



NEEDHAM PUBLIC HEALTH DIVISION



Board of Health Meeting Minutes

Date: December 14, 2021

Location: Remote via Zoom per Governor Charles Baker's COVID-19 Executive Order 3/12/2020 and amended as of 6/15/2021

Members: Robert A. Partridge, MD, MPH, Chair
Christina S. Mathews, MPH, Vice Chair
Edward Cosgrove, PhD, Member
Stephen Epstein, MD, MPP, Member
Kathleen Ward Brown, ScD, Member

Staff Present: Tara Gurge, Assistant Director of Public Health; Tiffany Zike, Assistant Director of Public Health; Mary Fountaine; Julie McCarthy; Carol Read; Michael Lethin; and Diana Acosta

Call to Order

Dr. Partridge called the meeting to order at 7:00PM and initiated roll call. Present were Dr. Partridge-Y, Dr. Brown-Y, Dr. Cosgrove-Y, Dr. Epstein-Y and Ms. Mathews-Y.

The meeting is being conducted in-person and remotely using Zoom consistent with Governor Baker's March 12th executive order and as amended on June 15, 2021, regarding COVID-19. The materials for this meeting were circulated previously and are available on the Town website. This meeting is being recorded.

Approval of Minutes – November 16, 2021

Upon motion duly made by Dr. Partridge and seconded by Ms. Mathews, it was voted to approve the above minutes as amended. Dr. Brown-Y, Dr. Epstein-Y, Dr. Cosgrove-Y, Dr. Partridge-A and Ms. Mathews-Y. Motion passed 4-0-1 with Dr. Partridge abstaining.

Staff Reports

Environmental Health – Tara Gurge, Diana Acosta and Monica Pancare

Ms. Gurge reported that the new part-time health agent, Sheri Miller-Bedau, started on Monday, December 6th. Ms. Miller-Bedau will work five hours per week in December conducting food inspections and will increase to ten hours per week in January.

Ms. Gurge also reported that Ms. Acosta organized and held three well-attended virtual food safety trainings with Lisa Berger of Berger Food Safety. After the series was completed, recordings of the session were posted on the Health Division website so restaurants can share the trainings with their



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employees. An application to the FDA-NEHA for a retail flexible funding model grant was filed and awaiting notice.

Ms. Acosta reported that three memoranda of understanding were issued to The Rice Barn, Masala Art and the Hungry Coyote, and these restaurants have been put on administrative watch for repeat violations of unsafe and unsanitary conditions. Pest control was an issue and they have been asked to submit contact information for the pest control companies directly. They are also required to keep cleaning logs and submit them weekly to the department. The Hungry Coyote owner was required to retrain staff, and there was a question as to whether a staff member had actually been trained. The Environmental Health team is following up with the training proctor to clarify how the exam was administered. The Board agreed that strict compliance should be enforced.

Ms. Acosta reported that she continues to issue annual permit renewals and is contacting those establishments that have not yet submitted requests.

Ms. Acosta also reported that the Housing Authority had reported that they were in the process of hiring contractors to add gutters to the homes with moisture complaints. The Housing Authority was advised earlier that there is no definitive test for the presence of mold as the state has no set standard.

Substance Use Prevention – Tiffany Zike for Karen Shannon,

In Ms. Shannon's absence, Ms. Zike reported that at the Peer Leadership Conference held at Gillette Stadium, Norfolk County District Attorney Michael Morrissey awarded SALSA students \$1,500 for their success in the Team Rival competition. This is the sixth straight year the Needham High School youth have been recognized for their work.

The Needham Police Department, in coordination with the Needham Public Health Division, conducted alcohol compliance checks on December 1, 2021. Of the 31 alcohol-licensed establishments, 25 of those businesses were checked. There were 11 sales-to-minor violations; 6 of those did not ask for identification. Ms. Zike noted this is an ongoing issue as 30% of high school students report alcohol use and 50% of seniors. The Board will make efforts to connect with the Select Board on ways to enforce vendor alcohol compliance.

Travelling Meals – Maryanne Dinell

Ms. Dinell reported that the Community Council, Rotary Club and Needham Golf Club had distributed fifty-three meals to participants on the Travelling Meals Program and another three-hundred meals to other Needham residents. She noted that there has been a decrease in participation, partly due to the increase of alternative food delivery options available post-COVID. The program, however, remains a lifeline for those homebound seniors who receive a meal and a daily wellness check-in.

Ms. Dinell announced her retirement in February, and the Board expressed gratitude for her twenty-eight years of dedicated service.

Emergency Management Support – Taleb Abdelrahim and Michael Lethin



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Mr. Lethin reported that an Emergency Operations Center (EOC) communications drill had been successfully conducted to validate standard operating procedures to use RAVE Alert to recall EOC staff outside of normal duty hours. Separate from the drill, the Massachusetts Emergency Management Authority (MEMA) had responded to requests for personal protective equipment. Mr. Lethin also reported that he received a notice to proceed on the Emergency Management Performance grant contract and a new application for a Hazardous Materials Emergency Performance Grant has been submitted and notice of approval is expected by the end of the month.

Public Health Nursing –Mary Fountaine and Tiffany Zike

Ms. Fountaine reported that COVID vaccinations are available in clinics by appointment. Flu vaccinations are also available by appointment. The nurses ran two second-dose pediatric vaccination clinics.

Ms. Fountaine also reported that three contact tracers have been hired, two of which will work under the shared grant with Medfield and Dover, and the third will work exclusively with Needham. All three have received their logins with the state MAVEN system. Ms. Burnett is also working on concussion protocols.

Ms. Fountaine also reported that the first Naloxone education program is scheduled for December 20th with additional programs to be offered. This thirty-minute class educates the consumer on when and how to use Narcan in the event of an opioid overdose. The Board agreed that this was a more suitable hands-on training than the pharmacies could provide.

Ms. Read announced the hiring of Ellisa Dockstader, a graduate student at Boston University School of Public Health. She has previously worked in Utah providing pandemic-related services. She will work on the grant for 19.5 hours per week.

Ms. Read also reported that she had reached out to the Norfolk County Commissioners with regard to the \$137 million allocated in ARPA funds. A portal has been set up for municipalities to apply for grant funds.

COVID-19 Update – Tiffany Zike and Julie McCarthy

Ms. McCarthy reviewed the Covid-19 data as of November including prevalence, demographics, breakthrough cases, and vaccination levels. See attached PowerPoint presentation for detailed information.

Covid-19 update
Incidence rate and percent positivity
Case demographics
Vaccination status
Breakthrough cases
Breakthrough cases in Massachusetts
Unvaccinated cases
Cluster and household transmission



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Vaccinations
Deaths
School contacts
School contacts vaccination status
State trends in cases and hospitalizations
Massachusetts cases by age
MA hospitalization rates by age
MA hospitalizations among children

Ms. Zike noted that 1.1% of the vaccinated population had breakthrough cases. Dr. Epstein noted the need to know the percentage rate of cases for those not vaccinated. Ms. Zike also reported on the number of vaccinations administered and plans for administering booster vaccinations. She also reported that the state had changed its protocol for contact tracing, changing from one-on-one tracing to multiple contacts of colleges, congregate care facilities, daycare and other high-risk settings.

Discussion of Tobacco Free Generation Policy

Dr. Epstein reported that Brookline Town Meeting had voted (62% in favor, 35%, 3% abstain) legislation that stated if you were born after January 1, 2000, there would be no tobacco sales. He added that this phased prohibition over a number of years could see a generation grow up without the use of tobacco.

Discussion ensued on the positives and negatives of this legislation. Although it makes scientific sense that the frontal lobe of the brain is not fully mature until age twenty-five and therefore the ability to make sound decisions, enforcement of this legislation for an adult seeking to buy a legal product would be difficult. Both Hawaii and New Zealand are considering prohibiting tobacco sales before age twenty-five only.

Regulation of smoking also addresses the societal impacts of smoking, especially the exposure to second-hand smoking for vulnerable children. It was agreed that staff would contact Brookline for feedback on how support of residents was garnered to get behind this legislation. In the meantime, the Board will continue to phase out tobacco sales permits.

Decriminalization of Controlled Substances

Michah Bernat appeared before the Board. He is a Needham resident and a student at the University of Vermont. He stated that he is involved in two student organizations, the Psychedelic Science Club and the Students for Sensible Drug Policy, that assisted in the passing of a resolution in Burlington, Vermont to decriminalize controlled substances. He added that Boston will pass similar legislation in January and Newton is considering the resolution.

He noted that the Board is on the forefront of tobacco and alcohol safety and he asked that the Board support the resolution to decriminalize entheogenic controlled substances, thereby promoting safety and reduction of harm from the stigma of substance abuse.



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Mr. Bernat will follow-up by providing the language of the resolution and supporting information for the Board's further discussion.

Continued Discussion of #1688 Central Avenue proposed Day Care – Citizens Comments

Holly Clark appeared before the Board. She stated that a red flag was raised when the seller of the property did not permit buyers to conduct due diligence on the environmental status of the site. Another was raised when the plan to construct a septic system was abandoned for sewer line from the street. She added that this property was not a single-family home but functionally operated for over fifty years as an auto junk yard and as a repository for an excavation company and its debris and machines. She displayed pictures taken of the site that show years of piles of debris, oil barrels and other salvage.

Other residents appeared before the Board: Kristy Thompson, Maggie and Joe Abruzese, Pat Day, Carole Siellio, Carolyn Reubach, Greg Parise and made following comments:

- Developer contracted with unlicensed person to do testing.
- No publicly available reports to indicate what is in the soil.
- Spread of six to twelve inches of loam over property is not sufficient.
- Developer recently excavated the site and brought in additional fill without supervision.
- Test the soil for lead and other toxins.
- Need for independent licensed professional to guide the town in supervision of this project.
- Extra level of security is needed because of the intended use of daycare.
- Auto salvage yards are tightly regulated by the state to not be within 300 ft of a daycare.
- This property is more than 300 ft to the abutting Temple playground.
- Motivation to object is driven by what is best for vulnerable children.

Richard Wozmak appeared before the Board. He stated that the entire area the children will occupy will be capped in order to eliminate exposure to anything that may be in the soil. This cap will prevent exposure of dust, soil, inhalation of dust or skin contact. The playground area in particular will receive a high intensity cap with a demarcation barrier. This cap is unlike the cap used for landfills as it allows rainfall to eliminate exposure pathways.

Board of Health Discussion and Recommendation to Planning Board of #1688 Central Avenue Project

Ms. Mathews thanked all participants for their input. She acknowledged that more information has come forth about the condition of the property and the current usage. She was alarmed that excavation and addition of fill had recently been done on the property.

The Board agreed that precautions must be taken to mitigate health hazards especially to children. Review by an independent evaluator who is qualified to do site assessment and make recommendations for appropriate mitigation should be done with consideration for the long term.

Upon motion duly made by Dr. Epstein and seconded by Dr. Cosgrove, it was unanimously voted to recommend to the Planning Board that an independent evaluation of the property be conducted, and



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evaluation submitted for the purpose of determining whether or not testing is necessary or whether or not mitigation is proposed for the developer. Dr. Brown-Y, Dr. Cosgrove-Y, Dr. Epstein-Y, Dr. Partridge-Y and Ms. Mathews-Y. Motion carries 5-0.

Other:

Dr. Cosgrove suggested that, due to the increase in the Omicron variant, masks should be required in public buildings. Following discussion, it was agreed that Ms. Zike will discuss with town management the impacts of masking indoors in municipal buildings.

Next Meetings

January 20, 2022 @ 9:00AM

February 10, 2022 @ 5:00PM

Adjournment

Upon motion duly made by Dr. Epstein and seconded by Dr. Cosgrove, it was unanimously voted to adjourn. Dr. Brown-Y, Dr. Cosgrove-Y, Dr. Epstein-Y, Dr. Partridge-Y and Ms. Mathews-Y. Motion passed 5-0. The meeting was adjourned at 7:17PM.

Attachment:

December 14, 2021 Meeting Packet