

Wellesley Board of Health
Remote Meeting via Zoom
Meeting Minutes
February 3, 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:

Marlene Alan, Chair, Council on Aging
Connie Carillo-Backoff, Director, Human Relations Service
Lindsay Steinsieck, Psychologist, Human Relations Service
Ellen Subramaniam, Resident
Kathleen Vogel, Board Member, Council on Aging
Beth Sullivan Woods, Member, Select Board
Maura Wayman, Resident
Emily Whittaker Smith, intern
Greg Wilson, Assistant Director, Council on Aging

Citizen Speak

Maura Wayman addressed the various covid restrictions put into place that the public schools particularly those in relation to school athletics. She asked that the Board Health consider loosening those restrictions.

Ellen Subramaniam reported that she agrees with the comments made by Ms Wayman regarding reducing restrictions. She further requested that the Board of Health review the masking policies and the importance of students and parents being able to attend concerts and field trips as well as in person meetings and events.

Chairman's Report

Shepard Cohen reported on the most recent Newton-Wellesley Hospital Community Benefits meeting noting that hospitalizations due to the corona virus have dropped off substantially.

Director's report

Leonard Izzo reported that the department calls regarding covid complaints and vaccination requests have dropped off. Mr Izzo reported that daily activity has been slowly returning to normal in the department.

Community Health

a) Mental Health – HRS

Dr Connie Cardillo-Backoff reported that she began her position as Director at HRS on December 1, 2021. Dr. Carillo -Backoff addressed the agencies collaboration with the town and reported on her plans to meet the needs of all the residents. Dr Cardillo- Backoff reported that mental health is overall an extensive issue in our community as well as in surrounding communities.

Shep Cohen suggested that HRS bring together all the social service employees and agencies in town to address what issues are present and how to address them.

Linda Oliver Grape inquired about the former Metro West Hospital in Natick. Lindsay Steinsieck briefly reviewed the history of the location noting that the emergency department is closed. All mental health patients are now directed to the Framingham hospital location as that is where the emergency department is housed. NWH is working very hard to service emergency mental health cases.

b) COVID: Community

Ann Marie McCauley reported that the Wellesley positivity rate is at 3.6% rate with approximately 12 new COVID cases per day. Seven of these are positive students from the colleges. One individual was admitted to the hospital but for a different diagnosis.

c) Council on Aging – Draft COVID Vaccination policy

Greg Wilson presented the draft policy on vaccination to the Board of Health. Marlene Alan reviewed the detail so the policy for a vaccine mandate for all visitors attending Council on Aging functions and programming.

Ms Alan cited the reasoning behind the policy noting that the location provides a low-risk place for seniors to go to and socialize. The policy does exclude the bus program as some non-vaccinated individuals may need the bus to get to appointments.

Marcia Testa Simonson commented that the draft policy cannot be a mandate. The only authority in the commonwealth that can put in place is the Board of Health . Ms Alan reported that the Council on Aging want to have jurisdiction over the people coming into the building who conduct programs and attend events at the building. Ms Testa Simonson reported that the Council on Aging cannot have jurisdictional authority, Ms Testa Simonson want to be certain that this is not a discriminatory policy.

Marlene Alan elaborated that the COA is trying to get people out of their homes and to get them to partake in activities. The COA encourages people to chat and take part in activities in a low-risk environment.

Linda Oliver Grape reported that she would not want the mandate to give participants a false sense of security and it is important to make it known that nothing is fool proof.

d) Sustainable Wellesley program

Leonard Izzo reported that the Sustainable Wellesley group is running a program on climate change. The event is taking place on March 3.

1. Environmental Health

a) Camps

Vivian Zeng reported that she has begun the camp process for the upcoming summer season. Ms Zeng noted that there are a few camps scheduled to operate over February and April school vacations.

b) Food Establishment

Vivian Zeng reported that she has recently approved four or five new food establishment plans.

Beth Sullivan Woods reported that there has been a great deal of interest in Wellesley with approximately 7 or 8 new food establishments coming into town.

Lenny Izzo reported on the many new food establishments, noting that the Department does not currently have the staff to review the plans and inspections in a timely manner.

c) Council on Aging – Kitchen

Beth Sullivan Woods briefly reported on the status of the kitchen at the Council on Aging.

d) Tobacco

Vivian Zeng reported that she has not hear anything additional from the tobacco retailer that 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.

e) Boston Sports Club Pool

Vivian Zeng reported that that Boston Sports Club will not pursue a variance. Instead of requesting a variance, they will close the pool during hours that they do not have lifeguards.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:15p p.m.

The next Board of Health meeting is scheduled for February 9, 2022, at 9 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Deadra Doku Gardner, Administrator