



NEEDHAM PUBLIC HEALTH DIVISION



Board of Health Meeting Minutes Regular Meeting DRAFT

Date: April 16, 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; Mary Fountaine; Hannah Burnett, Hannah Whitehead, Karen Shannon; Lynn Schoeff; Carol Read; Diana Acosta; and Taleb Abdelrahim

Guest: Stephen Corcoran

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.

Approval of Minutes – March 11 and March 26, 2021

Upon motion duly made by Dr. Epstein and seconded by Ms. Mathews, it was unanimously voted to approve above sets of minutes. Dr. Brown-Y, Dr. Cosgrove-Y, Dr. Epstein-Y, Ms. Mathews-Y and Dr. Partridge-Y. Motion passed 5-0.

Staff Reports

Emergency Management Report – Taleb Abdelrahim

Mr. Abdelrahim reported that the team had assisted in the vaccination clinics with a combination of 30% medical, 43% non-medical and 27% town staff. The transition to the Mass response system has been completed. Of the 160 remaining MRC volunteers, 123 have been accepted at the MA Respond clinics and 37 are awaiting background checks. The ongoing task is to organize supplies to be ready for future operations.



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Public Health Nursing – Hannah Burnett

Ms. Burnett reported that the Nursing unit continues to work on COVID-19 disease investigation. Approximately 7,000 doses of vaccine have been administered. Ms. Fountaine has trained three staff to assist her in contact tracing efforts, and she continues to have weekly meetings with the local liaison on the Community Tracing Collaborative. An email was sent out with regard to summer camp applications containing information for programs and camps about the health and safety requirements for summer 2021. Applications are due at the end of the month. Reports of others communicable diseases: there were three campylobacter related to food consumption and 4 Lyme disease. Originally 6 tuberculosis cases were reported, however, only one case is attributable to Needham. Ms. Burnett is working with the state to correct.

Ms. Burnett continues to give B12 injections monthly and the Gift of Warmth program has a total of 20 new households due to the economic impact of the pandemic.

Ms. Burnett also reported she has been involved with Domestic Violence Action Committee (DVAC) educational events with Representative Garlick and working on fund raising events to raise awareness and to help residents in need. A Mother's Day drive is planned with REACH, a domestic violence program in Waltham, to provide thirty mothers with essential needs donations. Ms. Burnett has reported an increase (over 5 and less than 10 in February) in calls from concerned residents on domestic abuse.

Mr. McDonald noted that the DVAC is funded by a donation made by two deceased sisters, residents of Needham. The trust yields around \$5,000 per year and there is a current balance of \$15-17,000. Efforts are made to stay within the yearly allotment with use of balance of funds for larger initiatives. Ms. Mathews suggested fund raising efforts within the community would produce favorable results.

Substance Abuse Prevention Collaborative (SAPC) - Carol Read

Ms. Read expressed gratitude to be able to assist in the operation of the COVID vaccine clinics. She is also working with the new law enforcement officer shared with Dedham to enable better communication with social workers from the Aging Services Division and public health in Needham to respond to resident calls.

Substance Prevention Alliance of Needham (SPAN) – Karen Shannon

Ms. Shannon reported that SPAN had co-sponsored a community educational event with Natick 180 (the equivalent substance prevention program in Natick) hosted by Dr. Safdar Medina: *Cannabis and the Teen Brain*. 70 persons attended and 22 favorable feedback surveys were received. The vaping cessation program is underway at the high school with a dedicated group of health professionals onsite. Because of hybrid learning, however, the program has not been as active as had been anticipated. The platform will be promoted to the end of the school year with an anticipated boost in the fall.

A four-year Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration (SAMHSA) STOP grant (Sober Truth on Preventing Underage Drinking) commencing in May had been obtained to prevent underage access and use of alcohol. Data was collected last month from two student focus groups conducted in an NHS wellness class, and two parent focus groups are scheduled for April. Twenty-



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nine teen participated in virtual SALSA meetings (Students Advocating for Life without Substance Abuse) and six students attended an advocacy meeting on developing youth presentation skills for peer-to-peer communication.

Dr. Partridge, as an emergency room physician treating adolescents, emphasized the need for education on cannabis and the teen brain, and Dr. Cosgrove congratulated Ms. Shannon on the acquisition of the grant.

Environmental Health – Tara Gurge

Ms. Gurge reported she is continuing to work on reviewing and tweaking the well permit regulations with Ms. Schoeff. A draft will be on the agenda for next meeting.

Ms. Gurge also reported continuing work with the St. Mary Street property owner in complying with removal of items on his property. A trip to the property every other week is keeping this owner motivated and making progress.

Although calls from homebound residents have dramatically decreased, Ms. Gurge is continuing to gather names for a master list once vaccination protocols have been met.

Ms. Acosta reported that online permit applications continue to be generated on ViewPoint. State COVID protocols are printed out, read and signed by applicants indicating compliance with 50% capacity and mask wearing on deck for public and semi-public pools.

In response to Ms. Mathew's inquiry on the property on Central Ave. being converted to a daycare center, Ms. Gurge summarized some of the concerns she received regarding permitting for food on the property, and the previous use of the property for car repair and its potential impact on the environmental. Mr. McDonald noted that the Planning Board submits all building activity to the Board of Health. If demolition is involved, there is an asbestos and pest check. Additionally, assurances are made that the property is not causing a hazard to neighboring properties with stormwater runoff, etc. In this instance where the property was being converted to a daycare center, and the site had been used for car repair, soils and metals test would be completed.

Travelling Meals Program – Maryanne Dinell

In Ms. Dinell's absence, Ms. Gurge reported that the numbers of meals delivered continues to increase. Ms. Dinell recently honored the volunteers with a "cookie" surprise in appreciation of their efforts. Summer positions have been posted.

Mr. McDonald reported the program is not an elder-only program but is need-based. Referrals made by Aging Services sometimes do not meet the criteria for need. As long as the person is unable to cook for themselves due to temporary or permanent disability, he or she qualifies to receive meals. Although that criteria does not generally include entire families, an instance where it may would be the grandparent taking care of small children and unable to provide regular cooked meals. As the pandemic recedes, Aging Services will restart the in-person lunch program onsite, and this will have a direct impact to the travelling meals program.



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Mr. McDonald also noted that the program is supported by volunteers, except during the summer, when four paid staff are added. During the year, seventy volunteers deliver all meals over several short routes. In the case of inclement weather, some volunteers may not be available. Mr. McDonald reported the need to redesign the program so that it is not solely dependent on volunteers. In this way Ms. Dinell will be assured of adequate support when it is needed, as well as backup for her to take earned personal and vacation time.

Board of Health Job Descriptions

Mr. McDonald reported that he is working on job descriptions for each of the three boards under the Needham Health and Human Services Department, including the Board of Health, Council on Aging and Youth Commission. This will inform new board members about what the expectation is on time commitment, type of issues worked on, etc. in order that the new member can be better involved from the first meeting. The Board of Health presently has an orientation folder that defines the regulations in place, town policies and responsibilities of members. The job descriptions would have a similar focus.

Dr. Cosgrove, having informed the Board of Health at the beginning of the meeting, left early.

COVID-19 Update

Community Risk Levels

Ms. Whitehead presented the report on COVID-19 data as of March 21st. See attached PowerPoint Presentation for detailed information on the following data:

- a. Clusters by household, social gatherings, daycare, congregate care, schools, businesses and sports
- b. Congregate care clusters
- c. Household clusters by cluster size and age distribution
- d. Household clusters over a period of time
- e. Cluster case study

Ms. Whitehead then presented data on vaccinations as of April 8th. See attached PowerPoint presentation for detailed information on the following data:

- f. Needham vaccines administered by Needham Public Health January - March
- g. People vaccinated by town
- h. People vaccinated by age and gender
- i. People vaccinated by race and ethnicity
- j. Vaccine coverage rate
- k. Vaccine coverage by age
- l. Fully vaccinated residents by race and ethnicity
- m. Percentage fully vaccinated by town

Discussion ensued on sharing the data on the town website and social media. Mr. McDonald noted that of the 700 first doses administered 97% received their second shots at the Needham clinic.



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Draft Policy on Racial and Health Equity – Lynn Schoeff

Ms. Schoeff presented the draft of the above document to shape development of policies and practices (see attached document.) Discussion ensued including members' suggestions for inclusion and presentation of data. Also discussed was the utilization of interpreters at public events and the costs associated with translation and interpretation. Mr. McDonald noted he had discussed with the Assistant Town Manager the formation of a central town fund to manage such costs. He suggested that members further review the draft document for discussion at the next meeting.

Needham Unite Against Racism Initiative (NUARI) – Timothy McDonald

Mr. McDonald noted that the Select Board developed a vision statement, guiding principles and intentional practices (see attached document.) The Select Board is suggesting that Boards will also choose to adopt the statement and adapt to its own policies and practices. It was noted that Public Health was not included in the group. Discussion ensued on the engagement and time commitment of the Board in this initiative. This item will be on the agenda for the next meeting for further discussion.

Community Events and Business Guidance – Timothy McDonald

Ms. Acosta noted that the Blue on Highland Restaurant was seeking to reopen. She introduced Mr. Stephen Corcoran, Operations Manager, who presented the reopening plan as compliant with health and safety regulations for staff and patrons (see attached document.) In addition to table distancing, staff and patrons are required to wear masks and have temperatures taken. Three HVAC systems have been upgraded on the roof with air filter ionization systems. Discussion ensued on the type of air filtration and number of air exchanges per hour. Also discussed was the use of open windows at the front of the restaurant during good weather. The proper plexiglass height and distance between tables throughout the restaurant was discussed.

Mr. Corcoran was asked to report back to the Board on the actual number of air exchanges of the filtration system. There is currently not enough data on the effectiveness of plexiglass in deterring airborne viruses. The Board agreed to allow the use of plexiglass dividers between the tables that are not required 6 feet apart per the state, but will still look forward to receiving the information back from Mr. Corcoran on the requested data regarding the number of air exchanges and filtration information.

Community Health Needs as Part of MA DPH DoN Process – Timothy McDonald

Mr. McDonald reported that Boston Children's Hospital had been approved in 2020 to build an outpatient surgical and sports medicine facility in Needham. In connection with this approval, the state requires the hospital to dedicate a portion of the total cost of construction toward the addressing the health needs in the service area based on a common health needs assessment. Children's Hospital met with Ms. Zike, Ms. Gurge, Ms. Sara Shine, and himself to discuss best ways to serve the health needs of the community (see attached document.) Mr. McDonald reported that discussed needs are mental health, food security, nutrition, exercise and overall wellness. Some other suggestions were diet and exercise, safe community building and injury prevention.

Discussion ensued on the specific services to be addressed by the hospital so as not to compete with existing pediatric practitioners in town.



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Mr. McDonald will forward the needs assessment data to the Board and will put the item on the agenda for next meeting.

HHS Department Annual Report

Mr. McDonald referenced the attached draft report that will be finalized and be available in the Town Meeting packet (see attached document.)

Norfolk County Mosquito Control District Spring Activities

Mr. McDonald reported that he has received notification that aerial larval control application will be conducted anytime between April 12 - April 30, 2021 (see attached letter.)

Regulation Update Policy

Mr. McDonald referenced the attached draft of a policy to review regulations to reflect up-to-date scientific data (see attached document.)

Town Meeting

Mr. McDonald reminded the Board of Health about the upcoming Annual and Special Town Meetings and highlighted some of the important items on the warrant for those meetings including special financial warrant article that would fund contracted subject matter experts for needed public health projects, a shared law-enforcement embedded social worker split between the Needham and Dedham Police Departments, and the Town's Public Information Officer (PIO). Mr. McDonald emphasized to the Board that the Public Health Division has benefitted greatly from the support and assistance of Ms. Gonzales, Needham's PIO, both in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and in consideration of communication plans, press releases, social media and website enhancement for other Public Health (and Health & Human Services) programs.

Election of Chair

Upon motion duly made by Dr. Epstein and seconded by Ms. Mathews, it was unanimously voted to elect Dr. Partridge as Chair of the Board of Health. Dr. Brown-Y, Dr. Dr. Epstein-Y, Ms. Matthews-Y and Dr. Partridge-Y. Motion passed 4-0. The meeting adjourned at 10:35AM.

Vice-Chair will be elected at next meeting.

Meeting Schedule

Wednesday, April 28 – COVID focused meeting – 6:00-7:00PM

Friday, May 14 – Regular meeting – 9:00-10:30AM

Thursday, May 27 – COVID focused meeting – 9:00-10:00AM

Page Break

Adjournment

Upon motion duly made by Dr. Partridge and seconded by Ms. Mathews, it was unanimously voted to adjourn. Dr. Brown-Y, Dr. Dr. Epstein-Y, Ms. Matthews-Y and Dr. Partridge-Y. Motion passed 4-0. The meeting adjourned at 10:35AM.



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Respectfully submitted,

Christine Martin Barraford

*Attachments:
April 16th Meeting Packet*