



Board of Health Meeting Minutes

Date: May 10, 2024

Location: Public Service Administration Building & via Zoom

Members: Tejal K. Gandhi, MD, MPH Chair; Stephen Epstein, MD, MPP, Member; Robert A. Partridge, MD, MPH, Member; Edward Cosgrove, PhD, Member; Aarti Sawant-Basak, PhD, Member

Staff Present: Timothy Muir McDonald, Director of Health, and Human Services; Tiffany (Zike) Benoit, Assistant Director of Public Health; Tara Gurge, Assistant Director of Public Health; Julie McCarthy; Kerry Dunnell; Carol Read; Karen Shannon; Lydia Cunningham; Lynn Schoeff; Taleb Abdelrahim; Ginnie Chacon-Lopez;

Welcome & Public Comment Period

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

It was noted that Dr. Sawant-Basak could not vote during this meeting due to not yet being sworn in.

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.

Anna Schickel, owner of Your CBD Store in Needham Center, explained that, over the four years her store has been open, there have been no health complaints. The products are very safe and helpful to the people who need them.

Review of Minutes: April 12, 2024

Upon motion duly made by Dr. Partridge, and seconded by Dr. Cosgrove, it was voted to approve the meeting minutes April 12, 2024, as presented. Motion passed: Dr. Gandhi – Y, Dr. Cosgrove – Y, Dr. Epstein – Y, Dr. Partridge – Y.

Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP)

Julie McCarthy, Epidemiologist, explained that the CHIP is designed to provide a framework for implementing strategies to the health concerns and problems identified in the Community Health

Assessment (CHA), but it is meant to be modified as these concerns or community priorities change, resources shift, or other external factors are identified. The priority areas for the CHIP were selected based on many variables, including the feasibility of the solutions and the potential impacts on the community, with health equity as a cross cutting factor. The CHIP priority areas are: Mental Health and Wellness, Substance Use Prevention, and Physical Health and Wellbeing.

Dr. Gandhi asked about tracking progress and outcome measures. Ms. McCarthy explained that staff will input items into a system and track with specific measurements. Ms. Benoit added that this is required as part of accreditation.

Beth Israel Deaconess – Traveling Meals Program

The Board reviewed a letter received from John Fogarty, Beth Israel Deaconess President, regarding the [hospital's decision to terminate the partnership for the] Traveling Meals Program, [effective February 2025].

Mr. McDonald explained that staff tried to negotiate on this item before it became public. Staff are now seeking a short- or medium-term solution, hoping that another institution will step up and be paid by the Town to hold this program. The Town will also likely go out to bid on this item again. This program is serving a broad group of people, and the need seems to be increasing over time. The state runs a Meals on Wheels program in many communities that could be utilized by the Town, though the quality may not be what Needham residents are accustomed to. There is some funding that could be contributed to this program and a reserve fund request could be made. The Board discussed bringing up funding for this item at Town Meeting.

Mr. McDonald also discussed the possibility, and the potential cost, of rebuilding the kitchen at the Center of the Heights so it might handle production for Traveling Meals in the future.

A discussion followed about how to bring this issue to Town Meeting.

Homsy Lane – Off-Street Drainage Bond Release Request

Ms. Gurge explained the off-street drainage bond release request for Homsey Lane. Mr. McDonald stated that the Board could consider the required amount for bond releases at a future meeting.

Upon motion duly made by Dr. Cosgrove, and seconded by Dr. Gandhi, it was voted to release the off-street drainage bonds for the 2 subdivision lots, specifically lots 13A and 13B (#5 and # 11 Homsey Lane) in the amount of \$3,500 per lot or a total amount of \$7,000.00.

SunMed Your CBD Store

Mr. McDonald stated that staff felt that, once alerted to something, they must respond and enforce the rules.

Dr. Cosgrove stated that there seems to be no choice from the federal and state level that these items be removed and not sold at the store. Dr. Partridge agreed. There does not seem to be an alternative in terms of enforcing what it allowed. Dr. Gandhi agreed.

Dr. Epstein stated that there is interest in allowing the business to wind down reasonably. Mr. McDonald suggested that staff consider where this lies as a priority item for enforcement in order to alert the owner.

Ms. Gurge explained that local liquor stores have been checked for CBD products, as well. Suppliers seem to be coming to many local stores with CBD products. Other vendors have been willing to remove these products from their shelves, once alerted to it. Dr. Epstein suggested that the Select Board should be alerted to this issue, as they have purview over the liquor stores. Letters should be issued to all food establishment licensees regarding these products, and it should be suggested that the Select Board do the same for their licensees.

Mr. McDonald noted that the Select Board is holding an Alcohol Hearing on Tuesday at 6 PM. An invitation has been extended to the Board of Health to attend the hearing.

Other Items

Nicotine Free Generation (NFG)

The Board discussed the Nicotine Free Generation law proposal. Mr. McDonald stated that a number of communities are interested in implementing this. It is clear that the brain is still developing, especially the risk processing centers, until approximately age 25. He stated that he does not love the idea of a prohibition and instead prefers age restrictions. There could also be an additional use tax, for example, to make the price higher so that younger buyers or people with limited resources do not make unhealthy choices. The Board of Health does have the purview to regulate these items.

Dr. Partridge stated that he likes the overall concept of this idea but does not believe it will be practical. Other places, such as New Zealand, have tried this and quickly repealed the entire idea for the whole country. He would be more in favor of supporting higher age limits, such as 25 or something similar.

Dr. Gandhi agreed. She stated that a complete prohibition may make this more enticing to some. Also, 21-year-olds are able to purchase things such as alcohol and join the military. There is a precedent for restricting personal choice, such as seat belt laws, in some cases though.

Dr. Epstein stated that he supports the idea. The Town would be supporting Brookline, which has already made this decision, if it supported this law. There should be a high bar set for nicotine use. The Board seems to wish to consider entertaining additional age restrictions in the future instead.

Dr. Cosgrove stated that this law may be a good way to keep those who have not ever used nicotine products from starting them.

Ms. Benoit stated that an education campaign for parents would be needed if the Town considered moving forward with this idea.

Tobacco Hearing – Mobil Exxon Great Plain Avenue

Ms. Gurge explained that routine tobacco compliance checks of all six retail tobacco stores were performed at the end of April. One sale of Zyn, a nicotine pouch product, was made to a minor by the Exxon Mobil Mini Mart at 1111 Great Plain Ave. This retail establishment last sold to an underage youth back on 10/30/15. The Board of Health should decide if the store owner receives a suspension of seven consecutive business days, along with the local \$300 fine. MA fines could also be issued.

The owner stated that there were systems in place to check for this issue. Verbal reminders are often given to employees to check IDs. A new scanner was recently installed that will check the license. This will not allow a transaction to go through unless the license is for someone over 21. This scanner would not have helped with the minor sale in question, as the license was not requested.

Mr. McDonald stated that the Board has decided in the past to issue a suspension but waived fees if this is not a common issue with the business and/or if positive steps have been taken to make sure this will not happen in the future.

Upon motion duly made by Dr. Cosgrove, and seconded by Dr. Gandhi, it was voted to uphold the suspension of seven consecutive business days of Mobil's tobacco permit at a time to be determined by staff, and to waive the fine. Motion passed: Dr. Gandhi – Y, Dr. Cosgrove – Y, Dr. Epstein – Y, Dr. Partridge – Y.

Staff Updates

Nursing – Ginnie Chacon-Lopez

Ms. Chacon-Lopez stated that there are currently 11 applications for camps and guidelines from the State are being followed.

Ms. Burnett has started the AED ambassador program and created a t-shirt for the participants who work at events.

Emergency Management – Kristin Scoble

No update at this time.

Emergency Preparedness – Taleb Abdelrahim

Mr. Abdelrahim gave an update on Emergency Preparedness.

Accreditation – Lynn Schoeff

Ms. Schoeff stated that staff continues to work on the process of accreditation.

Traveling Meals – Rebecca Hall

This was previously discussed by the Board, and there was no additional report at this time.

Epidemiology – Julie McCarthy

Ms. McCarthy explained that the vaccination data was removed from the Epidemiology monthly report as this data has remained the same for some time. There was a dip in the COVID-19 wastewater data. Hospitals are no longer required to report COVID-19 hospitalization data.

Two Biosafety Inspections had been completed as of the writing of the monthly report; inspections of the three remaining companies with Biosafety Permits were completed in the first week of May. The Biosafety Committee will meet after completion of inspections and before the renewal due date at the end of May.

Ms. McCarthy noted that sunscreen dispensers will be placed around Needham again this year.

Substance Use Prevention – Karen Shannon

Ms. Shannon stated that SPAN spent a fair amount of time in the community, including presentations for the Rotary Club, the MA Public Health Nurses' meeting, and partnering with the Needham Police for the Prescription Drug Take Back Day. 107 pounds of medication were collected at the Take Back Day, for a total of 440 lbs. collected over the last six months and an average of 73 lbs. per month.(which is misstated in the monthly report as 75.8 lbs. per month).

The Peer Recovery Coach also spent time delivering presentations in the community to spread awareness about recovery services.

Sara Shine and Karen Shannon facilitated Youth Mental Health First Aid to 13 Needham Housing Authority staff.

MassCALL3 - –Carol Read and Lydia Cunningham

Ms. Cunningham stated that April 25th was the annual meeting, and the strategic plan was presented to the communities.

Shared Services (Public Health Excellence, Regional Training Hub, Contact Tracing and Investigating) – Kerry Dunnell & Samantha Medard

Ms. Dunnell stated that Charles River Health District Advisory Board members heard presentations from Tara Gurge and Sai Palani regarding tobacco permitting, inspection and compliance procedures, and from representatives of BME Strategies who will be conducting a fee cost analysis project for the four communities. The intermunicipal agreement is still being considered by Dover, prior to finalization. The Regional Health Nurse position is open and will be posted soon.

Environmental Health – Sai Palani & Tara Gurge

Ms. Gurge stated that Mr. Palani is registered for the MA PHIT Food training. Staff worked on food safety issues with Rays New Garden Restaurant. Many improvements have been made and there will be additional bilingual training for employees. Kostas Pizza and Seafood also had an inspection and there have been many improvements made.

Other Items

- Article 22 Regulation for Prohibiting the Manufacturing, Sale, and Distribution of Synthetically Derived Cannabinoids & Kratom – Previously Board of Health Regulation on Synthetic Drug

Ms. Gurge stated that work has been done to revise the existing Synthetic Drug Regulation.

Dr. Partridge noted that the new document does not include stimulants and other hallucinogens, which were previously covered. Ms. Gurge explained that these could be added on if the Board so chooses. The Board agreed to hear more information on this topic at a future meeting.

- Board of Health Policy Positions for Town Meeting

This item was not directly addressed at this time.

Upcoming BOH Meetings

- **Friday, June 14th from 9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.**

Adjournment

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

The meeting was adjourned at 10:58 AM.

Attachment:

May 10, 2024 meeting packet