

Wellesley Board of Health
Remote Meeting via Zoom
Meeting Minutes
January 11, 2021
12:00 PM

Present:

Board:

Shepard Cohen, MPA, Chair
Marcia Testa Simonson, MPH, PhD, Vice Chair
Linda Oliver Grape, PA-C, MPH, Secretary
Carol Hannenberg, MD, Associate Member

Staff:

Wanda Alvarez, Community Social Worker
Leonard Izzo, Director
Cheryl Lefman, Community Health Coordinator
Ann Marie McCauley, Public Health Nurse Supervisor
Joyce Saret, Senior Community Social Worker
Vivian Zeng, Senior Environmental Health Specialist

In attendance:

Linda Chow, Chair, Wellesley School Committee
Linda Corridan, Director of Nursing, Wellesley Public Schools
Shira Doron, MD, Resident
David Lussier, Superintendent, Wellesley Public Schools
Melissa Martin, Vice Chair, Wellesley School Committee
Beth Sullivan Woods, Member Select Board

The meeting was called to order at 12:03 PM.

Citizen Speak:

No one was in attendance who wished to participate in Citizen Speak.

1. Administration
2. Community Health
 - a) Wellesley Public Schools (WPS) – COVID-19 Update

Dr. David Lussier provided an update on COVID-19 cases at Wellesley Public Schools (WPS). A letter (signed by Dr. Lussier and Leonard Izzo) was sent to the WPS community providing an update on COVID-19 cases at WPS, and because of 10 new documented cases at Wellesley High School (WHS), WHS would transition to full remote learning from January 11-19, 2021. They will resume hybrid learning on January 19th. WHS winter sports will be on hold during this time as well.

Dr. Lussier said the case count rose to 91 going into the weekend. They surpassed their rubric of 10 cases over two weeks, as there had been 10 cases at the High School from last week alone. Dr. Lussier is considering whether there was school-based transmission, and will do his due diligence to ascertain this. He will continue to work with Leonard Izzo and Ann Marie McCauley at the Health Department on contact tracing and other efforts.

Dr. Lussier reported on the breakdown of positive cases - 2/3 were from students and 1/3 from staff. Approximately 70% were captured via symptomatic (outside) testing and 30% from surveillance testing. He noted the importance of the number of staff that are out due to their 10-day quarantines. He reiterated the resumption of their regular hybrid learning model on January 19, 2021.

b) Wellesley Public School – Testing

Dr. Lussier reported there has not been a break in the chain in testing at the High School. They are collecting samples today and tomorrow for staff and students in Cohort A, and are providing test kits for next week's sample collection. Samples collected were dropped off at the designated testing location in Boston.

Linda Chow reported on the Commonwealth's consideration of district-wide pool testing, and acknowledged the work that Jesse Boehm (of the Broad Institute) had done in this arena, as it was instrumental in raising awareness about this type of testing. Ms. Chow will attend a webinar on this topic tomorrow. She noted she will be interested in the funding aspects of this initiative.

Marcia Testa Simonson said there may be additional funding for this type of testing from the State or CDC after the initial round of funding (for six

weeks) is over. She questioned whether Wellesley may apply for that funding if there is a different vendor used.

There was agreement that the testing system in place is superior to the one outlined by DESE.

c) Wellesley Public Schools - Dashboard

Dr. Lussier reported the dashboard needs to be updated using today's information and knowledge (versus the data from last August). The Safety Committee will review this work tomorrow. They will ground this work with a strong foundation in science.

d) COVID-19 Vaccine Clinics

Leonard Izzo reported that COVID-19 vaccination clinics for first responders will commence today, Monday, January 11, 2021 through the end of the week, at which time, the allotted 100 doses of Moderna vaccine will have been dispensed. There will be an opportunity to obtain additional doses for clinics. The police at local colleges and private schools will be included at clinics as supply allows.

Linda Oliver Grape said there was conversation about other first responders (outside of Wellesley) being included at local clinics. Leonard Izzo explained the vaccine that Wellesley received was part of a regional, Norfolk County 8 (NC8) allotment. NC8 communities regularly collaborate on regional emergency preparedness efforts, grants and community health initiatives. Additional communities bordering some NC8 communities did not have the infrastructure to vaccinate their first responders, and a couple of NC8 communities offered to vaccinate some of their first responders if they were able to.

Mr. Izzo provided a summary of vaccine planning efforts. He noted that during a 1-5-2021 MA Department of Public Health led call, there was discussion around whether local health departments/boards of health would like to vaccinate their community's populations all the way through Phase 3 (general population).

Mr. Izzo said that if this vaccination plan is considered, then local contact tracing (via Health Department nurses) could not continue, and may have to be forwarded to the State's Contact Tracing Collaborative or other.

Marcia Testa Simonson provided data on numbers of residents in particular phases and groups, i.e., more than 2,330 residents 75 + and well over 5,000 with two or more comorbidities including Type II diabetes.

e) COVID-19 Update

Ann Marie McCauley provided a case update. She continues to receive on average, 8-9 new cases per day, mainly through household spread. There have been a few cases of positive staff in long-term care facilities, but are staying on top of it through contact tracing. She was not sure how many associated cases were in the hospital, but did not think there were many.

Shepard Cohen inquired if there was a sense of the source of spread and why the numbers are rising.

Marcia Testa Simonson replied there are now higher case counts in individuals 19 and younger, and those individuals are likely asymptomatic and spreading the virus in their households. She noted that the demographics have shifted to an upside-down pyramid.

Dr. Doron added there is a shift in the demographics and the testing approach is different. Dr. Doron reported more patients are being treated on med (surgical) floors, and fewer are going to the ICU. She noted that hospitals are still full and wastewater data indicates high levels, as compared to those in the first surge.

Ann Marie McCauley reported on COVID-19 vaccine administration in the long-term care facilities. Waterstone will offer vaccination (via CVS vaccinators) to residents at assisted and independent living on 1-21-2021 (first dose) and 2-11-2021 (second dose). Elizabeth Seaton (long-term care) received their first vaccination and their independent living residents at Marillac will receive their first dose at the end of the week.

Linda Oliver Grape asked Ms. McCauley to reach out to Charles River ARC and any other congregate setting to ascertain their plan for vaccination.

f) Communication

Cheryl Lefman reported on the new [COVID-19 Vaccine Information](#) page on the Health Department website and thanked the town's Communications and Project Manager Stephanie Hawkinson for her work on this.

3. Mental Health

Joyce Saret provided an update on mental health concerns, initiatives and resources. She reported WPS offered a program for parents on resiliency; HRS offered resources to address COVID-19 and stress, and provided a summary of an upcoming opportunity for residents to virtually meet with Health Department social workers on Thursday, January 28, 2021 from 1:00-2:00. This is designed to offer residents tips on dealing with stress, practice self-care, and share their concerns and have questions answered if possible.

Ms. Saret noted that "blaming and shaming" is a problem, in regards to pointing the finger at an individual who contracted COVID-19; his/her source of exposure and transmission.

Dr. Lussier added that WPS are leveraging their mental health resources. They hosted a program for parents and staff on dealing with stress, featuring subject expert, Dr. Lisa Damour. Dr. Lussier noted that last week's events heightened levels of anxiety.

Wanda Alvarez reported she has been taking calls from residents eager to obtain vaccination information for their group. Cheryl Lefman will send answers to common questions, as well as vaccine information pages that may be helpful to those receiving those types of inquiries. Ms. Alvarez reported she is in regular contact with WPS social worker Sara Berenson, and they collaborate on concerns and resources for families residing at Wellesley Housing Authority properties.

Shepard Cohen requested that Ms. Saret keep track of cases, concerns, trends, etc. and prepare a report (sometime in the future) for the Mental

Health Task Force. Beth Sullivan Woods said a report would be helpful, to track the needs of the community, as promised.

4. Environmental Health

Leonard Izzo and Vivian Zeng received complaints (from various sources) about non-compliance of protocols related to the current mandate in certain businesses. Inspections and review of the guidance were conducted.

This meeting was adjourned at 1:07 p.m.

The next meeting of the Board of Health is scheduled on January 13, 2021, 11:30 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

Cheryl Lefman

Community Health Coordinator
