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# Council mulling health department's fate

Lubbock City Council members decided not to discuss changes to the health department at Thursday's meeting as scheduled. Instead, they tabled the topic until the following meeting, Aug. 25.

Posted: August 11, 2011 - 11:15pm | Updated: August 12, 2011 - 12:41am

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By [Kellie Bramlet](#)  
AVALANCHE-JOURNAL

Lubbock City Council members decided not to discuss changes to the health department at Thursday's meeting as scheduled. Instead, they tabled the topic until the following meeting, Aug. 25.

Councilman Victor Hernandez said the council moved the discussion so city representatives could present the planned changes to the Lubbock Board of Health at its next meeting, 12:30 p.m., Friday, Aug. 19, at the health department building.

"The board has not established a position on this," said Steve Presley, health board president and Texas Tech Institute of Environmental and Human Health associate professor.

Presley said he spoke with council members, and they decided because of time restraints it would be better to postpone the discussion of the health department.

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Also, the extra time would give board members and the public an opportunity to understand better the plans for the department, he said.

The city budget included several changes regarding the health department, including transferring one employee in Vector Control and another seven full-time employees from Environmental Health to the Codes Department, a function within the Police Department. But there remains little clarity beyond that.

"The rumor mill has gone crazy," Presley said.

He hopes the meeting will dispel those rumors.

But Brian Carr, another health board member and a licensed psychologist, said he feels like the council has already determined the health department's fate.

He said he wished the council had approached the health board earlier.

"We're pretty much presiding over a funeral here," he said.

City manager Lee Ann Dumbald could not be reached for comment.

To comment on this story:

kellie.bramlet@lubbockonline.com • 766-8754

leesha.faulkner@lubbockonline.com • 766-8706

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It apparently will take a death to get anyone's attention

By drbrianca | 08/12/11 - 07:48 am

As a private citizen and not as a member of the Board of Health I am greatly saddened that so little attention is being paid to the actions being taken by the city manager, mayor, and city council to rob our citizens of essential health services. The effort to gut the health dept for meager savings reveals both a lack of compassion as well as a short-sided economic focus that will actually drive up the cost for property taxpayers in the city and county.



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Any barrier to care will result in people not seeking out services. Relocating immunizations and the STD clinic to other non-governmental agencies in Lubbock will DIRECTLY limit care and thus increase the number of children lacking immunizations and citizens with STDs. Every child that is hospitalized with preventative disease because of a failure to access services will be terribly expensive and wash out any cost savings. It will just be that the property taxpayer will pay the hospital bill while the city government saves "a very few dollars".

Rather than show support for this bad idea the city council yesterday delayed public action on the situation. This really doesn't change what is happening. Already employees are being terminated, services are being transferred to where we don't know yet (other than the clinic will close on August 31st), and the building set to be abandoned.

The Board of Health is to be advised by the city manager at our meeting next Friday 8/19 at 12:30 at the Health Dept located at 19th and Texas. The Board cannot actually do anything about what is happening, our role has been eroded to the point where we can only witness what is happening. I hope that citizens will attend the meeting and join with us in at least noting a reasonable response is called for and not the death of our children and citizens.

My family has provided health care to Lubbock citizens since 1952. We are saddened to see others rob the future from our children all for "a few dollars".

Brian D. Carr, Ph.D.

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