



## City of Dallas

**ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH COMMISSION**  
**Dallas City Hall – 1500 Marilla, L1FN Conference Room “C”**  
**Regular Meeting**  
**February 6, 2005**  
**9:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.**

### MINUTES

#### **Members Present**

James Mitchell, Chair  
Diane Benjamin  
Carol Barnett Davis  
Jon (Tad) Heimbürger  
Linda Sharp  
Keith Kwoh  
Sylvia Lagos  
Tom Peck  
Barbara Pittman  
Chris Schulz  
Mary Vogelsson

#### **Members Absent**

Casie Pierce  
Mary Warner

#### **Public Present**

Chris Klaus, North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG)

#### **Staff Present**

Kenny Shaw, Director, Office of Emergency Management  
Kwaheri Heard, Office of Emergency Management  
Patsy Mitchell, Interim Assistant Director, EHS  
Lilia V. Gonzalez, Coordinator, EHS

#### **Minutes**

Mr. James Mitchell, Chair, called the regular meeting of the Environmental Health Commission to order at 9:01 a.m. The minutes from the January 9, 2006 meeting were approved as amended.

#### **Review of Metroplex Air Quality Status**

##### **Chris Klaus, NCTCOG**

Mr. Chris Klaus distributed information that NCTCOG has been using in the region with the North Texas Clean Air Steering Committee. The information he provided is the latest updates on clean air quality. The attainment date for the 8 hour standard is 2010. As a result of complicated issues, NCTCOG has to show clean air in the years 2007, 2008 and 2009. The Texas Commission of Environmental Quality (TCEQ) are working on a plan for the region to show Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) how the area will achieve attainment by 2010 and the attainment of 2009. The plan includes federal,

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state and local control strategies that will be proposed to be implemented in the region between now and 2009.

The state has been working very hard to reach attainment by 2010. Texas is the first state in the country to develop a new air quality plan. The rules were not released yet on the new 8-hour standard. Therefore, the state assumed that this would be the way EPA would rule in the guidelines. Unfortunately, that was not the case and a lot of the modeling, research, and activities are towards 2020 and quickly change it to 2009.

Mr. Klaus provided the 2010 estimates for the non-attainment areas in the region. The state predicted that DFW will have to reduce emissions by 45% by in 2010. As a result of the rule change, NCTCOG estimates the necessary reduction to be at 47% by 2009 because there would be one less year for vehicle fleet turnover, etc.

**Pandemic Flu Influenza**  
**Kenny Shaw**

Mr. Kenny Shaw stated that the City of Dallas works cooperatively with the Dallas County Department of Health and Human Services. Mr. Shaw mentioned that the City of Dallas relies on the county for expertise and emergency plans on public health issues.

Mr. James Mitchell asked Mr. Shaw what the criteria are for closing schools. Mr. Shaw responded that Dr. Bruener opinion is that it should not be decided right now. He doesn't want to make a decision without conferring with the Mayor and Council about it first. There is not an exact criterion. Mrs. Kwaheri Heard added that Dr. Bruner will talk to the superintendents of schools and mayors before making a decision about closing the schools.

Mr. Mitchell wanted clarification on how Dallas Water Utilities and TXU plan for continuity services when 1 out 3 employees will be out sick with the flu. Mr. Shaw mentioned that there was an exercise last summer state-wide at the Reunion Arena. They had an opportunity to hand out medication to real people to determine the time frame and how many people would be serviced. The Cities Readiness Initiative (SNS) is conducted another exercise with the U.S. Postal Service distributing medication door-to-door.

The Office of Emergency Management (OEP) conducts a monthly tabletop. Each month the scenario is changed to tornado, chemical spill and pandemic flu. The pandemic flu exercise will be administering to key city employees and will also be taken on the road for any other organization that want a tabletop exercise conducted at their facility.

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On Tuesday, February 14, 2006, there will be a meeting with all department directors at the manager's office. Mrs. Mary K. Suhm asked for Dr. Bruner to give a presentation. The same afternoon each department head will send a representative to discuss some of the things of interest to prepare the city for continuity of government.

Mr. Shaw mentioned that OEP is concentrating on surge capacity. In other words, how will the city deal with caring for patients once the emergency rooms at hospitals are full.

As a result of Hurricane Katrina and Hurricane Rita, OEP began the discussion phase with a group of doctors from Parkland Hospital and UT Southwest. They meet with OEP regularly and are more in tune with that community than before. The groups of doctors are extremely interested with pandemic flu. They are providing medical information they received that the city may not get at the government level.

Mr. Shaw also mentioned that Jacqueline Bell from the Public Information Office has media information on pandemic flu. He informed the commission that the Dallas Morning News was in the process of publishing an article on Pandemic Flu. DMN spoke to Dr. Bruner and to OEP.

Mr. Mitchell is concerned with the amount of staff that will be absent in case of a pandemic flu outbreak. He believes that his concern should be addressed. Mr. Shaw mentioned that he would invite TXU and others to the meeting being held on Tuesday, February 14<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Shaw also mentioned that AT&T have a national exercise on not specifically a pandemic flu outbreak but more a technical breakdown were they bring in 50 tractor trailer loads to rebuild a central office. Mr. Shaw stated that AT&T is very active in their emergency management.

Mr. Mitchell mentioned that the Health Department has a similar plan for May. Mr. Shaw mentioned that they are conducting their own plans and exercising. He also mentioned that there is a major state exercise in June. It is more of weapons of mass destruction exercise than pandemic flu.

Mrs. Mary Vogelsson suggested that Martha Blaine, Director of Community Council of Greater Dallas (2-1-1). Mrs. Blaine was frustrated that when Hurricane Katrina hit agencies were not informed of 2-1-1.

Mr. Mitchell stated that in looking at the amount of work that has to be done to prepare for this pandemic flu a lot of preparation is needed for the amount of absentee rate that will be expected. A copy of Mr. Shaw's presentation was provided to the commission.

Mr. Mitchell reported that a letter was sent to Councilmember Leo V. Chaney, Jr. stating the Commissions suggestions for community preparedness. Mr. Mitchell requested that a copy of that letter be included in the minutes of this meeting.

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**Commission Reports**

None

**Staff Reports**

None

**Public Comment**

None

**Adjournment**

Being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:40 a.m.

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Signature: James E. Mitchell, Chair, Environmental Health Commission

# James E. Mitchell

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Dallas, TX 75248  
972-248-1182, drjem@swbell.net

January 23, 2006

Councilmember Leo V. Chaney, Jr.  
Chair, Neighborhood Quality of Life Committee  
Dallas City Hall  
1500 Marilla Street  
Dallas, TX 75201

Dear Councilmember Chaney:

## Community Preparedness for Potential Avian Flu Pandemic

The Environmental Health Commission has met with Dr. John Carlo, Chief Epidemiologist of the Dallas County Health & Human Services, to learn about the county's preparedness for a potential influenza pandemic. DCHHS is actively involved in efforts to prepare and educate municipalities, hospitals, first responders, schools, faith-based organizations, and many non-governmental agencies and service providers. It has been determined that, in the event of a pandemic influenza, everyone in the community is a stakeholder.

As part of their ongoing efforts to prepare for public health emergencies, DCHHS is planning to host a pandemic influenza symposium including a table-top planning exercise, launch public education campaigns, and conduct a series of presentations to the Dallas County Medical Society, area ISD's, and other business community members. The Commission was impressed by the ongoing efforts of DCHHS to prepare the healthcare partners and medical institutions. The Commission is, however, seriously concerned over the current state of preparedness within the business community, non-governmental organizations and the general population.

Analyses performed by DCHHS of past pandemics have been used to forecast what could happen in Dallas County if another pandemic were to occur. These forecasts show that should a pandemic similar to the one in 1918 occur in Dallas County, public health and other systems would be severely affected. Here are the consequences of this situation. The impact of illness may restrict travel which could significantly reduce the delivery of goods and services. Thus, recommendations should be made for families to store water, food, medicine and to have provision for cooking should there be neither gas nor electricity. Second, the number of sick individuals would over-run hospital capacities requiring alternative methods of care. Third, significant reductions in the workforce could be expected due to illness and isolation recommendations, thus every business, large and small, needs to begin creating a business continuity plan.

A concern was raised particular to low-income families that might have limited financial reserves going into such an episode. They may have an urgent need to have some family members continue working during the epidemic.

Non-governmental organizations including houses of worship may find themselves asked to assume vital roles in support of individuals and families. Advanced planning on the part of these non-governmental organizations can make a big difference in the effectiveness with which they are able to deliver these required services.

With this as background, the Environmental Health Commission makes the following recommendations to the City of Dallas:

1. The City should work with the businesses and governmental agencies that provide essential services including water, sanitation, electricity, natural gas, public safety, fire and rescue to ensure that realistic plans are put in place to provide for continuity of services in the event of a pandemic.
2. The City should work with businesses that provide the distribution of food and transportation fuels to the metroplex to impress upon them the urgency for continuity of services and to assist them in such planning if they need it.
3. The City should work with Dallas County to insure that DCHHS is provided with adequate resources to take a leading role in the planning for community-wide preparedness. It is also recommended that the City assist the DCHHS in making connections with the business community through the Chambers of Commerce and other organizations, and with non-governmental organizations.

It is always hard to know just how much attention to pay to a possibility like an avian flu pandemic. In this instance, the Commission is impressed by the urgency exhibited within the medical community. Thus, it is appropriate to recommend raising the level of preparedness within the broader Dallas community to a much higher level based on realistic planning among those who will be affected and can make a difference.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this topic with you.

Sincerely,

***Original Signed***

James E. Mitchell, Chair  
Environmental Health Commission

Copies:

Mayor Laura Miller

Members, Neighborhood Quality of Life Committee

Angela Hunt, Dr. Maxine Thornton-Reese, Gary Griffith, Dr. Elba Garcia, Pauline Medrano,  
James L. Fantroy

Councilmember Linda Koop

Mary K. Suhm, City Manager

Ramon F. Miguez, ACM

Ms. Karen D. Rayzer, Director, HEHS

John Carlo, MD, DCHHS Department