

Wellesley Board of Health
Remote Meeting via Zoom
Meeting Minutes
January 25, 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:

Leonard Izzo, Director
Cheryl Lefman, Community Health Coordinator
Ann Marie McCauley, Public Health Nurse Supervisor
Joyce Saret, Senior Community Social Worker

In attendance:

Bob Brown, The Swellesley Report
Linda Corridan, Director, School Nursing, Wellesley Public Schools
Linda Chow, Chair, School Committee
Shira Doron, MD, Resident
Stephanie Hawkinson, Communications and Project Manager
David Lussier, Superintendent, Wellesley Public Schools
Melissa Martin, Member, School Committee
Beth Sullivan Woods, Member, Select Board

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

The Board of Health approved the following set of minutes:

1-20-2021

Citizen Speak:

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

1. Administration
2. Community Health
 - a) COVID-19 Update

Ann Marie McCauley provided a case update. There were new 20 cases over the weekend and 16 this morning, mainly from those college age and younger, through household/family spread. Babson College still has many cases. Ms. McCauley (and the nurses) are sending cases to the State's Contact Tracing Collaborative (CTC).

Dr. Shira Doron reported there is concern about new mutations and the vaccine's efficacy (on the variants). Dr. Doron reiterated that people need to be meticulous about mask wearing, social distancing and hand hygiene protocols. She restated that in Germany, everyone must now wear a medical mask. Dr. Doron said if this becomes a mandate here, there will be issues with the supply chain.

b) COVID-19 Update – Wellesley Public Schools (WPS)

Dr. David Lussier provided an update on COVID-19 at WPS. There have been 15 new cases (2 staff, 13 students). Three cases were identified through surveillance testing and 12 by external testing. To date, there have been 117 cases in total. Seventy percent have been in secondary education (Middle and High Schools). He noted the High School has resume their regular schedule after the break, and cited that Needham High School has gone fully remote as they had a surge in cases.

Dr. Lussier reported that DESE is getting behind pool testing and is seeking feedback. He noted disappointment with their selection of the nasal swab test. The Wellesley model is more seamless. They are engaging with the State to ascertain if they may be able to obtain State support of their testing model, despite it being a different one.

Dr. Lussier reported on a staff and community meeting about the updated dashboard this Thursday from 6:30-8:00.

c) COVID-19 Vaccine Clinics

Leonard Izzo reported he has received numerous complaints about vaccine distribution in town. Residents do not understand why they have not been notified about their ability to receive a vaccination. Mr. Izzo explained that the Health Department stood-up clinics for first responders and others eligible in the first tiers of Phase 1. They used their allotted number of doses for this purpose.

Mr. Izzo reported the Governor was set to speak at 12:30 and anticipated an announcement about vaccine clinic rollout.

Marcia Testa Simonson reported she had insight into the Governor's announcement having just been on a call with the Local Public Health Coalition. Dr. Testa Simonson said there is a new plan for distribution of vaccine. In Phase 2, all vaccinations will be going to mass distribution clinics, and commercial contractors (that have contracted with the State) to offer vaccinations. CIC Health vaccinators will be used. Larger allocations of vaccine will go to high-risk communities, and local boards of health/health departments that have opted to offer local clinics will receive up to 100 doses per week.

Dr. Testa Simonson noted that those in Phase 2, group one will be 75+ only. The second group in Phase 2 will be those 65+, or those with two co-morbidities. K-12 teachers have been moved to group three.

Dr. David Lussier was shocked by the change, noting that it is counterintuitive that K-12 teachers are moving lower down the list. He stated that vaccinations for staff are their highest priority. Dr. Lussier said the association of superintendents sent a letter to the Governor requesting that staff be vaccinated during the week of 2-15, February vacation. He wanted to arrange a clinic in collaboration with the Health Department. With this news, Dr. Lussier wondered whether they might approach a vendor like CVS to arrange a plan for vaccination when eligible.

There was discussion related to the minimization of the role of local public health in vaccination efforts. Marcia Testa Simonson said transportation, particularly for those unable to drive or obtain a ride to a clinic is being considered. Other considerations include whether a call center can be operationalized to aid with vaccine related questions, and collaboration with partners such as the Council on Aging to assist senior residents navigate the State's website to sign-up for a vaccination.

Ann Marie McCauley reported that two COVID-19 vaccination clinics for first responders and school nurses were held last week. The same groups will return for their second doses in February.

Beth Sullivan Woods reiterated that the Veterans Administration has a separate vaccine program through the federal government. Shepard Cohen

reported veterans have already received their shots at the VA Hospital in West Roxbury.

Beth Sullivan Woods reported on the local COVID-19 relief funds available, noting that a few applications for this funding have been received.

d) Social Work

Joyce Saret provided an update on the virtual chat on self-care with Health Department social workers next Thursday, January 28, 2021 from 1:00-2:00 PM.

Ms. Saret reported she is waiting for news regarding funding from the partnership with Newton-Needham Chambers of Commerce (\$40,000) for local restaurants that will participate in assisting those identified as having food insecurity concerns. The funding will help the restaurants as well.

This meeting was adjourned at 12:48 p.m.

The next meeting of the Board of Health is scheduled on January 27, 2021, 11:30 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

Cheryl Lefman

Community Health Coordinator