

Wellesley Board of Health
Remote Meeting via Zoom
Meeting Minutes
January 20, 2022, 12 noon

Present:

Board:

Shepard Cohen, MPA, Chair
Marcia Testa Simonson, MPH, PhD, Vice Chair
Linda Oliver Grape, PA-C, MPH, Secretary

Staff:

Wanda Alvarez, Community Social Worker
Deadra Doku Gardner, Administrator
Leonard Izzo, MS, RS, CHO, Director
Cheryl Lefman, MA, Community Health Coordinator
Ann Marie McCauley, RN, Public Health Nurse Supervisor
Joyce Saret, Senior Community Social Worker
Vivian Zeng, REHS, RS, CP-FS, Senior Environmental Health Specialist

In attendance:

Shira Doron, MD, resident
Stephanie Hawkinson, Public Information Officer, Town of Wellesley
David Lussier, Superintendent, Wellesley Public Schools
Catherine Mirick, School Committee, Wellesley Public Schools.
Ellen Subramaniam, Resident
Beth Sullivan Woods, Member, Select Board

The meeting was called to order at 12:07p

Minutes from January 6, 2022 and January 13, 2022 were approved.

Chairman's Report

Shep Cohen reported that Board should be considering a community-wide webinar focusing on COVID. Marica Testa Simonson and Linda Oliver Grape agreed however suggested that we wait a few weeks.

Director's report

Leonard Izzo reported that the department had placed an order for test kits that were expected to arrive however these test kits have been diverted to accommodate the federal test kit distribution. Mr Izzo is uncertain as to when these will be delivered.

1. Administration

a) Wellesley Public Schools(WPS) update

David Lussier reviewed the updated COVID-19 dashboard for the Wellesley Public Schools noting that the number of positive COVID cases has reduced. Since Sunday there have been 82 cases. Student absences are way down and symptoms continue to be mild.

Dr Lussier reported on the state press conference regarding school testing. Dr Lussier reviewed the general plan that the Commonwealth is moving to a different paradigm which will empower parents, teachers, and families to do COVID testing at home. The WPS has made a significant purchase of at home test kits however it was also announced this week that the Commonwealth has procured 26 million kits to be distributed to school populations. Dr Lussier reported that school districts are required to opt into a program to obtain the kits. WPS has opted into the program. The program will be phased-in during two time periods- next week kits will be available for 1000 staff members) and the week of January 30th kits will be available for students. The Commonwealth is committing to providing kits the districts thru the end of April. Every family, every staff would receive at least one rapid test per week if they opted into the program. Rapid tests would still be available and done at school when needed.

Dr Lussier reported that there will no longer be any contact tracing, no test and stay program and most likely surveillance testing will no longer be taking place.

Every family, every staff would receive at least one rapid test per week if they opt into the testing at home program.

Ann Marie McCauley asked that all the expiration dates on the new kits be reviewed as some expire sooner than others. Linda Oliver Grape stressed the importance of the noting the expiration dates. Dr Lussier believes that the kits are good for a period of six months. Dr Lussier also noted that care needs to be taken with storage of the kits as they cannot freeze. The school administration has notified the Facilities Maintenance Department who will be storing these kits at Fiske School. Dr Lussier elaborated that he would like to cancel the two pallets that were ordered by the district. The WPS administration had ordered two pallets of 7500 kits at \$75,000 each totaling \$150k. Dr Lussier reported that they are unable to cancel the order and the WPS is going to try to apply for MEMA reimbursement.

Linda Oliver Grape reported that the rapid tests remain under emergency use authorization and that the US government has the right to redirect the kits. Ms Oliver Grape questioned what is going to be done with families with school age children that have elected to opt out of the at-home-testing program. She also inquired as to what communication has been done to encourage people to apply for the federal program (four at home test kits to be delivered to every household via the USPS) Dr Lussier reported that at this time there has been no messaging to the school community regarding the at home testing kit delivery. Families have yet to be notified and the opt-in program is being finalized in the next few days. When prior testing was done at the schools approximately 65% of the student population opted in. In situations where a child might be symptomatic at school and the family did not opt into the program the child had to be sent home as there was no permission to test. This is a different testing model and Dr Lussier believes that most parents will opt into this new program.

Leonard Izzo inquired as to how this new program would impact childcare settings. Ann Marie McCauley reported that there is a new program where childcare facilities can also order tests allowing for the nursery and day care children to remain in school.

b) COVID-19 Update

Ann Marie McCauley reported that the Wellesley positivity rate is at 12.1% rate with approximately 37 cases per day. The daily escalation of COVID cases has ceased. Babson and Wellesley Colleges have students and they have been receiving some positive cases.

Leonard Izzo reported that he has a meeting with Babson College later today to review the slight increase in COVID cases on the campus. Additional information will be provided at the next meeting.

c) Wellesley Clinics

Ann Marie McCauley reported that she has scheduled a small non-covid clinic next week.

David Lussier reported the WPS had applied for the state mobile COVID vaccine program and they are waiting to learn if they have been accepted to this program.

d) Human Relations Services (HRS)

Leonard Izzo reported that the new Director of HRS will be attending the next Board of Health next meeting.

e) Masks

Shep Cohen reported that the merchant mask program has had a very positive reception. Vivian Zeng reported that she has been getting positive feedback while doing educational outreach to the food establishments. She noted that merchants and restaurants were happy to see agents in a non-enforcement role.

Linda Oliver Grape inquired as to whether the masking program should be expanded to other businesses. Beth Sullivan Woods reported that the merchant association and the landlords have positively received the program. Ms Sullivan Woods reported that people appreciate the new signage. She noted that some hair salons and medical establishments still need to be covered. Stephanie will continue to put out a news release with information. Lenny Izzo reported that this has been a great opportunity to reconnect with some of the business.

Shira Doron pointed out that the CDC updated their pages for N95 and mask use.

2. Environmental Health

a) Food Establishment

Lenny Izzo reported on new food establishments noting that the department does not have the staff to cover the plans and inspection and there may be a delay in services.

Vivian Zeng reported that there will be a new restaurant located on Central Street where the Upper Crust was located. The new establishment has submitted plans for review..

Vivian Zeng reported on the new coffee shop on Washington Street in Wellesley Hills. It was discovered that it was an active construction site without having submit a plan review. A “cease and desist” order was issued to stop the construction.

b) Tobacco

As noted at the last two meetings, Vivian Zeng reported that that a new tobacco retailer is expected to be leasing space in Wellesley. The retailer wishes to open within 500 feet from another tobacco retailer which would require a variance. To date no variance request has been submitted.

c) Pool

As noted at the last two meetings, Vivian Zeng reported that that Boston Sports Club is considering putting forth a variance request to eliminate the lifeguard requirement. Currently they must have one lifeguard in place for every 25 bathers at their swimming pool. The club wishes to install cameras and supervise the pool activity remotely. To date no variance request has been submitted.

d) Tolles Parsons/Council on Aging

Leonard Izzo reported that there is a scheduled Council on Aging board meeting this afternoon.

The meeting was adjourned at 1p.m.

The next Board of Health meeting is scheduled for February 3, 2022, at 12 noon.

Respectfully submitted,

Deadra Doku Gardner, Administrator