

Wellesley Board of Health
Remote Meeting via Zoom
Meeting Minutes
March 22, 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:

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
Joyce Saret, LICSW, Senior Community Social Worker
Vivian Zeng, REHS, RS, CP-FS, Senior Environmental Health Specialist

In attendance:

Bob Brown, The Swellesley Report
John Brown, Athletic Director, Wellesley Public Schools
Linda Chow, Chair, School Committee, Wellesley Public Schools
Linda Corridan, Director of Nursing, Wellesley Public Schools
Shira Doron, MD, Resident
John Lanza, Advisory Committee
David Lussier, Superintendent, Wellesley Public Schools
Lloyd Tarlin, MD, Resident, former Board member
Beth Sullivan Woods, Member, Select Board

The meeting was called to order at 12:04 PM.

The following meeting minutes were approved: March 17, 2021.

Citizen Speak

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

1. Community Health

a) COVID-19 Update

Leonard Izzo reported that since the last meeting (3/17/2021) there have been 16 confirmed cases in the community; the majority were from household transmission. Since the last meeting there have been two confirmed cases at Babson College.

Linda Corridan reported only one positive case at the Middle School last week, identified through surveillance testing. The number of students in quarantine has significantly decreased.

b) Babson College – COVID-19 Update

Leonard Izzo reported on his weekly Thursday meeting with Babson College administration. At the time of the meeting there were 16 students in isolation (8 on campus, 8 off campus) and 46 in quarantine. Mr. Izzo reported there had been two COVID related hospitalizations, however both individuals have been released. One was identified as a Babson employee and the second was a graduate student. The last day of Babson classes is April 19 and everyone is expected to depart the campus by May 1, 2021. The summer educational programs for small student groups are expected to begin on June 4, 2021.

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

Linda Chow and Superintendent Lussier reported on a webinar held last Thursday for parents of K - 5 students. It highlighted the expansion of COVID pool testing to those grade levels. Testing will begin next Monday, March 29, 2021.

Dr. Lussier reported on the WPS full in-person classroom opening timeline. The dates are as follows:

- April 5, 2021- K-5
- April 12, 2021 -Middle School
- April 26, 2021, High School

Parents have been asked to decide on their preference: 1) whether to keep their child/children in fully remote learning or 2) return them to full in-person classroom learning. Responses are due by 5:00 pm this Wednesday.

Linda Oliver Grape expressed concern regarding the upcoming April school vacation and anticipated travel. Dr. Lussier said he will reinforce the updated travel advisory guidelines and continue mitigation strategies

in schools. The administration has given consideration to the return to school following the vacation break. He hopes that all the cautionary steps that have been taken thus far will help mitigate further disruption to classroom learning, as they cannot delay school opening. Ms. Oliver Grape stressed the importance of being careful and well-prepared.

WPS Athletics Director John Brown provided an update on the current school athletics season and the upcoming spring season (Fall II). He noted that with the exception of volleyball, all spring sports will be held outdoors. The spring programs include boys' volleyball, baseball, dance, boys and girls golf, softball, tennis and outdoor track. The sailing program (with guidance from NESAs and Mass Bay Sailing Association) will begin on March 29, 2021. Linda Corridan reported there is a mandated weekly screening for students participating in athletics.

Dr. Lussier reported that 62% of WPS staff have received at least one COVID vaccination thus far.

Dr. Shira Doron reported on concern from several families regarding whether remote hours will count as school hours for those children that are dealing with isolation, quarantine or COVID related issues. She noted the importance of removing the barriers of having to count school hours when children are sick or when they are exposed, as symptomatic children should not attend school. Dr. Lussier said it is challenging and a topic of bargaining with the teacher's union. He noted the difficulty of teachers to manage teaching students who are physically in the classroom as well as those at home.

Leonard Izzo reported on his meeting with school administrators regarding end-of-school activities including commencement. He said the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) released guidelines pursuant to this last weekend. Dr. Lussier said the WPS plan is in alignment with DESE guidelines. Graduation will be the first weekend of June and they continue to work on the spacing of attendees and how the ceremony will take place. The graduation ceremony will be live streamed. Dr. Lussier said another concern is the prom; they are awaiting further guidelines.

d) COVID-19 Vaccine, Clinics and Homebound Individuals

Leonard Izzo reported the Health Department will hold a vaccine clinic for second doses for seniors on Tuesday, March 23, 2021 at the Warren Building. He noted there had been WIFI accessibility issues at previous clinics at the Warrant Building however the IT Department has installed new systems and there has been a dramatic improvement.

Marcia Testa Simonson reported on the State's vaccination plan for homebound individuals. She also mentioned the State's new vaccination by municipality dashboard highlighting each community's breakdown of vaccinated populations.

e) Social Services/Mental Health

Shepard Cohen provided an update regarding the mental health and social services meeting held last Friday, March 19, 2021. Cheryl Lefman provided detailed notes and a report will be drafted. Participants identified the following issues:

1. There is an overall need for additional external resources, such as child psychiatrists, child psychologists, and other therapists
2. The town will need to consider hiring additional social workers to fill the gaps, mostly created by a scarcity of external resources
3. Summer camps are critically important this summer for children

Joyce Saret emphasized that there is also a need for additional social work hours, especially for school-based work, so they can do more with families in need. The School Department previously added social work hours for the summer, and there will be additional needs this coming summer. Wanda Alvarez reported that services in the community are limited and there is a need for additional supports for residents.

Ms. Saret said that Human Relation Service (HRS) has an intake and referral service and refers clients out if they cannot assist. Every call is returned within a 24-hour period and assists with service or referral. Linda Oliver Grape said the vast majority of insurance companies are covering telemedicine visits.

Linda Corridan said it was a great meeting, and repeated the positive aspects of students during COVID: some kids have done very well and have shown good resilience. Kids in school are going outside every day, getting fresh air and that helps them to settle down when they go back into school buildings.

2. Environmental Health

a) Camps

Leonard Izzo reported on summer camps, and the policy regarding emergency shelter. The State confirmed that a tent or bus will be satisfactory, however, the tent must meet local building codes. Mr. Izzo has been in contact with the Building Department director regarding this matter.

b) Sports and Athletic Clubs

Boston Sports Club (BSC) - Vivian Zeng reported that BSC has no plan to operate camps and will not be opening the outdoor pools this summer.

Boston Sports Institute (BSI) - Vivian Zeng reported they are fully operational; she is in contact with management and makes regular visits to the location.

Leonard Izzo reported that the inspectors are in contact with other athletic clubs in regards to capacity and spacing. These locations do not require Health Department permitting.

3. Administration

a) FY22 Budget

Marcia Testa Simonson, John Lanza and Leonard Izzo will be meeting in regards to the recent budget submission that Financial Services has provided. John Lanza said the Health Department budget that had been submitted previously was voted on and approved by the Advisory Committee. Mr. Lanza is not aware of any changes or alterations made by Financial Services.

This meeting was adjourned at 12:53 p.m.

The next meeting of the Board of Health is scheduled on March 24, 2021, 11:30 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Deadra Doku Gardner

Administrator