



Needham Public Health Division



Board of Health Meeting Minutes

Date: November 22, 2022

Location: Rosemary Recreation Complex – Multi-Purpose Room, 178 Rosemary St., Needham MA 02494 OR via Zoom

Members: Edward Cosgrove, PhD, Chair; Kathleen Ward Brown, ScD, Member; Tejal K. Gandhi, MD, MPH, Member; Robert A. Partridge, MD, MPH, Member; Stephen Epstein, MD, MPP, Member

Staff Present: Timothy Muir McDonald, Director of Health, and Human Services; Tara Gurge, Assistant Director of Public Health; Tiffany Zike, Assistant Director of Public Health; Mary Fountaine; Hannah Burnett; Julie McCarthy; Cindi Melanson; Taleb Abdelrahim; Michael Lethin; Karen Shannon; and Carol Read.

Welcome and Public Comment Period

Dr. Cosgrove called the meeting to order at 9:00AM and initiated a roll call. Present were Dr. Brown – Y, Dr. Cosgrove - Y, Dr. Epstein – Y, Dr. Partridge – Y, and Dr. Gandhi-Y.

According to Chapter 107 of the Acts of 2022, as an act relative to extending certain states of emergency accommodations, as passed by the General Court, and signed into law, Acting Governor Karyn Polito, on July 16 2022, revised Section 20 of Chapter 20, the Acts of 2001. In so doing, provided modifications to the Massachusetts Open Meeting Law, which allow for flexibility to hold remote only, and hybrid meetings, while preserving public access and, where appropriate, public participation. Currently, that additional flexibility will expire on March 31, 2023, unless additional legislative action occurs. As part of today's hybrid meeting, all votes will occur via a roll call.

Approval of Minutes – October 13, 2022

Upon motion duly made by Dr. Brown and seconded by Dr. Partridge, it was voted to approve the minutes of October 13, 2022, as amended. Dr. Brown – Y, Dr. Cosgrove - Y, Dr. Epstein – Y, Dr. Partridge – Y, and Dr. Gandhi-Y. Motion passed 5-0-0.

Establish Regular BOH Meeting Schedule & Discuss Public Comment Period

Mr. McDonald stated that another public comment period was placed on this agenda, but no one chose to avail themselves of it either ahead of time or by being at this meeting.



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The Board discussed a proposed set meeting schedule. The Board has historically tried to have all members present, and there is also the option to participate remotely. The Board agreed to attempt to meet regularly, on Friday at 9am, the second week of each month, beginning April 14, 2023.

FY 2024 HHS Budget Submission

Mr. McDonald stated that the budget includes current year requests such as, extending the currently ARPA-funded Aging Services part-time clinician, and to support the Traveling Meals program. He explained that he is looking into a number of options for this program, including Bertucci's and a private catering company out of the Andover Senior Center. There is a study currently being conducted as to whether the kitchen at the Senior Center could be turned into a commercial kitchen. The cost to renovate this would be approximately \$250,000-\$300,000. Another budget priority is additional staff time for Environmental Health inspections. Ms. Gurge noted that the request is for an additional 10-hour/week part-time Health Agent. The fourth request is for a part-time front desk administrative assistant at the Center at the Heights. Mr. McDonald explained that three future requests, to be funded 50% in FY25 and 100% in FY26, include making permanent the currently ARPA-funded positions of clinician for the Youth & Family Services Division, the epidemiologist, and the currently vacant Public Health Nurse position. Larger presentations for these items will be made next year. Mr. McDonald explained that there is a request for a financial warrant article regarding opioid remediation, and future capital articles for the Aging Services fleet and potential facility modifications.

Mr. McDonald explained that the Town on January 1, 2022, adjusted Schedule C, for non-benefit eligible staff. This budget captures that change. The Department may approach the Personnel Board regarding adjusting wages for additional staff.

In response to a question from Dr. Cosgrove regarding the Town's financial situation, Mr. McDonald explained that the Public Health Division receives numerous grants throughout the year and will be requesting that the Town not cover the associated fringe benefit costs, as the grants themselves can cover this. This will be a cost saver for the Town. The challenge is capital costs and debt related to building projects.

Initial Discussion of 2023 and 2024 BOH Goals

Mr. McDonald stated that an update to the past two years' goals will be presented at the December meeting. He suggested that the Board move towards higher level goals.

Dr. Brown stated that some of her concerns include post-COVID use of public spaces and increased substance abuse in the community.

Dr. Gandhi stated that her concerns deal with post-COVID mental health challenges, especially for youth.



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Dr. Partridge stated that he supports reviewing the data from the MetroWest Adolescent Health Survey and how to best direct resources. Regarding Public Health Nursing, he would like to see additional public information regarding vaccinations.

Dr. Epstein noted that substance abuse has a significant place in the Board's goals. There could be more proactive engagement for community health.

Dr. Cosgrove stated that there needs to be research done into vaccine programs, as it will be important for the Division to continue to provide these to the public. He would also like the Division to continue to pursue accreditation.

Biosafety Regulation

Ms. McCarthy explained that the regulation should address the cutoff for which biosafety level (BSL) the Town wants to permit. She reviewed the biosafety levels with the Board. There are quite a few biosafety level 2 and 3 labs throughout the State. The Town can also decide if it would like to create a Biosafety Committee, composed of a variety of members. The Town currently has a policy which only contains steps for applying for a permit. There are few stipulations included.

Ms. Gurge stated that Needham previously had two BSL 2 labs, which both closed in 2018. A new registration was recently submitted for 117 Kendrick Street, for a BSL 2 lab. This company will not have any animals on site.

Dr. Cosgrove stated that he believes BSL 2 is a good level for the Town to permit. The Town also needs to consider if it will allow animals on site for these facilities.

Dr. Epstein stated that there could be significant costs for the Department with higher BSL levels. He noted that a Biosafety Committee could be useful to pursue.

Dr. Brown stated that she is unsure of the impacts of eliminating BSL 3 labs in Town. She suggested the possibility of a variance for labs of this type. Mr. McDonald agreed with the idea of a variance.

Dr. Cosgrove stated that he believes the Board should move forward with outlining regulations for BSL 1 and BSL 2 and continuing to consider what to do with a potential BSL 3.

Mr. McDonald explained that this item will be placed on the Board's agenda for the next couple of months, with proposed presentation of draft regulations in February, and a tentative hearing date scheduled for March. The Division will work to have a draft version available for public review in January, in case public comment leads to additional revisions to the draft.



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Opioid Settlement

Mr. McDonald stated that Needham has signed on to receive a portion of the opioid settlement. Additional parties are joining the settlement which includes manufacturers, distributors, and pharmacies. Currently Needham is slated to receive approximately \$1.03M over the next 16 years: the funding is not spread evenly across that period and the annual disbursement may range from about \$40,000, to more than \$70,000 per year.

The settlement is not a grant; it is a disbursement and so must go into the General Fund, per State Law. State Law also requires that Town Meeting, as Needham's legislative body, decide how and when to appropriate money. As a result, the Needham Public Health Division will place an article on the spring Town Meeting Warrant to state the amount received, request it be moved into a separate account, and to note that there will be a recurring annual request to add the settlement funds received in each year into the separate account every spring.

The account will be directed by the Public Health Division, working collaboratively with community partners and with other Needham departments like Youth & Family Services, Police, and Fire. Mr. McDonald noted that he is open to signing onto a regional effort to pool these funds if one becomes available. Needham's plan for these funds is to focus on harm reduction, access to treatment, and prevention. Mr. McDonald will update the Board on this item into the future.

Sira Naturals Label Review

Ms. Gurge reviewed the changes made to the label. She noted that she still has concerns regarding the FDA statement on the back, as it still blends into the label. The Board discussed the use of the word "gummies" on the label and the splat icon.

Dr. Brown asked if the Board is planning to review each label for each new product that becomes available. Dr. Epstein stated that marijuana is becoming a retail, recreational business. This is what third-parties are promoting at this time.

Off-Street Drainage Bond Release Request: Hutter Ridge Rd.

Ms. Gurge explained that the seven lots in this area have been completed. None of the owners have any issues and a site visit was conducted.

Upon motion duly made by Dr. Epstein and seconded by Dr. Brown, it was voted to release the off-street drainage bond for Hutter Ridge Road.

Dr. Brown – Y, Dr. Cosgrove – Y, Dr. Epstein – Y, Dr. Partridge – Y, and Dr. Gandhi-Y. Motion passed 5-0.

Staff Reports and COVID Updates



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Emergency Management – Michael Lethin

Mr. Lethin stated that meetings with Babson College Public Safety and Mass Maritime students to develop an active shooter tabletop exercise to take place in Spring 2023 are ongoing. He explained that MEMA held four days of regional training at the Needham Public Safety Building's EOC Training Room. This is the first time MEMA has used this training space. This partnership allows MEMA to utilize a centrally located, state of the art training facility, and allows Needham employees and volunteers priority for critical training courses. He noted that the application for the annual Emergency Management Performance Grant has been developed. Needham is eligible for \$8,500, which is slated to be used for hazmat training.

Emergency Preparedness – Tiffany Zike & Taleb Abdelrahim

Mr. Abdelrahim stated that there are currently 43 pending MRC memberships. The group has been working to renew volunteer badges, which are expiring soon, and coordinate and assist the nurse unit with vaccination clinic tasks.

Substance Use Prevention – Karen Shannon & Carol Read

Ms. Shannon stated that the group partnered with the Police Department with the semi-annual drug take-back day. 128 lbs. were collected that day, which is a substantial increase. On average, over the past six months, 75 lbs. were collected per month, a 36% increase over previous years.

Ms. Read stated that she has continued to attend community meetings. An online abbreviated MetroWest Adolescent Health Survey was created and given to Walpole and Westwood students last week. She worked with Ms. Zike to present Needham's Community Crisis Intervention Team model at the Massachusetts Health Officers Association Conference.

Traveling Meals Program – Rebecca Hall

Mr. McDonald stated that Ms. Hall works to continue this program through adversity, with the help of many dedicated volunteers.

Shared Services Grants – Diana Acosta

Ms. Acosta stated that training on reviewing applications was conducted and other types of applications for review can be added on as needed. She, Ms. Kent, and Mr. Abuntori attended the Annual MHOA Conference in Falmouth, MA. She and Mr. McDonald continued meeting with Regan Checchio of Regina Villa to discuss strategic planning to determine the next steps to continue developing the Charles River Public Health District's inter-municipal agreement. Regina Villa delivered a draft interview questionnaire and invitation letter for the Shared Service Planning process. Kendy Valbrun is no longer a contact tracer for Needham, Dover, and Medfield. Michaela Bucca has shifted her hours to cover all weekdays.

Accreditation – Cindi Melanson



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Cindi Melanson stated that the Senior Assessment and Community Health Assessment are being written. The Workforce Development Plan is also being drafted, along with staff survey questions for the PH WINS follow-up.

Epidemiology – Julie McCarthy

Ms. McCarthy stated that Needham, the State, and the region have seen a decrease in both wastewater markers and hospitalization rates. Vaccination booster rates for each age category have gone up by approximately 10%. She stated that she has spent a lot of time reviewing the Community Health Assessment and MetroWest Adolescent Health Survey data.

Public Health Nursing

Ms. Burnett stated that there have been many vaccine clinics held for flu and COVID. A couple of HGA and Hep B cases were revoked.

Environmental Health – Tara Gurge

Ms. Gurge stated she has not received any updates from the owner of The Rice Barn. The 3-month sustained Order of Permit Revocation ended on November 2nd. The owner and his lawyer were contacted shortly thereafter to remind them about the next steps if they decide to apply for a new food establishment permit. Ms. Gurge has not received a reply.

Regarding Gage Street, Ms. Gurge stated that she and Mr. McDonald conducted a Zoom meeting call with the owner. The owner was encouraged to work with staff to set up the final housing inspection. Additional attempts were made to set up the housing inspection, with no reply. An Administrative Hearing order letter was sent to the owner, with a mandatory date and time. The owner retained a lawyer to help coordinate this process. Ms. Gurge stated that she was contacted by the lawyer, and it was agreed that, in lieu of a hearing, the owner can set up a date and time for the housing inspection. A date and time for an inspection was subsequently agreed to, however, it was postponed. A second date was set up and agreed to, and that date was also postponed due to illness. The housing inspection is currently scheduled to be conducted on December 1st.

Brief Updates

- **Pest Control**

Ms. Gurge stated that two active sites were treated, with a third site recently treated. The goal is to make sure these sites are now maintained.

- **Claxton Field**

Mr. McDonald explained that the Town is close to signing an agreement with the developer, so that the developer will install a barrier and cover it with soil.

Other Items



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Dr. Cosgrove noted that he has been representing the Board on the Housing Committee. This group has completed its work with a draft report presented to the Selectmen and other interested parties. All options for affordable housing in Needham were reviewed and suggestions for rezoning were made, in regard to the new MBTA Communities requirements.

Next BOH Meeting

The next regular Board meeting will be held on December 16, 2022, at 9am.

Adjournment

Upon motion duly made by Dr. Gandhi and seconded by Dr. Epstein, it was voted to adjourn. Dr. Brown – Y, Dr. Cosgrove - Y, Dr. Epstein – Y, Dr. Partridge – Y, and Dr. Gandhi-Y. Motion passed 5-0.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:53 a.m.

Attachment:

November 22, 2022 meeting packet