

**DRAFT**

**CITY OF SHORELINE**  
**SHORELINE CITY COUNCIL**  
**SUMMARY MINUTES OF SPECIAL MEETING**

**TOUR OF WASHINGTON PUBLIC HEALTH LABORATORY (PHL)**

Monday, August 13, 2007  
1:00 p.m.

Public Health Laboratory  
1610 NE 150<sup>th</sup> Street

**PRESENT:** Mayor Ransom, Deputy Mayor Fimia, and Councilmembers McGlashan and Way

**ABSENT:** Councilmembers Gustafson, Hansen, and Ryu

**STAFF:** Bob Olander, City Manager; Rachael Markle, Assistant Director, Planning and Development Services; Tom Boydell, Economic Development Program Manager; Rob Beem, Customer Services Division Manager and Human Services Manager; Scott Passey, City Clerk

**PHL STAFF:** Dr. Romesh Gautom, Director; Lain Knowles, Assistant Director; Jim Robertson, Division Chief Administrator; Robert Soldier, Division Emergency Response Planner; Mike Glass, Director, Office of Newborn Screening; Blaine Rhodes, Acting Director, Office of Environmental Laboratory Sciences; Dr. Jinxin Hu, Director, Office of Public Health Microbiology; Bud Taylor, Radiation & Chemistry Supervisor; Bob Lona, Lead Chemist; Wes Neuenschwander, Division Facilities Planner; David Boyle, Molecular Epidemiologist; Yolanda Houze, Microbiology Supervisor; Craig Colombel, Microbiology Supervisor; Dolores Villareal, Lead Microbiologist

Dr. Romesh Gautom convened the meeting at 1:10 p.m. with welcoming remarks and introductions around the table. The tour then began in the Office of Newborn Screening. Mayor Ransom arrived and joined the tour at 1:20 p.m.

Mr. Glass provided a guided tour of the Newborn Screening facility. It was noted that state law requires screening of every newborn in Washington State; the PHL processes screenings for approximately 83,000 births annually. There were questions and comments regarding the handling and processing of samples and the treatments for various disorders. Analysis of the specimens is fully automated, and staff currently screens for six congenital disorders. Mr. Glass explained how the equipment worked and how it measures for the various disorders and conditions.

Mr. Rhodes then provided a guided tour of the Office of Environmental Laboratory Sciences, where the emphasis is on water chemistry/biology, shellfish, food parasites, blood lead, radiation chemistry, and chemical terrorism. He provided details on the operation of the instruments used to analyze the various specimens. It was noted that sensitive materials/emergency items are received through the loading dock area. It was also pointed out that larger organizations within the State often have their own laboratories; however, if there is a state epidemiology issue, then the PHL gets involved and does the analysis.

Deputy Mayor Fimia asked about the interface between the PHL and the academic community.

Dr. Gautom explained that the PHL has an extensive training program and works closely with local high schools, colleges, medical schools, universities, and has international ties. Students come to the PHL for training as part of their laboratory curriculum. He noted that Dr. Hu was a post doctoral training fellow, and staff holds joint appointments with the University of Washington.

The tour group then entered the Radiation Chemistry area, where Mr. Taylor explained the PHL's radiological services. He noted that the instruments can identify almost any radiological element and can determine whether the radiation is man-made or naturally occurring. The department processes 1,500-2,000 samples annually and conducts about 12 tests (from among the 2,000 samples) annually.

Mr. Lona then explained the work conducted in the shellfish department. He noted that 4,000 checks for "red tide" toxin and 1,500 checks for domoic acid toxin are conducted annually. He briefly explained the system of monitoring and sampling shellfish populations.

As the group made its way to the Food/Microbiology department, Mr. Gautom identified the area of the facility that will see a future expansion. Mr. Robertson and Mr. Neuenschwander explained the scope of the addition and noted that while the Department of Health owns the land on which the PHL is located, there could be a need for further land acquisition in the future. There is no plan for hiring additional employees as part of the planned expansion, and the current facility comprises 70,000 square feet of space. It was noted that the new space created by the expansion will be equally divided between laboratory and specimen reception.

Deputy Mayor Fimia asked if there has been any discussion about building housing for employees/staff as part of the Fircrest Master Plan.

Mr. Robertson said the PHL has not been involved in planning for the unoccupied areas of Fircrest, and that he does not anticipate the PHL playing a role.

Responding to Councilmember McGlashan, Mr. Knowles briefly explained security protocols and noted that employee background checks are done through the Department of Health.

The group was then directed to the Food/Microbiology department, where they were given a tour of the facilities and instruments involved in testing for tuberculosis, whooping cough, food poisoning, food-borne illness, bio-terrorism, etc.

Deputy Mayor Fimia asked how often the PHL staff gets “stumped” and has to defer to another laboratory or agency for a determination.

Dr. Gautom noted that PHL staff makes positive determinations 99.9% of the time, but the PHL serves as a link and works collaboratively with state, local, and federal entities in order to corroborate each others’ findings.

Ms. Houze commented on the testing procedures for organisms that cause various conditions, such as whooping cough. She noted that the PHL works very closely with State epidemiologists to know what they should be testing for. In response to Councilmember McGlashan regarding the connection with local hospitals, Ms. Houze noted that larger entities such as University of Washington and Harborview have their own laboratory facilities; however, smaller entities use the State PHL.

Dr. Hu added that the PHL is more specialized than other facilities, such as in the case of bio-terrorism. Dr. Hu and Mr. Colombel then provided a tour of the communicable disease facility and explained the process by which 20,000-30,000 specimens are analyzed annually.

Ms. Villereal then gave an overview of the HIV screening process, noting that 60-100 specimens are analyzed daily, five days a week. It was noted that 8.5% of the specimens collected test positively for HIV; however, the specimens are collected from sources where there is a higher risk of HIV infection.

Dr. Hu then gave a tour of the testing area for measles, mumps, rubella, rabies, West Nile, etc. Ms. Houze noted that the PHL conducted a rabies test of a bat that was discovered in the luggage of a person who returned from a trip to Mexico.

Responding to Deputy Mayor Fimia, Dr. Gautom noted that the PHL can make its publications available to the City for distribution.

Mr. Olander added that King County Public Health is one of the City’s primary sources for health information.

As the tour continued, it was noted that the air pressure and filtration system within the facility is designed to ensure that contaminants are captured. PHL staff also explained the backup/emergency power system, and clarified that the PHL was built in 1985

specifically as a laboratory. Mr. Neuenschwander added that the PHL has a robust capital improvement program, so there is a perpetual redevelopment plan in place.

The group was then taken on a tour of the laboratory training room, where classes for nurses and laboratory technicians are provided. Council and staff viewed samples of various bacterium and parasites with microscopes and then returned to the meeting room.

Deputy Mayor Fimia pointed out that the tour is helpful in understanding the role of the PHL, and helps Councilmembers respond to citizens' questions. She encouraged a close working relationship between the City and the PHL, noting the possibility of collaborating on the Fircrest Master Plan as well as public education.

Dr. Gautom mentioned that the PHL will have a public open house on August 31 from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., and that this event will be advertised in the mail to the local community. Also, the intent is to coordinate with the Shoreline School District so that the PHL work can interface with school curriculum. It was noted that outreach efforts should be directed to the City Manager's Office for distribution to groups such as the Chamber of Commerce and neighborhood associations.

The meeting concluded at 3:17 p.m.

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Scott Passey, City Clerk