



NEEDHAM PUBLIC HEALTH DIVISION



Board of Health Meeting Minutes

Date: December 10, 2020

Location: Remote via Zoom per Governor Charles Baker's COVID-19 Executive Order 3/12/2020

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

Absent: Christina S. Mathews, MPH, Member

Staff: Timothy M. McDonald, Director of Needham Department of Health and Human Services; Tara Gurge, Assistant Director; Carol Read; Diana Acosta; Tiffany Zike, Assistant Director; Taleb Abdelrahim; Zendilli Depina; Karen Shannon; Hanna Burnett, Michael Lethin, Maryanne Dinell, Angela MacDonnell, Dawn Stiller, Elizabeth Masterson, Lynn Schoeff

Guests: DJ Wilson, Massachusetts Municipal Association; Barbara Singer, Needham Public Schools

Dr. Brown called the meeting to order at 9:03 a.m.

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 November 12 meeting. Dr. Epstein's remark about posting data on Facebook should be amended to, "Dr. Epstein said that he would tentatively post..."

Dr. Cosgrove moved to accept the minutes as amended. Dr. Partridge seconded the motion. The vote to accept the minutes was 4-0.

Tobacco regulation

The meeting began with an extensive discussion about the Needham tobacco regulation. Topics included modifying the regulation with changes including, retiring three or four permits; adjusting the fee schedule; changing fines and penalties; tightening the restriction on flavored tobacco; reflecting current state penalties; training for vendors.

Tobacco hearing

The hearing on changes to the tobacco regulation was opened at 9:22. There were no attendees.

Mr. McDonald and Ms. Gurge will modify the tobacco regulation per Board of Health discussion and will present it for Board vote at the next meeting on January 14, 2021.

Dr. Brown summarized the changes for the purpose of voting at this meeting. The changes included adjusting the Needham regulation to match the state law; not including section T1, a-e; inserting section 2.

Dr. Epstein made a motion to retire three tobacco permits and to accept the changes described by Dr. Brown. Dr. Partridge seconded the motion. The motion passed with a vote of 4 – 0.

Mr. McDonald will post a legal notice of the regulation changes in the newspaper and he will submit the changes to the Town Clerk. A discussion about the proposed revisions, including section T1, a-e, will be scheduled for a Board of Health meeting in 2021.

Staff reports:**Environmental Health – Tara Gurge and Diana Acosta**

Ms. Gurge reported that Paige Lambert, Monica Pancare and Ms. Acosta have completed their training on Standard 2 of the Voluntary National Retail Food Regulatory Program Standards, a program of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Pamela Ross Kung, a consultant, provided the training. Ms. Gurge reported that the Division has applied for two more FDA grants. The inspections have all been completed.

Ms. Gurge also reported that Sweet Basil and Capella's would benefit from additional training on cooling procedures. The Town will fund a month's worth of consulting and training regarding cooling.

Needham Pool and Racquet Club is working with Environmental Health staff to ensure that a composting toilet is in compliance and that the wading pool replacement meets current pool code standards.

Ms. Acosta has been working on permits and has already received about 130. The online system is working well. Most of the annual inspections and permits are already done. Businesses, including restaurants, have adjusted well to online permitting.

Food complaints have decreased while Covid complaints have been increasing.

Traveling Meals – Maryann Dinell

The Needham Community Council, along with Temple Beth Shalom, will provide Christmas dinner, which will be delivered early Christmas Eve.

Public Health Nursing – Tiffany Zike

Ms. Zike thanked Elizabeth Masterson, a student nurse from Boston College, who worked on data and on vaccination planning.

Ms. Zike reported that the nurses finished flu clinics, including a couple that had been added at Needham Housing Authority (NHA). Only about 14 people took advantage of the clinics at NHA, but a precedent has been set in this important relationship.

The Domestic Violence Action Committee started up again with local partners. The committee recently had the Silent Witness display at Town Hall. The committee decided to donate \$6,000; \$1,000 to families in need for Christmas, and \$5,000 went to food gift cards so the families could have a holiday dinner in place of the usual dinner provided by the group.

Public Health Nursing has been doing a great deal of preparation for Covid vaccination clinics, since the Division may get very little notice before having to get a clinic running.

In communicable diseases, there was one campylobacter and one salmonella. The way the Covid data reports are generated by the State is improving. The number of confirmed cases tripled from October to November.

Although flu clinics have ended the nurses are now providing in-office appointments for flu shots for students.

The nurses are working with the social workers to encourage people to take advantage of the Gift of Warmth program. Ms. Zike expressed appreciation for the Community Council for their donation to this program.

Substance Use Prevention – Karen Shannon

SALSA youth were very active in November. They produced worked on two public service announcements. One was on medication disposal and the other was a Covid holiday message released before Thanksgiving. The Covid message was posted on Facebook where it received over 700 views.

They were also invited to do a presentation at the 84 Youth Power Summit, a statewide conference for teens involved with tobacco prevention and anti-tobacco advocacy.

Ms. Shannon is participating in the online virtual certification for Youth Mental Health First Aid to bring the course back to Needham. The training will be offered for the community in January and more trainings after that.

The Health and Human Services Racial Equity Committee, with members from all three divisions, continues to meet every two weeks to look at how we can embrace racial equity in our work and policies.

Ms. Shannon introduced Angela MacDonnell who started last month on the vaping grant. She is working on curriculum for 6th and 9th grades. The high school cessation program has already started.

Board of Health goals

Dr. Brown, Dr. Epstein, and Dr. Partridge requested several edits. Mr. McDonald will incorporate those changes and submit for a vote in January.

COVID-19 update

Mr. McDonald introduced Ms. Barbara Singer, the Director of School Health Services.

Ms. Zike reviewed the recent case data which includes the total confirmed cases in Needham for this fiscal year (572) and the total for probable cases (95). Ms. Zike went on to discuss the increases in cases by age and clusters outside of households. The average numbers of daily cases and percent positivity are all going up, although the positivity percentage is artificially low since it is based on the number of tests rather than the number of people.

The public health nurses are getting to the point where the number of cases to follow and track is becoming unmanageable. It takes a great deal of time and work and Ms. Zike said that it may soon be necessary to use a surge protocol. In the past Needham has used the Community Tracing Collaborative (CTC) to help with the large number of cases. However, the CTC is already running on surge protocol which means that they send initial text messages to people who test positive but only follow up if the test has been conducted within the past three days. The Needham surge protocol is to refer cases that are within three days to the CTC and take on cases where the test result is from four days or more. But, the numbers of the four-to-seven-day cases are also growing.

Ms. Singer reported that the collaboration between the School Department and Public Health Division has been great. Particularly beneficial is sharing a data sheet with clearance dates.

There is new quarantine guidance from the CDC, which reduces the recommended quarantine period from 14 days to 10 days. Discussion followed about whether Needham should follow the new guidance, about what guidelines the School Department follows, and about how confusing these changes are for the public. There are also some differences between CDC guidance (a person may “test out” of quarantine after 10 days, and the MA DPH guidance (a person may test out after 8 days). Mr. McDonald will see about setting up a meeting in the next couple of weeks to discuss quarantine guidelines.

Ms. Zike reviewed the weekend surge protocol for Needham. Nurses alternate weekend on-call coverage and make school cases the priority. If cases with less than three-day lab results are identified on a weekend, the nurses will follow up on Mondays if workload allows or refer them to the CTC. Cases with the longer lab result time lag will be followed by Needham. The website is being updated to provide the clearest information to Needham residents. A new epidemiologist will start work on Monday, December 21, to do deeper analysis of the data. There are also three per diem nurses who are working on contact tracing.

There was a discussion about the challenges of contact tracing: people who do not cooperate with contact tracing; people who do not answer their phones and thus require letters; and about how to improve compliance. There are not enough staff working on the state level to keep up with the volume of work, and other towns do not have the capacity to follow up with Needham students who live in other communities.

The role of the Needham Public Health Division in vaccination will be similar to the way flu vaccines are managed (vaccination clinics run by the division). However, it is not clear in which phase of the effort the division will be engaged.

The Board discussed the need for another meeting before the next scheduled meeting, given the urgency of the pandemic. Mr. McDonald and Dr. Brown will work to find a time.

Dr. Partridge made a motion to adjourn at 11:00. Dr. Cosgrove seconded that motion. The motion passed 4-0.

Next meetings

- January 14, 2021

Note: this meeting is available to view at [Board of Health 12/10/2020 - YouTube](#)