



NEEDHAM PUBLIC HEALTH DIVISION



Board of Health Meeting Minutes COVID Focused Meeting

Date: March 26, 2021

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
Christina S. Mathews, MPH, Member
Robert A. Partridge, MD, MPH, Vice Chair

Staff Present: Timothy M. McDonald, Director of Needham Department of Health and Human Services; Tara Gurge, Assistant Director of the Public Health Division; Tiffany Zike, Assistant Director of Public Health; Carol Read; Diana Acosta; and Taleb Abdelrahim

Call to Order

Dr. Brown called the meeting to order at 9:00AM and initiated roll call. Present were Dr. Brown-Y, Dr. Cosgrove-Y, Dr. Epstein-Y, Ms. Mathews-Y (arrived late) and Dr. Partridge-Y.

The meeting is being conducted remotely using Zoom consistent with Governor Baker's March 12th order regarding 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.

COVID-19 Update

COVID Vaccination Clinics

Ms. Zike reported that the clinic had dispensed its last doses on March 22nd for a total of 491 doses. The area has been cleaned with a small area at the back of the cafeteria ready to be put into action if the need arises.

Participation in Program to Vaccinate Homebound Residents

Ms. Zike reported that telephone calls to homebound residents will begin next week. A list must be provided to the state before an order can be placed. The program will run through April 23rd. The Johnson & Johnson vaccine comes in 5 doses/vial but requires refrigeration after six hours in room temperature. This will require careful monitoring as home visits will require at least a 15-minute allergic waiting time.



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Community Risk Levels

Ms. Whitehead presented the report on COVID-19 data for the period February 28 – March 1 and February 28-March 13. See attached PowerPoint Presentation for detailed information on the following data:

February 28 – March 1

- a) Needham confirmed cases by age group
- b) Cases in children
- c) Cases in young adults
- d) Age breakdown: academic year to date
- e) Cases by age compared to population
- f) Cases by age compared to population – children and young adults
- g) Average daily incidence by age
- h) Average daily incidence by age – children and young adults
- i) Average daily cases per 100K – cities and towns
- j) Average daily cases per 100K – cities and towns – January-March

February 28 – March 13

- k) Average daily cases by age
- l) Average daily cases among children
- m) Average daily cases among adults
- n) Average daily cases per 100K – state and county – January - March
- o) State calculated positive testing rate – January-March

Discussion ensued on the following highlights. The significant cluster of cases in March for 15-19 age group was not school or sports based but attributable to social gatherings. Also notable was the cluster of cases in the 5-11 age group not school related.

Ms. Whitehead then presented the report on vaccinations administered. See attached PowerPoint presentation for detailed information on the following data:

- a) Vaccinations administered from week 1 (Jan 11) to week 7
- b) Vaccinations administered by first second and total doses
- c) Vaccinations administered by town
- d) Vaccinations administered by age group, gender, race and ethnicity

Updated Needham Public Schools

Mr. McDonald reported on the reopening plan for Needham Public Schools to return to full-time instruction. He referenced the attached letter from the Superintendent to the School Committee. The Department of Elementary and Secondary Schools (DESE) has been given full authority to compel the return for all elementary and secondary students who are presently enrolled in remote only or hybrid instruction to full-time instruction commencing on April 5th. Tents have been set up outside the schools to provide as many options as possible for lunch and other outdoor activities. The reopening timeline is K-4 April 5th, 6-8 April 15 and high school by May 3rd.



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Discussion ensued. Dr. Brown noted that mask breaks may *not* be taken indoors but possibly outdoors. In terms of bus safety, even though the state has designated three students to a seat and six across, Needham has designated two students/seat. With the absence of monitors on the bus except for medically fragile students, enforcement and contact tracing will be difficult. As the Community Tracing Collaborative (CTC) has announced that contact tracing cannot be guaranteed beyond June 30th, the burden of community level of transmission tracing may be transferred to the town. The Board recommends that windows must be kept open and driver and students masked at all times.

It was also suggested that students be brought back in three-week increments rather than two-week. In this way the opportunity for data analysis of cases may inform the next phase of reopening.

Also discussed was the positive impact of the 15-19 age group becoming eligible for vaccination on April 19th. In any event, Mr. McDonald and Dr. Brown will follow up with school officials on the Board's recommendations.

COVID-19 Public Health Emergency Orders and Compliance Enforcement

Mr. McDonald noted that the above emergency order expires on March 31st. If the Board chooses not to extend the order, the state mandate will remain in effect. Discussion ensued on the merits of extending the Board's order especially in terms of outdoor masking in general and indoor/outdoor dining requirements specifically.

Following discussion and upon motion duly made by Dr. Cosgrove and seconded by Dr. Epstein, it was unanimously voted to change the order about mask wearing outdoors to the original language of the order and leave the rest of the language as is and extend the order to June 30, 2021. Dr. Brown-Y, Dr. Cosgrove-Y, Dr. Epstein-Y, Ms. Mathews-Y (arrived late) and Dr. Partridge-Y. Motion passed 5-0.

Reopening Plan Step 4, Phase 1 Update

Ms. Acosta reported on the state reopening plan (see attached for detailed information.) Ms. Acosta reported on following up with restaurants on the six-foot between tables requirement. Some confusion arose because of state's three-foot requirement. Also discussed was the use of six-foot tall barriers in between tables in some restaurants. Discussion ensued on clarifying the appropriate use of table barriers and maintaining distance and possibly amending the vote on the emergency order. Following discussion, it was decided to resolve this issue at the next meeting.

Other Business

Dr. Cosgrove reported he had been receiving requests from seniors on the opening of the senior center. Mr. McDonald responded that a July 12th date is targeted as the same date the offices will be open to the public without an appointment.



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Proposed Change in Operating Hours Request from Sira Naturals RMD

Ms. Gurge reviewed the request she received from Sira Naturals RMD to be allowed to extend their hours of operation for the upcoming dates of April 16-20, 2021 from 9:00AM to 9:00PM. She noted that a prior request in March 2019 had been approved for hours 9:00AM to 11:00PM. As a condition to the approval, Sira Naturals was required to inform the police about its new hours and to have sufficient staff on site along with sufficient security for the extended timeframe. That condition would remain in effect for this approval.

Upon motion duly made by Dr. Cosgrove and seconded by Dr. Partridge, it was unanimously voted to grant the above conditional request. Dr. Brown-Y, Dr. Cosgrove-Y, Dr. Epstein-Y, Ms. Mathews-Y and Dr. Partridge-Y. Motion passed 5-0.

Meeting Schedule

Mr. McDonald will send out schedule of April meetings

Dr. Brown noted that the Chair position will be voted at that meeting

Adjournment

Upon motion duly made by Dr. Cosgrove and seconded by Dr. Partridge, it was unanimously voted to adjourn. Dr. Brown-Y, Dr. Cosgrove-Y, Dr. Epstein-Y, Ms. Matthews-Y and Dr. Partridge-Y. Motion passed 5-0. The meeting adjourned at 10:05AM.

Respectfully submitted,

Christine Martin Barraford

Attachments:

COVID-19 Update

Vaccination Update

Public Health Emergency Order

State Reopening Plan