta Anthes asked how long it takes for a farmer to get the soil back to organic. Mark Squire said that legally it is three years, but the deeper answer is about ten years. The life of the soil is what makes the system work. It could take from ten to twenty years to get the soil to its optimum condition.

4. Barbara Wientjes thanked Mark for his efforts and for using good cleaning agents. She like the fragrance-free products. Mark stated that it is hard to keep fragrances out of products in restrooms and everywhere in the store.
5. Sandy Ross remarked that fabric softeners are really bad, worse than detergent in their fragrances. She noted that products listed as “unscented” could mean that the product merely contains a masking agent that covers the smell. In order to get rid of smells, people can spray washers and dryers with diluted vinegar.
8. **Closing remarks:** Mark Squire stated that he is thinking about our youth. Marin County had a ten-year school lunch program that was closed due to the pandemic. [Conscious Kitchen](#) was a good program. It is best to have kitchens back in the schools. He is hopeful that the County will take this up again. Jennifer Rienks encouraged members to talk to their elected officials about this.
9. **Adjournment:** Bobby Moske moved to adjourn the meeting. Roberta Anthes seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 pm.