

Wellesley Board of Health
Remote Meeting via Zoom
Meeting Minutes
March 17, 2021
11:30 AM

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

In attendance:

Shira Doron, MD, Resident
Lloyd Tarlin, MD, Resident, former Board member

The meeting was called to order at 11:35 AM

The following meeting minutes were approved:

- March 15, 2021

Citizen Speak

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

1. Community Health
 - a) COVID-19 Update

Ann Marie McCauley reported that since the last meeting there has been one confirmed case in the community and one confirmed case at Babson College.

b) Babson College – COVID-19 Update

At previous meetings, Leonard Izzo reported on increases in COVID cases on the Babson College campus. At today's meeting, Mr. Izzo reported on a communication from the Babson president to students, requesting that they be cautious in their activities, personal behaviors and at events. Ann Marie McCauley reported on her conversation with the health services director regarding student behavior. Students are supposed to report upcoming travel plans and quarantine when they return. In some cases, when they learn of this guidance, suddenly their trips are called off. Linda Oliver Grape said there are opportunities for improved behavior at the College.

Mr. Izzo will address students' behavior during his weekly meeting with Babson College contacts on Thursday.

c) COVID-19 – Wellesley Public Schools (WPS)

Dr. Shira Doron reviewed the first of two surveys forwarded to parents. The first was sent to assess parents' thoughts on the return to full in-person school plan. There was a great deal of confusion related to this survey as it indicated that this was the first survey to assess their opinions and was not binding.

A second survey will be sent at the end of the week asking for parents' binding decision related to sending their child/children back to full in-person learning; they may also opt out.

Leonard Izzo reported that information disseminated by the Department of Public Health (DPH) has been confusing in regards to students' return to the classroom.

Mr. Izzo said he will have a meeting this Thursday with Superintendent David Lussier to discuss school schedules and end-of-year activities, including prom, sporting events and graduation. Mr. Izzo said he is waiting for the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) to provide guidelines.

d) Governor's Announcement

Leonard Izzo and Marcia Testa Simonson reviewed Governor's Baker announcement today regarding the vaccination timeline of remaining groups in Phase 2 and then the general public.

Marcia Testa Simonson reported that individuals can sign up to be vaccinated, but vaccine supply remains extremely limited.

The Board of Health discussed Regina LaRocque's request for signatures on a letter to the Governor in support of delaying the reopening of businesses across the State. Leonard Izzo said there is value in some venues delaying their reopening. The deadline for signatures expired before the Board meeting, and Mr. Izzo could not sign the document on behalf of the Board.

e) COVID-19 Vaccine, Clinics and Homebound Populations

Leonard Izzo reported on an email from DPH in regards to recent Public Housing vaccination clinics that were held in Wellesley and elsewhere in the State. Mr. Izzo said the Health Department received 100 doses. Sixty doses were used to vaccinate housing residents and the remaining forty doses were used to vaccinate Wellesley seniors and homebound residents. The State reprimanded health departments for using remaining doses to vaccinate others outside of the designated housing population. They noted that unopened vials from this supply were to be returned to the State. The exception was if an extra dose could be extracted from a vial, it could be given to someone outside of the designated group.

f) COVID Testing

Carol Hannenberg said that CVS is offering antibody testing for \$38. She inquired if an individual takes the test and it comes back positive, would it come up as a suspect case? Ann Marie McCauley said that suspect cases still require follow-up and the individual would have to adhere to the quarantine guidelines. Dr. Doron said that DPH has not yet changed testing guidelines for vaccinated individuals.

Dr. Doron reported that she does not know what WPS will do in regards to testing but eventually the funding will run out. She noted that the positivity rate at WPS has been very low; in their worst week, they had a positivity rate of .3%. Marcia Testa Simonson said they should assess the risk to benefit ratio. She believes WPS could stop testing now, and put funding into mental health programming. If the need warrants, they could re-start the testing program.

DESE is rolling out a testing program for the rest of the state. Linda Oliver Grape reported that surveillance testing continues to expand. Dr. Doron said that WPS will not discontinue testing as long as the rest of the State is testing.

g) Social Services/Mental Health

Joyce Saret reported on her Zoom program for parents this afternoon. She will continue to provide programming for this group as long as there is a need. Some children who had issues have become worse. She does not know what will happen to these children when they return to school full-time. Wanda Alvarez said it would be helpful to have an assessment of the students, and provide supports and an inventory of resources.

Ms. Saret said she is waiting to hear about the hiring of a new Resident Services Coordinator at the Wellesley Housing Authority (WHA). She noted an uptick of calls from WHA locations. Residents are feeling stressed and are worried about their neighbors.

Joyce Saret reported on the food program funded by the Regional Newton/Needham Chamber of Commerce. Those who test positive for COVID and must quarantine may be offered meals from participating restaurants. This will also provide Ms. Saret an opportunity to learn if they are in need of her services.

Shepard Cohen provided an update regarding the mental health and social services meeting this Friday, March 19, 2021 at 2:30 PM. Participants will identify gaps and discuss how best to leverage and expand resources. A report will be generated following the meeting.

2. Environmental Health

a) Regulations

Lenny Izzo reported that a draft set of tobacco regulations are still being reviewed by Town Counsel.

Other regulations are in the process of being updated.

b) Camps

Vivian Zeng reported that camp codes state that camps are required to have options for emergency shelter. WPS will not be leasing space to some camps that operate on their fields.

The State has reported that the use of tents will be fine as long as the tents meet the local building codes. Ms. Zeng has addressed this with Wellesley Building Inspector, Mike Grant.

3. Administration

a) Human Resources Board

Shepard Cohen reported that the Board of Health will be going before the Human Resources Board to address staff vacation pay-outs, additional compensation for specific staff, increased hourly rates for nurses, and reclassification of two senior positions.

b) FY22 Budget

Marcia Testa Simonson reported that the budget submission that Financial Services provided is incorrect. She will ensure that the correct version is submitted for Town meeting.

This meeting was adjourned at 12:31 p.m.

The next meeting of the Board of Health is scheduled on March 22, 2021, 12 noon.

Respectfully submitted,

Deadra Doku Gardner

Administrator