

Board of Health/Environmental Advisory Council
Tuesday, August 12, 2014
Penn Room

Board of Health Members Attending: B. Hospidor, J. Seidel, J. Wong, K. Schorn, J. Dethoff

EAC Members Attending: D. Beane, P. Ignozzi-Shaffer

Others Attending: S. Katzenmoyer, D. Hoag, K. Miller

Dr. Dethoff called the meeting to order at 4:02 pm.

A quorum was present.

Dr. Dethoff introduced himself and asked others in attendance to do the same.

Dr. Karen Miller from the Berks County Task Force on Oral Health stated that she was asked to attend to give the Task Force's position on the fluoride issue.

Fluoride

Dr. Dethoff gave a brief explanation of the issue and the need for this meeting.

Dr. Dethoff explained that there is no such thing as pure water on earth - that natural ground water contains dissolved mineral salts and that the amount of impurities and which are contained in water depends on the location. He stated that naturally occurring fluoride is low in the US and explained the background of fluoride and dental caries.

Dr. Dethoff stated that most fluoride concerns fit within ~~two~~ **three** common concerns:

- Philosophically disagree with governmental intervention in personal life
- **That fluoride is unsafe at any level**
- That the delivery of the fluoride routinely exceeds the safe range which is a real concern if there is a factual basis

Dr. Dethoff stated that every major health organization strongly supports the addition of fluoride to drinking water.

All present listened to the presentation made to City Council during public comment at their June 23rd regular meeting.

Dr. Dethoff expressed the belief that the speaker was concerned that too much fluoride is being added to the drinking water.

Ms. Hoag stated that she has been coordinating and collecting information from the Reading Area Water Authority (RAWA). She stated that RAWA tests the fluoride levels daily at its entry point. She stated that all data indicates that levels are below those recommended except for one anomaly in September 2013 in which the level was 1.08.

Dr. Dethoff asked for clarification of the safe levels. Ms. Hoag stated that the US EPA considers 4 ppm and PA DEP recommends 2 ppm. EPA uses both 4.0 and 2.0 with 4 being the standard they use for fluoride addition and 2 being a secondary goal used for areas with naturally occurring fluoride. DEP recommends 2 ppm.

Dr. Dethoff questioned the reference to .7 ppm. Ms. Hoag stated that this is the effective dose of fluoride for dental caries. She explained that the fluoride is added to the water by RAWA by automated equipment to reduce the likelihood of over-fluoridizing the water.

Dr. Dethoff questioned the average reading for the available data. Ms. Hoag stated that it would be approximately .72. She stated that the data cited by the speaker was from West Reading and Wyomissing who uses Western Berks Water and not RAWA.

Dr. Dethoff questioned the occurrence of the anomaly. Ms. Hoag stated that she was unsure and that US EPA lowered the target level from 1.0 to .7 in March 2012.

Dr. Dethoff questioned if RAWA was within target range consistently. Ms. Hoag stated that they are.

Dr. Dethoff questioned any overages. Ms. Hoag stated that it was only the one anomaly at 1.08.

Dr. Dethoff explained that the problem with children and toothpaste is that they often use too much and swallow a portion. He stated that the chance of fluorosis from this is very small. He stated that the risk with infant formula is also very small. He stated that as a precaution, parents are told to mix powdered formulas with non-fluoridated water occasionally to reduce the risk even further. He stated that he knows of no local pediatricians who have problems with these issues.

Dr. Dethoff asked for input from the EAC.

Mr. Beane stated that the EAC has not come to a conclusion on the issue. He stated that a former member of the EAC brought the issue forward and a subcommittee was formed. He stated that after some preliminary work of the subcommittee, the EAC took testimony from Dr. Kimball, the Water Authority and representatives of the local dental community. He stated that the EAC wished to hear from opponents but that none came forward.

Mr. Beane explained that the issue has been tabled while the EAC has been working on other projects and that some members felt that this was an issue which should have been reviewed by the Board of Health from the beginning. He stated that some members have serious concerns about fluoride being added to drinking water but that the issue is unfinished. He stated that the issue will be discussed at the September meeting and whether or not the EAC has a role in this issue will also be discussed.

Dr. Dethoff stated that this issue has been reviewed by many organizations many times. He stated that the science should always be first and that it has been reviewed by many credible medical panels. He stated that there are safe levels of fluoride. He expressed the belief that there may be changes in policy in the future but that there is currently overwhelming evidence supporting the use of fluoride.

Dr. Miller stated that the Berks County Task Force on Oral Health unanimously passed a resolution on July 23 to continue fluoridation of drinking water. She explained that the Task Force is made up of 27 professionals and was formed in response to the 2013 Health Needs Assessment for Berks County. She stated that the Assessment listed oral health as a top priority and stated that dental caries is five times more common than asthma in children. She stated that the Task Force urges the Board of Health and the Environmental Advisory Council to recommend the continuation of the fluoridation of the drinking water in Reading.

Mr. Beane expressed the belief that the speaker before City Council seemed mainly concerned that fluoride levels were not within the safe range. He suggested that this be the focus of any response.

Dr. Dethoff agreed and stated that there is no obligation to counter each point made by the speaker. He stated that the statement will not change people's opinions. He suggested a joint position statement with documentation from RAWA to show the readings. He suggested that the position statement acknowledge that some do not agree with fluoridation of water but that the evidence outweighs any detriments. ~~He stated that the only organizations he has found who do not support fluoridation is the American Chiropractic Association and the Sierra Club.~~

Dr. Dethoff suggested that the data from RAWA be organized by Ms. Hoag in an easy to read and understandable format. He stated that he will work with Dr. Wong and Dr. Kimball on the Board of Health's portion of the position statement.

Dr. Wong stated that he reviewed all the information he received. He expressed the belief that .7 is the magic number and that the data from RAWA is very convincing. He stated that all need to know that the level in Reading water is within the safe range.

Dr. Dethoff stated that he will begin work on the position statement and that it will be further discussed at the next meeting.

Mr. Beane stated that the EAC will also meet in September to discuss whether they have a role in this issue. He stated that if they determine that they do, they will issue the statement jointly with the Board of Health. He noted the need for the EAC to investigate any possible detriments to the environment and not to the general health of residents.

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Board of Health will be Tuesday, September 9 at 4 pm in the Penn Room.

The meeting adjourned at 4:55 pm.

*Respectfully submitted
Shelly Katzenmoyer
Deputy City Clerk*