

Wellesley Board of Health
CONFERENCE CALL – ZOOM
Meeting Minutes
September 2, 2020
11:30 AM

Present:

Board:

Shepard Cohen, MPA, Chair
Marcia Testa Simonson, MPH, PhD, Vice Chair
Linda Oliver Grape, PA-C, MPH, Secretary

Staff:

Deadra Doku-Gardner, Administrator
Leonard Izzo, Director
Ann Marie McCauley, Public Health Nurse Supervisor

In attendance:

Linda Chow, Chair, Wellesley School Committee
Linda Corridan, Nursing Director, Wellesley Public Schools
Sharon Gray, Wellesley School Committee
Katey Groehringer, Wellesley Educational Foundation
David Lussier, Superintendent, Wellesley Public Schools
Beth Sullivan Woods, Board of Selectmen

The meeting was called to order at 11:30 am.

Citizen Speak

No one was in attendance that wished to participate in Citizens Speak.

1. Administration

a) Wellesley Public Schools (WPS) – reopening plan

Linda Chow reviewed a reopening and possible testing plan for the Board of Health (BOH).

Ms. Chow presented a testing RFP that was issued the previous Friday by the school department and school committee. The key points included collaboration with the BOH noting that schools must continue to work closely and be in sync with the BOH and their requirements.

Dr. David Lussier reported that teachers will be returning to their schools on Monday. Teachers were given the option to work in the school building or remotely this week. Next week, all teachers will be required to be working in their school building. Students will be welcomed back in a remote mode on

September 16 and beginning October 1, 2020 students will be phased in for in-person classroom learning.

Dr. Lussier reported on a survey completed by the teaching staff. Many teachers have been interested in teaching remotely. WPS have staffing needs and are actively hiring and preparing to fill vacant spots. Dr. Lussier also reported that student enrollment is down with multiple families not returning to the classroom.

Linda Chow reported on the social distancing six-foot standard. She said a working group was formed and met on August 18. The group has a draft plan on a macro district level and are currently working at the micro level of how things will operate classroom by classroom, and school by school.

The BOH reported that on August 13th they reviewed the recommended reopening plan with the hybrid model. The BOH supported the plan and the school committee approved and voted on the plan.

b) Wellesley Public Schools – testing

Linda Chow, David Lussier and Jessie Boehm reported that in July 2020 WPS found the need for a viral testing plan and that viral testing could reassure staff and families that it would be safe to return to the classroom.

On August 19, 2020, the school committee authorized the school department to issue a Request for Proposal (RFP) in search of testing facilities. The RFP was completed Friday, August 28. It was reported that the teacher's union agreement indicated that testing would be available. An open forum on viral testing is being held this evening (9/2/2020).

The BOH reported they did not receive a copy of RFP until Monday 8/31/20. They expressed concern that they were not given an opportunity to review the draft and provide input. The BOH reported there were substantive issues in the RFP and they were not supportive of it as it was.

Katey Goehringer reviewed the RFP process, defining the end result as a "fully managed solution." The RFP objective is to find a vendor that would provide a comprehensive testing solution. The vendor of choice would have to obtain prior consent for minor children (as young as pre- kindergarten). RFP responses are due Tuesday September 8, 2020. Ms. Goehringer reported that September 24 is the target date for the start of baseline testing.

The WPS business office follows the state RFP process and the final RFP draft was reviewed and approved by town counsel.

The BOH noted that symptomatic school staff and students cannot be tested by whatever agency is selected to conduct the screening. Systems are in place and they have been working. The BOH asked for a 24-hour

turnaround commitment of a PCR test result from the selected vendor. Katey Goehringer agreed to issue an addendum to the RFP regarding the testing of symptomatic people only, as well as a 24-hour turnaround time of test results.

The BOH reported they have been working with Newton Wellesley Hospital since the start of the pandemic. The BOH reminded meeting attendees that the BOH is not only responsible for school health but the entire community.

The BOH reiterated that COVID-19 case reporting is done thru the Massachusetts Department of Public Health's state-wide system MAVEN. Results of COVID-19 testing feeds directly into the MAVEN system. Only municipal public health staff, primarily nursing staff, have been trained and are provided access to the program. MAVEN information and testing results are provided ONLY to agents of the BOH (i.e. public health nursing staff). The MAVEN system does not provide information on clusters.

Thus, the lead department on reporting and direction is not the schools – it is the health department. Jurisdictional authority is given to the public health nurse. If there is a positive case, the health department is the lead agency and the school department staff will assist in the contact tracing

Katy Goehringer reviewed the testing frequency explaining that there is a huge amount of fear in the community. She cited all the protocols that are being put into place. Jesse Boehm reviewed testing of individuals, noting that the fear component has a social and emotional issue.

Marica Testa Simonson reported that there is no public health rationale to do this sort of testing in Wellesley. Wellesley has a low positivity rate and global testing is not helpful. Baseline testing is being done to see if there is a spike (currently there isn't one).

Katy Goehringer reported the school community wants a degree of safety at the start of school. The testing program proposed is for 9 weeks.

Sharon Gray said they have done the best they can to create safety in schools building.

Marcia Testa Simonson reported teachers have anxiety about returning to school. Many have their own personal issues of juggling their family and work life. Dr. Testa Simonson reported that many are driven by emotion, not data.

The BOH reiterated their disappointed that they were not brought in for the RFP process and issues need to be addressed within the RFP. A member of the BOH will join the review team to evaluate incoming proposals.

Linda Oliver Grape asked if testing is enforceable and whether a student or staff member will be able to go to school in hybrid mode. She questioned the definition of close contacts (as presented in the RFP). She asked for

additional information in regards to transporting individuals. Ms. Oliver Grape said the RFP guidelines needed additional information about parent presence for testing and the status of minors during testing.

Linda Corridan reported on the guidelines presented by DPH and DESE noting that both have provided strict guidelines as to who close contacts are in school. Ms. Corridan reported there will be seating charts for the busses, as well as classrooms.

Ms. Corridan reported on the policies if staff and/or students exhibit COVID-19 symptoms. They will be advised to contact their physician first. The schools have isolation rooms. Students visiting the nursing offices will be addressed at the front door of the office and anyone with symptoms will be sent to the isolation room. Others will be directed to a designated "clean room". Ann Marie McCauley reported that at this time she is not concerned about symptomatic cases in the schools. The schools have done an excellent job planning for the unexpected.

Additional information will be reported upon as it becomes available.

The next meeting of the Board of Health is scheduled for Wednesday, September 9, 2020.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Deadra Doku Gardner
Administrator

Documents reviewed during this meeting and on-file in the Health Department:

- NONE