

Wellesley Board of Health
Remote Meeting via Zoom
Meeting Minutes
February 9, 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, MS, Administrator
Leonard Izzo, MS, RS, CHO, Director
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
David Fay, Resident
David Lussier, Superintendent, Wellesley Public Schools
Ellen Subramaniam, Resident

The Board approved the meeting minutes dated January 20, 2022.

Citizen Speak

David Fay reported on his concern regarding covid restrictions and policies surrounding covid in the schools. He briefly reviewed a situation that occurred involving one of his children noting that there is no uniformity in restrictions that are followed in the schools.

Chairman's Report

Shepard Cohen reported that Board of Health is going to be presenting at the Select Board meeting on Monday.

Director's report

Leonard Izzo again emphasized at today's meeting 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.

1. Community Health

a) Wellesley Public Schools (WPS)

David Lussier reported that he expects to hear today about the lifting of mask mandates in schools at governors briefing report today. He suspects the governor will be announcing that the school mask requirement will expire on Feb 28th. Dr Lussier reviewed the weekly COVID dashboard noting the high vaccinations rates of the staff and school populations. He also noted that the case counts are dramatically different (lower) than where they were and that the severity of symptoms and illness is far less severe.

Dr Lussier reported that the administration is in the process of relaxing mitigation strategies in terms of athletics and the performing arts. He also reported that schools have been receiving and distributing government issued test kits to families. In addition, the district has also purchased kits, and these are also being distributed. Linda Oliver Grape reported on the importance on being aware of the expiration dates on the test kits that WPS purchased. Dr Lussier reported that the kits expire in June 2022. Ms Oliver Grape also inquired as to whether there was an opportunity to share these test kits with other residents outside of the school community.

Marcia Testa Simonson noted that the vaccination rates in the WPDS district are incredible, and she believes that we are at the end of the recent surge.

b) COVID: Community

Ann Marie McCauley reported that the Wellesley positivity rate for last week has not been reported. Wellesley has approximately 9.5 new COVID cases per day this week. Colleges also have some cases however the numbers are coming down.

Shira Doron reported on the letter that was sent by the Commonwealth to college presidents instructing the higher education institutions to reduce mitigations and try to go back to a normal campus level activity (pre-pandemic). Dr Doron will forward the letter to the Board of Health members and staff.

Linda Oliver Grape requested that the staff report on the status and activities of the colleges and private schools.

c) Town Buildings and Mandatory Masking

Leonard Izzo reported that the mandatory mask mandate in public buildings will be address at the Select Board meeting on Monday, February 14, 2022.

As mandated on August 25, 2021, anyone individual over the age of 5 must be masked in a town building.

d) Metro-west Grant

Leonard Izzo reported that the town has been awarded a grant from the Metro West Foundation.

e) Test kits

Leonard Izzo reported that the test kit order he and the Fire Chief placed thru Cataldo Ambulance has been cancelled. All test kits were diverted thru the White House to the federal distribution program.

Mr Izzo reported that there are other communities that did purchase kits thru the Department of Health vendor links, and they are now finding that these kits have expiration dates of April and May.

f) Mental Health

Joyce Saret and Wanda Alvarez provided a quick overview of the mental health status in the community.

2. Environmental Health

a) Food Establishment

Vivian Zeng reported on the possibility of a new specialty grocery store opening at 259 Washington St. Linda Oliver Grape expressed traffic concerns. Ms Zeng reported that the Select Board may be requiring a traffic study.

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

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

The next Board of Health meeting is scheduled for February 8, 2022, at 9 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Deadra Doku Gardner, Administrator