

IWellesley Board of Health
Remote Meeting via Zoom
Meeting Minutes.
September 9, 2021

Present:

Board:

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

Staff:

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
Vivian Zeng, REHS, RS, CP-FS, Senior Environmental Health Specialist

In attendance:

Shira Doron, MD, resident
Stephanie Hawkinson, Communications and Project Manager
Ashley Hulme, Director of Nursing, Wellesley Public Schools
David Lussier, Superintendent, Wellesley Public Schools
Catherine Mirick, School Committee, Wellesley Public Schools
Beth Sullivan Woods, Select Board

The meeting was called to order at 12:05 PM.

Chairman's report

Shepard Cohen reported on the most recent Newton-Wellesley Hospital Community Benefits meeting. He reported that there were only twelve COVID patients in the Hospital at the time of the meeting.

Director's report

Leonard Izzo and Maria Testa reviewed the indoor mask advisory being released to the Wellesley public. Mr Izzo reported anyone over the age of five years old should be wearing a mask when in an indoor and public setting. The Board of Health voted to approve the advisory.

1. Community Health

a) COVID update

Ann Marie McCauley reported that currently there is a .6% Covid positivity rate for Wellesley. Linda Oliver Grape reported that Wellesley positivity rate is well below that of other communities

Ann Marie McCauley reported that there are approximately 4.4 positive COVID cases per day throughout the community. Without including the colleges, the community rate drops to 3.3 positive cases per day. In the last month there has only been one hospitalization.

b) Town Buildings and Mask order

Leonard Izzo reviewed the mask order for town buildings and the order implementation. At the start of the mask order the Health Department provided masks to all town buildings.

Stephanie Hawkinson reported that the mask mandate at Town Hall is going well.

c) Community Masking

Leonard Izzo reported that a public health intern from the University of Massachusetts will be working on a survey of 25 to 30 Massachusetts communities. The survey will help to determine if other communities are planning to implement a masking order. Survey questions will include how the order will be implemented and enforced, and how metrics are being used to off ramp to remove the masks.

d) Wellesley Public Schools (WPS) – Masking and Testing

David Lussier provided an update on Wellesley Public Schools.

Dr Lussier reported that the school administration and school committee have agreed to sign onto the state testing programs. The testing contracts are out by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), however it is taking time for providers to come up to speed with the actual implementation and guidelines. The testing partners are having a staffing issue and WPS recently learned that the pool testing will be at a later date as the staffing as well as the resources are not now adequate.

Dr Lussier reviewed on-site in school testing noting that this is a massive undertaking. Testing will focus on grade levels pre- k thru grade 6. Testing will be the interior nasal swab and done weekly. Consent forms were sent out to parents last night.

Dr Lussier reported that the schools have been open for slightly over a week. There have been a few positive COVID cases. The challenging piece for the schools is how to draw boundaries of those who are close contacts. Trying to get the clarification information from the state has been difficult.

Ashely Hulme reported that 86% of students are vaccinated.

Dr Lussier reported that there are constant vaccination reminders to those that are unvaccinated. The State has said that public schools cannot require vaccinations, only encouragement. Marcia Testa Simonson agreed noting that schools should not be practicing clinical medicine. There are multiple reasons why children could be a vaccine exception, such as they have recently had covid, they have a medical condition preventing them from being vaccinated, etc. .

Dr. Lussier reported that there is no social distancing in schools. Children are eating outside and so far this has been working well. There are many more students on campus than a year ago. Principals are doing the best to spread kids out within the schools.

Dr Lussier reported that he intends on planning a webinar for parents in the coming weeks. Topics will include information about where the virus is in Wellesley and status of the school operations during COVID. Marica Testa Simons feels that communication would be very important at this time. Dr Lussier reported that WPS will be putting their dashboard up starting on Friday for parents to see case counts across the school district.

e) Star Academy

Leonard Izzo and Vivian Zeng issued a plan approval for food service at the new school.

David Lussier reported that the Star Academy curriculum has been approved by the school committee with some conditions one of which is that there will be no food service program until the kitchen renovation is approved by the Health Department.

2. Environmental Health

a) Temporary Permits

Vivian Zeng reported that there have been multiple temporary permits for block parties and various events at the schools and colleges.

b) West Nile Virus

Leonard Izzo reported that three Wellesley pools tested positive last week. The East Middlesex Mosquito Control Project (EMMCP) is doing additional larviciding in the community. Mr Izzo has put out a community advisory about avoiding bites and providing general education.

c) Wellesley Wonderful Weekend (WWW)

Beth Sullivan Woods reported that plans for the weekend are moving along. Vivian Zeng reported on her recent meeting with Carl Nelson of the Wellesley Celebrations Committee. Ms Zeng reviewed the event schedule for Saturday and Sunday noting that over the next five weeks she will have weekly updates from the WWW planning committee. Ms Zeng reported that there is a plan to have the Sunday parade staggered. Most events will take place outside and be spread out.

d) Tobacco Appeal Hearing

At a recent meeting the Board of Health approved a reduction of a tobacco fine for Gary Aharonian, owner of B & P Auto. Mr Aharonian was required to immediately pay \$300 of the \$1000 fine for the first offense tobacco sale. The Board of Health will hold \$700 in abeyance. In the event of a second violation within the next three years (2024) the \$700 will be charged in addition to the fine for the second offense, currently \$2000. The total fine at the time of a second offense will be \$2700 so long as the state does not alter the fine schedule

Vivian Zeng and Jessica Cliff reported that B & P Auto has paid the fine, the check was received check today.

e) Community Health Coordinator

Leonard Izzo reported that the job description has been finalized and is expected to be posted soon.

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

The next meeting of the Board of Health is scheduled for September 30, 2021 at 12 noon.

Respectfully submitted,

Deadra Doku Gardner

Administrator