



Needham Board of Health

178 Rosemary Street, Needham, MA 02494
www.needhamma.gov/health

781-455-7940 ext. 504
781-455-7922 (fax)



Board of Health Meeting Minutes October 9, 2020

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

Location: Remote via Zoom per Governor Charles Baker COVID-19 Exec. Order of March 12, 2020

Staff Present: Timothy M. McDonald, Director of Needham Department of Health and Human Services; Tara Gurge, Assistant Director of the Public Health Division; Carol Read; Diana Acosta; Tiffany Zike; Taleb Abdelrahim; Zendilli Depina; Karen Shannon; Karen Mullen, Hanna Burnett, Lynn Schoeff; Michael Lethin.

Dr. Brown called the meeting to order at 9:01.

The meeting is being conducted remotely using Zoom consistent with Governor Baker's March 12 order regarding to COVID-19. The materials for this meeting were circulated previously and are available on the Town website. All votes will be voice votes by roll call.

Dr. Brown asked for a review of the minutes from the September meeting. Rob had comments about COVID-19 status update. The second paragraph should be 100,000 people rather than 10,000.

Dr. Cosgrove moved to accept the minutes as amended. Dr. Epstein seconded. The vote to accept the minutes was 4-0 (Ms. Mathews had not yet joined the meeting).

Staff reports:

Environmental Health – Tara Gurge and Diana Acosta

Ms. Gurge reported that she is working with the Community Council on their protocols for holiday meal delivery using Traveling Meals as a model.

There has been an increase in mask complaints. Environmental Health held an administrative hearing with the owner and son of Kostas's Pizza and Seafood about masks after many complaints and



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multiple warnings. The restaurant has done better with spot checks since the hearing. Environment Health has not yet issued any fines but will consider fines if complaints continue.

Ms. Acosta reported on the recent food advisory meeting which was attended by more than 20 people. At the meeting, she introduced the possibility of food grading, although this is not a good time to institute such a program during the COVID-19 pandemic. The group also discussed having Nourishing Needham next year.

Ms. Acosta continues to work with Terry Wolfson from IT to launch more online permitting. Food permits have been the most challenging to implement. Ms. Acosta will work with the permit holders to improve the system once people start using it.

Dr. Brown asked about how the restaurants are doing with indoor service. Mr. McDonald and Ms. Acosta determined that outdoor dining can expand, and indoor seating requests will be handled separately. The only restaurant to request indoor seating requests is Latina Kitchen.

Policies and accreditation – Lynn Schoeff

Ms. Schoeff reported that four grant proposals were submitted in September. She has continued to work on mask distribution and has begun researching health and racial equity policies.

Substance Use Prevention – Karen Shannon

Ms. Shannon announced that Needham has completed 10 years of the Drug Free Community grant.

Ms. Shannon reported that they recorded a session, called Insights on a Teen's Life 2020. The program will be promoted to high school parents and she hopes to do a similar program for the middle schools.

Karen Mullen has been helping with the MetroWest vaping grant until the position is filled. The program includes cessation, education on health consequences of vaping, and a diversion program. There are strong partnerships with the Needham Public Schools and Youth & Family Services. The cessation part of the program will train the school nurses in Calling it Quits-Vaping. Youth & Family Services staff and school counselors and health teachers will also attend.

Traveling Meals – Maryanne Dinell

Ms. Dinell is on vacation.

Emergency Management – Taleb Abdelrahim

Mr. Abdelrahim thanked Ms. Zike, other staff, volunteers, and the Medical Reserve Corps for their work on the flu clinics, which were a great success.



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Mr. Abdelrahim described the following activities:

- Needham received a large amount of personal protective equipment (PPE) from the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA);
- September was National Preparedness Month. Needham promoted personal and family preparedness through social media;
- A survey about the public and staff was included in the flu clinic debrief and after-action report;
- The next task is to restock the Emergency Dispensing supplies in the trailer.

Public Health Nursing – Tiffany Zike

Ms. Zike reported that Hanna Burnett has been working on COVID-19 for the past few weeks. The new temporary full-time nurse, Mary Fountaine, will start on Tuesday, October 13. She will work 11:30-8:00 so more hours of the day will be covered.

Blood pressure clinics have started up again one day per week and require appointments. About 4-5 people are seen each week.

A debrief of the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) was conducted with Eliza Cole, discussing how and when to reactivate.

Ms. Zike said that the nursing unit is working on the PrepMod training, which is the new state system set up to help each local jurisdiction manage clinics electronically. This was established in preparation for a COVID-19 vaccine, if or when it is available.

Ms. Zike has adjusted the way she is reporting communicable diseases to reflect the changes in state data. There were 23 confirmed COVID cases in September, 1 probable infection, and 34 contacts. Other communicable diseases were 2 campylobacter cases (both were lost to follow up), 1 dog bite, and 1 bat concern.

Ms. Zike reported that she has started giving B12 injections to a resident again. As of the end of September, there were 288 flu vaccines given.

Flu clinics

All flu clinics are managed with COVID-19 precautions. Two formats for the clinics were developed, although one, a drive-through clinic, was not used due to staffing shortage and the need for electricity to keep vaccine cold. The other format was in-person flu clinics with social distancing. The flu clinics were run under the Incident Command System with Ms. Zike as Incident Commander and Director of the flu clinics, Mr. Abdelrahim supervising the non-clinical staff, and Ms. Burnett supervising the clinical team. The limited staff was augmented by volunteers and there were 20-22 staff + volunteers at each clinic. Ms. Zike described how the clinics were managed and said that everything ran smoothly and well. Ms. Zike and Mr. McDonald see these flu clinics as preparation for COVID-19 vaccination clinics.



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Supply management for the flu clinics was a challenge, particularly for flu vaccine and needles, Ms. Zike said that they used electronic signups this year to lessen contact and paper, but there were some limitations. She hopes that PrepMod will be a more effective system. There was much praise about the flu clinics from the public. On September 23, there were 270 people who received vaccine, and on October 3, there were 520 people. Ms. Zike is doing more vaccines today and plans to run clinics at Needham Housing Authority sites.

The supply chain has been affected by the western fires and Sanofi has not been able to meet even partial delivery. Ms. Zike was able to get some vaccine from a neighboring health department. Ms. Zike said she has no control over how much high dose vaccine (4 times higher dosage than the standard) is received. However, she had anticipated that might happen and ordered more of the “higher” dose (3 times higher).

Farmers Market hearing

Ms. Gurge reported that the Farmers Market Board voted to keep existing COVID protocols rather than to ease up per state recommendations.

Quick updates

Mr. McDonald reported that the incidence of Eastern Equine Encephalitis and West Nile Virus have been lessened by the drought and early colder weather this fall.

Fees have been reduced by half across the board. This is a one-time reduction to acknowledge hardship due to COVID.

The October Town Meeting supported paying two-thirds of the cost for extension of the sewer line on Walker Lane with residents paying the other third. The Select Board is asking, but not requiring those residents to connect to the sewer. Dr. Cosgrove referred to an earlier incident where residents were required to connect with a newly installed sewer. Mr. McDonald and Ms. Gurge will consult with Town Counsel and Tony DelGaizo before the next Board meeting. They would like to consider a regulation requiring homes to connect with sewer if it is available.

Mr. McDonald reported that Needham has been designated as a Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness community, which will make Needham eligible to apply for an action grant which would help the Town make improvements to prepare for extreme climate change.

Massachusetts is doing a community impact survey to understand how people have been impacted by COVID-19. Mr. McDonald is encouraging everyone to participate.



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COVID-19 update

Mr. McDonald discussed data used to determine which format, hybrid or remote learning, the schools should adopt (see slides in meeting packet). Mr. McDonald meets weekly with school leaders to look at the latest COVID data, information about compliance with masks and social distancing, and updates on air handling in the schools. This information helps determine whether schools can be open. While Needham and several bordering communities are in the “yellow” group (risk and spread level 4-8/100,000 positive cases over a two-week period), other nearby communities are in the “red” group (high risk). Needham has been trending up.

The state has used two methods to count the percent positive cases. One approach is to count *people* who have tested positive (average daily new cases); another is to count the number of *positive tests* (since the economy reopened, there is much more repeat testing for employees and students). The Board had a lengthy discussion about how to look at and interpret the data. Mr. McDonald is hopeful that the Public Health Division will get a grant from the MetroWest Health Foundation that will support more sophisticated data analysis.

Ms. Zike provided information about the number and rate of Needham COVID cases, pointing out the rise since September. Since Ms. Burnett joined the staff, Public Health is managing all cases except those that are identified on the weekend. Each case has as many as 40 contacts each. The work is daunting and overwhelming, but the Community Tracing Collaborative (CTC) has been very good, initiating contact within a day of case identification.

There have been a couple of outbreaks in businesses. CTC has taken these cases on since many employees do not live in Needham, but they have notified Ms. Zike about the cases.

Ms. Zike said that, to date, Needham has had 1318 people who have self-reported to the state and were in travel-related quarantine.

Mr. McDonald reported that there were some Facebook comments during September primaries about inadequate distancing and personal protective equipment at polling sites. He will work with the Town Clerk to resolve these issues before the November 3 election. Mr. McDonald also reported that Town Meeting went well.

The Needham face covering order has been red-lined and is in the Board packet and reflects the recent orders from the Governor about phase 3, step 2. Modest adjustments include having six-foot visual markers in businesses. The current Needham order expires on November 13.

The state is allowing restaurants to go to 50% capacity, which is based on the fire code. The Board discussed whether the fire code determination is relevant to public health. The discussion also touched on how the 25-person limit for “events” impacts restaurants.

The Board discussed keeping the language as in the edited version of the mask order, except using “fewer” rather than “less” and to extend the order until January 16, 2021. The Board will discuss the maximum permitted occupancy limits at the November meeting.



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Ms. Mathews made a motion to accept the order with revisions. Dr. Cosgrove seconded. The motion was passed unanimously.

40B housing guidelines

Mr. McDonald suggested that the Board weigh in on the upcoming Select Board discussions about possibly extending the 40B housing guidelines now that Needham has met the 10% threshold for affordable housing. In the context of addressing social determinants of health and positioning the Board of Health has an opportunity to bring the perspective of “health in all policies” to public policy discussions. The Board has been asked to send comments to the Select Board on the revised 40B by November 16. Mr. McDonald will have a draft of a message from the Board of Health at the next meeting on November 12.

Ms. Mathews is interested in discussing Section N, the local preference aspect of the 40B guidelines. Dr. Partridge noted that local preference does not encourage diversity.

Dr. Partridge motioned to adjourn at 10:59, with a second by Dr. Cosgrove and unanimous approval.

Next meetings:

Thursday, November 12, 9:00-11:00 AM

Thursday, December 10, 9:00-11:00 AM