



Needham Public Health Division



Board of Health Meeting Minutes DRAFT

Date: June 9, 2023

Location: Rosemary Public Services Administration Building – Charles River Room 500
Dedham Avenue, Needham MA 02492 & via Zoom

Members: Kathleen Ward Brown, ScD, Vice-Chair; Edward Cosgrove, PhD, Member; Robert A. Partridge, MD, MPH, Member

Staff Present: Timothy Muir McDonald, Director of Health, and Human Services; Sai Palani; Diana Acosta; Taleb Abdelrahim; Ginnie Chacon-Lopez; Lydia Cunningham; Cindi Melanson

Welcome & Public Comment Period

Dr. Brown called the meeting to order at 9:00AM and initiated a roll call. Present were Dr. Brown – Y, Dr. Partridge – Y, Dr. Cosgrove - 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 by Acting Governor Karyn Polito, on July 16, 2022, revised Section 20 of Chapter 20, the Acts of 2021. 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, 2025, unless additional legislative action occurs. As part of today's hybrid meeting, all votes will occur via a roll call.

There was no request for public comment at this time.

Review of Minutes – (May 12, 2023)

Upon motion duly made by Dr. Cosgrove, and seconded by Dr. Partridge, it was voted to approve the minutes of May 12, 2023, as submitted. Motion passed: Dr. Brown – Y, Dr. Partridge – Y, and Dr. Cosgrove – Y.

Board of Health Fee Schedule *Vote Required*



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Mr. Palani explained that fee information was gathered from other towns. There are multiple ways to create the fee schedule. Natick and Wellesley do charge more than Needham is proposing, while the other towns are closer in line with the proposal.

Dr. Partridge asked about the proposed fee for the marijuana treatment center. Mr. McDonald stated that he believes this is an annual fee. He suggested adding a category for an initial permit versus an annual renew.

Dr. Brown stated that Needham seems to have a more complicated fee schedule than other towns.

The Board discussed approving the proposed fees with an adjustment that the marijuana treatment center annual permit would be \$1,250, and an initial permit of \$2,500. The Board also discussed a change to the proposed tanning permit fees.

Mr. McDonald suggested performing a cost review for all permits from the last fiscal year, to hopefully continue this discussion at a future time. This could include an analysis as to how much staff time is being spent toward restaurant permitting.

Upon motion duly made by Dr. Partridge, and seconded by Dr. Cosgrove, it was voted to approve the revised fee schedule structure with the modifications discussed at this meeting, to include a cost review study in July. Motion passed: Dr. Brown – Y, Dr. Partridge – Y, and Dr. Cosgrove – Y.

Shared Services Memorandum of Understanding *Vote Required*

Ms. Diana Acosta explained that the Charles River Public Health District created a working group with Regina Villa Associates, which consisted of one Board of Health Chair from each community and at least one staff member from each community. The major goal of the group was to create a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). With the assistance of Regina Villa Associates, a draft MOU for the shared services agreement was created. The initial draft language was reviewed by Needham's Town Counsel. The MOU establishes an agreement for all participating municipalities to commit to working together. This is the first step in creating a solid agreement between all four municipalities in the Charles River Public Health District. The plan is to now create a Regional Advisory Committee that will meet at least once a quarter to discuss matters relating to policy making, budgeting, and the effectiveness of the shared services arrangement.

Ms. Acosta stated that the MOU must be signed by each municipality's Town Manager or Administrator and each Board of Health Chair. The Board of Health first needs to agree to the MOU. No feedback was received on the draft document from the other towns.



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Upon motion duly made by Dr. Partridge, and seconded by Dr. Cosgrove, it was voted to approve and sign the MOU with the Charles River Public Health District Working Group to serve as the framework for an intermunicipal agreement as required by the program. Motion passed: Dr. Brown – Y, Dr. Partridge – Y, and Dr. Cosgrove – Y.

Upon motion duly made by Dr. Partridge, and seconded by Dr. Cosgrove, it was voted to appoint Dr. Cosgrove as the primary representative and Dr. Brown the alternative representative for the working group. Motion passed: Dr. Brown – Y, Dr. Partridge – Y, and Dr. Cosgrove – Y.

Select Board FY2024 and FY2025 Goals

The Board discussed potential additional goals it would like to see for the Select Board, including food security and nutrition for seniors and residents of all ages, ways to address senior isolation, potentially expanded service hours for a number of Town departments, mental health for all ages, Last Mile transportation, and walkability, bike-ability, and physical configuration of the community. Mr. McDonald stated that he would put these into goal considerations to present to the Select Board.

Center at the Heights Space Study & Kitchen Plans

Mr. McDonald explained that he previously presented this concept to the Council on Aging and the Permanent Building Committee. There are three large capital projects on the Town's list that will take the vast majority the capital spending for the next decade or so (replacements for the Mitchell and High Rock Schools, and the renovation/replacement of the Pollard Middle School).

The Center at the Heights final report identified a series of small projects that could be independently pursued if small (mid-six figures or low seven figures) amounts of funding ever become available. Mr. McDonald would like to see a kitchen included as part of this project to help address food security and nutrition issues amongst Needham's senior population. There are also accessibility issues at the Senior Center which need to be resolved. The Town is planning to rent 13 additional parking spaces from the MBTA, restripe the back parking lot, add more handicap spaces, and, if funding can be found, create an additional accessible entrance to the Senior Center. The Board can continue to advocate for cost-related items for seniors and money to renovate the kitchen.

Dr. Brown asked if any of the proposed items preclude other items. Mr. McDonald stated that the projects were intentionally designed to be independent of one another. He did note that there are some projects which may make sense to complete at the same time, if possible. Many senior centers now contain cafés or lounges. This is ideal but may not be possible. Most of the requests



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are for reconfiguration of the existing space to meet the needs more accurately and potentially expanding the space into the basement.

Staff Reports

Public Health Nursing

Ginnie Chacon-Lopez explained that blood pressure clinics at Needham Housing Authority continue with variable interest from residents. Both Matter of Balance classes ended, and a total of 13 people ‘graduated’. Four CPR classes were offered to the public, and all were well attended. COVID vaccines have been offered by individual appointments in the office. 40 gift bags were created and distributed for Mother’s Day by the Domestic Violence Action Committee. In May, notable cases included less than five cases of Strep A which were confirmed through lab testing at a local LTC/SNF. A number of COVID cases were also confirmed at a local school affecting teachers and students. The majority of the cases were in the same classroom and other students were also out with symptoms.

Epidemiology

It was noted that there were 22 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in May. There was no additional update at this time.

Emergency Management

There was no update, beyond the written report included in the Board’s meeting packet, at this time as Michael Lethin was out at a National Guard training.

Emergency Preparedness

Mr. Abdelrahim explained that the team coordinated with the Needham Police Department to provide Active Threat and Situational Awareness training to volunteers and staff members. The team also nominated one volunteer from the Needham unit to attend a special statewide Medical Reserve Corps Training Day. On May 15th, staff participated in a hazard vulnerability assessment survey of Region 4AB health and medical stakeholders, including public health and emergency medical services. Mr. Abdelrahim attended the Active Shooter Tabletop Exercise at Babson College. Staff continues to work on accreditation.

Shared Services Grants

Ms. Acosta reported that Roland Abuntori continues to assist Needham with various inspections. The team is considering expanding the use of FoodCode-Pro and adding on similar programs such as HousingCode-Pro and PoolCode-Pro. She noted that the budget increased from \$150,000 to over \$280,000 for next year.



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Accreditation Team

Ms. Melanson explained that the Senior Assessment will be detailed at the next Board meeting. The data has been used in the Community Health Assessment. She explained that there are two projects ongoing for quality improvement such as a Food Safety Excellence Program and Alcohol Compliance checks. Also ongoing are workforce development, readiness assessment, identifying and writing supportive documentation, the Community Health Assessment, and performance management.

Environmental Health

Sai Palani stated that an enactment date was set for the Food Safety Excellence Program for November 1, 2023. A pilot will begin with food establishments following the annual fall forum food safety trainings.

Regarding the ongoing housing case involving conflict between an occupant and landlord, a final joint inspection was conducted by Public Health and Building departments on May 11th. Staff met with the occupant and the landlord on site, with a police escort. All remaining housing order letter items, with the exception of the window and screen replacements in one unit, were found to be completed. A final letter to the landlord with a summary of the items that were completed, and was sent via certified mail, mailed, and emailed to all parties involved, including the landlords' attorney.

Regarding the Rice Barn, Mr. Palani performed a plan review, met with Mr. Intha, and went over application and proposal to open issue by issue. Mr. Palani performed a walk-thru of the establishment and noted the lack of a mop sink. Mr. Intha will need to resubmit his application and address outstanding building department concerns prior to moving forward.

Mr. Palani reported that there will be another variance sought for a business proposing to bring food in from off site, similar to a catering business.

There are currently ten vendors proposed for the Farmers Market.

Dr. Brown asked about the Synthetic Turf Policy. She asked how often and how the turf will be tested. She asked about temperature regulations, in order to ensure safety for people using the fields.

Substance Use Prevention - MassCALL3 grant

Ms. Cunningham reported that MassCALL3 will be funded \$250,000/year for FY24 and FY25. Staff held the first of two MassCALL3 strategic planning meetings. The final meeting will be held this month. The group continues to work on an action plan and on the social media and movie theater campaign. This program went live last month and continues to do well. There will be data to review once the campaign is complete.



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Substance Use Prevention

SPAN partnered with Needham High School to host a Social Host and Hidden in Plain Sight event, held on May 2nd. Fifty-five people attended. The first session for SPAN strategic planning was held on May 31st via Zoom and was facilitated by Amanda Decker of Bright Solutions. Eighteen people attended, including twelve coalition members and six prevention staff. Sessions will continue over the summer. A TIPS training, led by Carol Read and Officer Jason Sullivan, was held on May 15th. There were 25 in attendance, including nine from Needham businesses and one from a Dedham business.

Traveling Meals

Mr. McDonald explained that an agreement will soon be signed between the Town and the Hospital, allowing this program to continue for at least another two-year period.

Brief Updates

- Alcohol Compliance

There were some amendments made to the Needham alcohol regulations, which were detailed in a chart sent to the Board of Health.

- Senior Assessment

Mr. McDonald explained that this item is informational only. A detailed presentation will be made to the Board next month.

- Public Health Five Year Strategic Plan

Mr. McDonald stated that the strategic plan work will begin in July. It will include setting goals and helping to ensure that those goals integrate into a departmental strategic plan. This will also be carried down into the staff's goals and objectives as part of the review process.

- Housing Updates

Mr. McDonald explained that a housing situation previously thought to be resolved is continuing for now, but staff are working to do what is appropriate. He explained that he would like to use data to assess some of the most frequently occurring violations and then do some education for licensees or permit holders.

Mr. Palani noted that the Housing Code changed approximately two weeks ago.

- Substance Use Prevention

Mr. McDonald noted that the Board was supplied with a chart that detailed the compliance checks and TIPS trainings, which shows that there is not necessarily a strong correlation the two. It was noted that Dr. Epstein had previously had a question as to whether or not this data changed when Needham became a non-dry town (that is, allowed liquor sales from package



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stores rather than just liquor consumption at food service establishments). The data continued to trend down until 2018 and now is on an upward trend for Needham. Dr. Epstein also had previously asked about how this compares to other communities. Mr. McDonald said that it would be difficult to make that comparison as there is not ready access to that data.

In general, most categories of substance misuse averaged across the entire MetroWest region continue to trend down, while in Needham some categories of substance misuse are trending up, including drinking for the past 30 days and binge drinking for the past 30 days.

Upcoming BOH Meetings

- **July 14th from 9:00 – 11:00 a.m. at likely remote only via Zoom.**

Adjournment

Upon motion duly made by Dr. Cosgrove, and seconded by Dr. Partridge, it was voted to adjourn the meeting Motion passed: Dr. Brown – Y, Dr. Partridge – Y, and Dr. Cosgrove – Y.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:50AM.

Attachment:

June 9, 2023 meeting packet