



NEEDHAM PUBLIC HEALTH DIVISION



Board of Health Meeting Minutes

Date: October 13, 2023

Location: via Zoom

Members: Tejal K. Gandhi, MD, MPH Chair; Kathleen Ward Brown, ScD, 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) Benoit, Assistant Director of Public Health; Karren Shannon; Vanessa Wronski; Michael Lethin; Kerry Dunnell; Samantha Menard; Julie McCarthy; Taleb Abdelrahim; Ginnie Chacon-Lopez; Carol Read; Lydia Cunningham; Lynn Schoeff.

Welcome & Public Comment Period

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

Review of Minutes – (September 8, 2023)

Upon motion duly made by Dr. Epstein, and seconded by Dr. Brown, it was voted to approve the minutes of September 8, 2023, as submitted. Motion passed: Dr. Gandhi – Y, Dr. Epstein – Y, Dr. Brown – Y, Dr. Partridge – Y.

Board of Health Future Meeting Dates

The Board discussed its upcoming meeting dates. The Board tentatively agreed to meet on November 17, 2023, pending further discussion.

FY25 Budget & Fall Town Meeting Update

Mr. McDonald discussed non-operating budget sources of funding. He explained that Children's Hospital is building a large outpatient center and, as part of the host community agreement, in lieu of personal property taxes, Children's Hospital signed an agreement with the Select Board

committing to pay to roughly \$200,000 a year. This is to occur once when the building permit was issued, once at 50% completion, and then annually after occupancy. Health and Human Services proposed adding two mental health clinicians to the Youth & Family Services team. One would be a community clinician and the second would be focused on community training. The Finance Committee had a lot of questions about this proposal and voted unanimously to support placing it on the Town Meeting warrant.

Mr. McDonald stated that the second item for discussion is the opioid settlement fund. This is money that the State has set up as part of the legal settlement with pharmaceutical manufacturers, distributors, and pharmacies related to the impacts of prescription opioids. The Board previously discussed using some of this funding for Narcan reversal kits. Additional funding could be used for a comprehensive public engagement process on what the public would like to see the settlement fund used for. The State set seven broad category areas including access to treatment, recovery services, substance prevention, mental health promotion, and others. During the engagement process, a special effort could be made to reach out to subpopulations that are disproportionately impacted. A consultant would be hired to complete a strategic plan based on the input from the community. The consultant would also be charged with developing an evaluation framework to track progress and measure the efficacy of the work. The Finance Committee approved the community opioid settlement plan, as presented by Health and Human Services, though not unanimously.

Mr. McDonald explained that staff are also looking to make permanent all HHS positions funded by the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). The request is to place these positions into the Town budget permanently, as they are currently only funded by ARPA funds through December 31, 2024. Mr. McDonald stated that staff would like support from the Board of Health, Select Board and Finance Committee for this change. The Department also plans to submit multiple capital requests for Aging Services. Aging Services finished its space study and presented it to the Council on Aging in the spring. The study suggested a series of projects ranging in cost from \$16,000-\$900,000. The Town does have several other capital commitments that will take up quite a lot of funding. A top priority for the Council on Aging Board is transforming the kitchen to be a commercial kitchen and expanding the fitness room for additional senior fitness options. The full production kitchen could produce healthy, fresh meals on site rather than having frozen meals reheated.

Mr. McDonald stated that capital budgets are due on Monday, October 16th and operating budgets are due on Friday, October 27th. Budget requests will also include requests for some additional staff time. Town Meeting is scheduled for October 30th.

The Board thanked Mr. McDonald for the update.

Select Board Code of Conduct Discussion

Mr. McDonald reviewed the Select Board's Code of Conduct. The Board of Health could choose to approve a similar set of conduct rules.

The Board agreed to review a redlined version of this document at its next meeting for possible approval.

Public Hearing – Board of Health Article 7 Body

Dr. Gandhi opened the public hearing at 9:30am.

Ms. Gurge reviewed the proposed changes to Article 7.

There was no public comment at this time.

Upon motion duly made by Dr. Epstein, and seconded by Dr. Brown, it was voted that the Board of Health adopt the changes to Article 7 Body Art, specifically **section 7.12**, to include the requirement for each practitioner to have CORI and SORI conducted and; **section 7.11 (5)**, with the following general statement, ‘The annual fee for the Body Art Establishment Permit shall be set at the level determined by the Board of Health in its fee schedule, which shall be adjusted from time to time.’ Motion passed: Dr. Gandhi – Y, Dr. Epstein – Y, Dr. Brown – Y, Dr. Partridge – Y.

Public Health Strategic Plan

Ms. Benoit reviewed the Public Health Strategic Plan. The goal is to have this completed by the end of December.

Alcohol in Individual Serving Bottles

Ms. Benoit explained that several residents have raised concerns to the Select Board regarding individual-serving alcohol bottles (also known as “nips”), and the Select Board has requested input from the Board of Health. Ms. Benoit explained that there are two issues that the Board of Health can consider addressing: that miniature alcohol bottles may increase alcohol use among adolescents; and that the plastic bottles lead to litter in Needham. The Board can decide to support a ban by addressing either the concern about underage alcohol use or through a plastic ban. However, there is limited data about how miniature bottles may be related to substance use.

Dr. Epstein stated that the Board of Health could convey to the Select Board that there are other, more proven, methods of curbing underage drinking that could be considered. The Board of Health has always operated using data.

Ms. Benoit asked if the Board would like to hear a more substantive presentation on this topic at a future meeting. Dr. Gandhi stated that it would be interesting to hear more data if there is any. The Board agreed.

Staff Updates

Substance Use Prevention

Ms. Shannon introduced Vanessa Wronski to the Board.

Ms. Shannon explained that last month the group worked with Needham Police on an alcohol compliance check. Of the 26 businesses checked, only one had a sales-to-minor violation. This

was due to misreading of the license presented during the check. A scanner was not used during this violation.

Ms. Shannon reported that SPAN has been busy in the community and is working on its strategic plan.

Dr. Epstein stated that during the next compliance check, all 29 businesses that hold licenses should be checked. Ms. Shannon agreed that help may be needed to access some of these businesses.

There was discussion regarding alcohol licensees continuing to follow the Needham Alcohol Regulation now that businesses are required to use ID scanners during license checks. It was suggested that scanner use could be considered as part of upcoming checks as criteria for success.

Nursing

Ms. Chacon-Lopez stated that flu clinics have started. COVID-19 vaccines have been difficult to obtain.

Emergency Management

Mr. Lethin stated that the Small Business Administration conducted their preliminary damage assessment of Needham on September 7th. 16 properties were identified as having sustained major damage from the flood, but there must be a minimum of 25 sustaining major damage in each county for that county to receive assistance.

The Town continues to work to address the items identified in the After-Action Report – Improvement Plan, including developing a toolkit for future flooding events.

The Board discussed public alerts for flooding events.

Emergency Preparedness

Mr. Abdelrahim stated that the plan for the Junior MRC program was completed, and has been sent to management for review. The MRC continues to coordinate and assist the nursing unit with vaccination clinic tasks. The MRC was actively engaged in drafting the Emergency Shelter Plan.

Accreditation Team

Ms. Schoeff stated that the Readiness Assessment has been submitted to the Public Health Accreditation Board. Feedback should be received by November about whether NPHD should go forward with the application.

Traveling Meals

Ms. Gurge stated that there is nothing new to report.

Epidemiology

Ms. McCarthy explained that the State just started presenting some additional dashboards which may change the presentation of data to the Board at future meetings. Ms. McCarthy and others in the Division have been working on the Community Health Assessment.

The Biosafety Committee will meet on October 24th for the first time.

Substance Use Prevention MassCALL3 grant

Ms. Cunningham stated that she and Ms. Read plan to submit a strategic plan in the coming weeks. Walpole and Westwood will be participating in the Fall MetroWest Adolescent Survey.

Environmental Health

Ms. Gurge explained that a part-time health inspector, Pamela Ross-Kung, has been hired. Training forums for the Food Safety Excellence Program have begun. Nutritionally Needham will begin to take place in November. The goal is to provide another training for this program.

Shared Services

Ms. Dunnell explained that the group is posting for a Regional environmental health agent and a regional nurse. The first Shared Services meeting is tentatively scheduled for October 19th. Ms. Dunnell explained that performance standards for local public health entities were recently released. This will allow the Shared Services team to determine how best to allocate resources.

Ms. Menard stated that the group continues to work with the Needham Environmental Health team and meets monthly.

Other Items

None at this time.

Upcoming BOH Meetings

- **Friday, November 17th from 9:00 – 11:00 a.m.**

Adjournment

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

The meeting was adjourned at 10:34AM.

Attachment:

October 13, 2023, meeting packet