



NEEDHAM PUBLIC HEALTH DIVISION



Board of Health Meeting Minutes Regular Meeting DRAFT

Date: June 9, 2021

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

Members: Robert A. Partridge, MD, MPH, Chair
Christina S. Mathews, MPH, Vice Chair
Edward Cosgrove, PhD, Member (arrived late)
Stephen Epstein, MD, MPP, Member
Kathleen Ward Brown, ScD, Member

Staff Present: Tara Gurge, Assistant Director of the Public Health Division; Tiffany Zike, Assistant Director of Public Health; Lynn Schoeff; Mary Fountaine; Taleb Abdelrahim; Maryanne Dinell; Karen Shannon; Carol Read; and Diana Acosta

Call to Order

Dr. Partridge 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 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 – April 28, May 14 and May 27, 2021

Following discussion and upon motion duly made by Dr. Partridge and seconded by Ms. Mathews, it was unanimously voted to approve above minutes as amended. Dr. Brown-Y, Dr. Epstein-Y, Ms. Mathews-Y and Dr. Partridge-Y. Motion passed 4-0.

Staff Reports

Environmental Health – Tara Gurge

Ms. Gurge reported that Board of Health advisory notices were sent to all businesses. She also reported that the new intern will be hired and onboarded next week and will be working one day in the office and remotely, including conducting inspections at the weekly Farmers Market on Sundays.

Ms. Gurge also reported that a well-check by police at Charles River Landing alerted the office to a situation that did not meet health and sanitation codes. She, Ms. Acosta met with the occupant. A long-term plan will be set in place to increase cleaning services for the occupant and a Zoom virtual meeting was also scheduled with Ms. Zike and the nursing staff, along with a Council on Aging social worker



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and social workers from Springwell. A long-term plan will be set in place to increase cleaning services for the occupant so that she may live safely in her home. Ms. Gurge also added that several odor complaints had been made due to the occupant leaving trash in the hallways.

Ms. Acosta reported that the Sheraton Hotel was conducting a complete thorough double cleaning after a year of being closed, and following inspection all the floors are ready for occupancy. The kitchen is the next cleaning project to make it ready for restaurant use. The indoor pool has been drained and cleaned and will be ready for use at a future date to be determined.

Ms. Acosta also reported having received calls after the Governor's May 29th lifting of restrictions. Residents are looking for confirmation as to gathering limits at events, pool capacity, etc. Temporary permits are starting to be issued.

Ms. Gurge confirmed that the Walker Lane properties were being connected to town sewer at the end of the week. She is awaiting septic abandonment forms and final septic pump reports for each property that is connected to sewer.

Ms. Acosta reported that the food permits for the Tai Story restaurant are pending. The restaurant shares a basement with Latina and there is ongoing construction and concerns for construction dust permeating the restaurant. Inspections are ongoing.

Travelling Meals Program – Maryanne Dinell

Ms. Dinell expressed gratitude for the volunteers for their hard work and dedication. She reported that four employees were reinstated for the summer program starting on June 18th and two substitutes will be hired as well, including a recent high school graduate.

Substance Prevention Alliance of Needham (SPAN) – Karen Shannon

SPAN

Ms. Shannon reported that the last quarterly meeting was held on May 11th to honor volunteers and to reflect on accomplishments. The coalition attended a two-hour training and development class facilitated by the Montana Institute on prevention messaging using positive community norms. Additional technical assistance was contracted with the institute for a small group to delve into the details on how best to apply positive community norms in messaging. This technical assistance will result in a product on using messaging in the prevention of substance use.

Vaping Grant

Ms. Shannon reported that the program came to a close at the end of the school year, having completed most of its goals in diverting vaping use and incorporating the vaping cessation program into the wellness curriculum. Work will continue over the summer in anticipation of renewing a stronger launch at the high school providing in-person services directly to students..



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STOP Act Grant

Ms. Shannon reported that the STOP grant is underway. An amendment was submitted on a change in key personnel and a new person is being recruited to be part of the prevention team in the administration of the grant.

Mental Health First Aid for Youth

Ms. Shannon reported that a mental health first aid course was conducted on May 13 for 7 persons in the community. With concerns around mental health issues especially around youth, she looks forward to offering more courses over the summer educating adults on the warning signs and challenges of mental health conditions.

SALSA

Dr. Partridge noted that he enjoyed the online video capturing the dedication, spirit and hard work of SALSA students.

Substance Abuse Prevention Collaborative (SAPC) - Carol Read

Ms. Read reported that in collaboration with Walpole, Dedham and Westwood the substance use prevention application had been resubmitted. This grant would commence on July 1 and focus on underage substance use prevention focusing on principles of health, equity, and bringing minority and under-represented populations to the table.

Ms. Read also reported that she is heading to the state house to attend an event sponsored by MHOA to advocate for FY22 public health funding and the allocation of American Rescue Plan funds dedicated to public health.

Emergency Management – Taleb Abdelrahim

Mr. Abdelrahim reported that training has been scheduled for MRC volunteers on sheltering operations and MassCare coordination. A meeting with volunteers was held last month and he is working with Ms. Zike in completing the organization of the basement storage. The monthly Department of Health MRC survey was completed as well as participation in the COVID-19 After Action report. The Emergency Dispensing Site plan reflecting use of technology was also submitted.

While equipment is stored at the Rosemary building, a backup trailer is stored at the Fire Department. Additionally some shelter supplies are stored in the basement of the high school.

Discussion ensued on providing redundancy and digitizing of paper records. Mr. McDonald noted that some paper records had been lost in the past, and suggested that the town consider digitizing records across departments.

Public Health Nursing – Tiffany Zike

Ms. Zike reported a successful Mother's Day Basket drive containing over \$700 worth of items for the aid and comfort of domestic abuse survivors. A "What to do, what to say" skill building webinar training with 24 attendees (30 registrations received) was held prompted by the need during the pandemic to respond to and help domestic violence survivors. An MRC meeting was held to work with



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camps around regulations and a coffee hour with town leadership was held about reopening and discussions on mask wearing and what rules remain in place. A weekly training course for public health nurses was completed on Hoarding 101. Ms. Fountaine and her team continue to make followup calls to COVID cases and offer assistance.

One case of amebiosis, two campylobacter and one salmonella were reported in May.

COVID-19 Update – Tiffany Zike

Community Risk Levels

Ms. Zike presented the report on May COVID-19 data. See attached PowerPoint Presentation for detailed information on the following data:

- a) May cases
- b) Epidemic curve
- c) Cases by age
- d) Age and gender of May cases
- e) Average daily incidence
- f) Covid-19 testing
- g) May symptomatic cases
- h) Variants and breakthrough infections
- i) May clusters
- j) May contacts

Ms. Zike then presented data on vaccinations as of May. See attached PowerPoint presentation for detailed information on the following data:

- a) Vaccine coverage rate
- b) Vaccine coverage and covid incidence
- c) Vaccine coverage by age
- d) Vaccine coverage by race/ethnicity
- e) Vaccination status by race and ethnicity among those who have received 1+ dose
- f) Fully vaccinated residents by race and ethnicity
- g) Percentage fully vaccinated by town
- h) Percentage of 12-15 year old among those who have received 1+ dose

Ms. Zike then presented data on vaccinations administered by Needham Public Health as of May. See attached PowerPoint presentation for detailed information on the following data:

- a) Covid-19 vaccinations January-May

Mr. McDonald noted the need for a staff member long-term to focus on data collection with Ms. Whitehead's term coming to a close in a few months.



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Update and Detailed Discussion of Public Health Accreditation – Lynn Schoeff

Ms. Schoeff reviewed the Public Health Accreditation update (see attached report) with an overview of what is required by way of supporting documentation before making application. The three pre-requisites are: community health assessment; community health improvement plan; and strategic plan. While some progress has been made on the community health assessment, a senior reassessment needs to be accomplished in order to provide more focus on sub-population data. It was suggested that this survey could take place when the senior center reopens in the fall.

Discussion ensued including the successes over the past year in working effectively within the community with a high degree of vaccinations. Although Needham Public Health is a high-functioning and well-run department, the state's plan for the COVID response did not include the local public health departments as a partner. Representative Garelick advocated for the town and earmarked \$50,000 in the state budget for public health accreditation. If passed, this money would be available after July 1 and may serve as an incentive to the Finance Committee to support the Board moving forward with accreditation. State legislation is directing the Department of Public Health to put more pressure on local public health departments to improve and meet public health standards. The process of self-assessment is beneficial in that the exercise identifies and reveals weaknesses that can be worked on for improvement.

Given the high standards and work involved in gaining accreditation, Ms. Schoeff noted that only high-functioning local health departments have the bandwidth to apply for accreditation. As a high achieving community that demands certification from its fire, police, school departments, etc., accreditation of its public health department is indeed a high value to the residents.

Ms. Schoeff noted that accreditation requires review of policies on a two-year cycle. Review does not necessarily result in rewriting of policies but ongoing reassessment in order to ensure best practices.

Discussion ensued on the timeliness of this project post-pandemic in that residents not only have become more aware of the relevant services of their public health division, but there is a renewed excitement as things get back to normal for looking at the essential mission of a local public health department. State funded resources will assist the department in brining on additional staff to increase and finetune services.

Discussion also ensued on the strategic plan piece affording the opportunity for the Board to increase its communications with residents. This planning will also allow the Board to consider expanding the resources needed to address critical issues like expanding mental health youth services and looking more "upstream" at problems and the ability to address them effectively.

It was agreed that the accreditation process be a recurring item on the Board's agenda in order to move the discussion and implementation forward on a regular basis.



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Discuss Proposed Article 12: Rules and Regulations for the Registration and Construction of Private Water Supplies – Tara Gurge

Ms. Gurge reported that a review of current Board of Health well regulations is needed to bring them up to date (see attached edited document.) She and Ms. Acosta worked closely with Mr. Harrington of the Water and Sewer Division since he does pre- operation inspections of these wells and have added a section thereon. Also added is a section on ground source heat pump wells, also known as geothermal wells. Ms. Gurge noted that some information in this sections is pending from Mr. Harrington.

Discussion ensued on requirements for geothermal setback and backflow prevention, and Ms. Gurge reported that these sections are now on par with state regulations.

Ms. Gurge will report back to the Board at its next meeting with additional revisions.

HHS Department's Draft Policy on Racial and Health Equity – Lynn Schoeff

Ms. Schoeff reviewed the draft of the policy containing revisions suggested by the Board at its last meeting (see attached document). She added that writing policy which addresses both health inequity and racial disparities is difficult.

Discussion ensued with regard to language in the sections Purpose, Policy and Procedure and ways to better express the Board's intentions for a public health policy that will bring into account current problems but not be limited to the present situation but a more lasting statement of policy that will endure under all conditions.

Ms. Schoeff noted that the "Purpose" first paragraph was written following input from a racial equity group that felt that making a strong statement at the beginning of the document made a relevant case for why the policy was needed. Ms. Shannon added that the racial equity commission had many meetings over a nine-month period with the focus on discussing the root causes of racism which resulted in health inequities and disparities. She supports language that takes a strong position that accurately defines the problem is not be confused with "inflammatory" language.

Mr. McDonald agreed to make the document available on the Google drive for members to add further comments for further review at the next meeting.

Needham Unites Against Racial Initiative (NUARI) – Timothy McDonald

Mr. McDonald referenced the statement (see attached) with the Board's position not to formally adopt the NUARI vision and principles. The Board of Health, however, and Public Health are interested in being included in NUARI's future discussions to expand their vision statement to encompass health inequities. He suggested that the Board clarify its position further that it is indeed against racism but is unable to make the time commitment fully endorse intentional practices.

Discussion ensued. Mr. McDonald suggested that the public health division review the document and decide how it could feasibly be able to apply its resources to address one of these practices. At the next meeting it will present a simple plan on how a good faith effort could be made to address one issue. At that time a vote will be taken and statement drafted that the Board of Health is clearly committed to



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racial equity, diversity and inclusion and will fully support a plan on addressing racial inequities in the delivery of health services.

Proposed Board of Health FY22 Fee Schedule – Timothy McDonald

Mr. McDonald noted that due to the pandemic, the schedule for fees (see attached) was not set in March as usual for an upcoming fiscal year beginning on July 1. Accordingly, he suggested maintaining the same fee schedule as FY21 with the understanding made clear to all vendors that fees will revert back to normal fee structure in July, 2022 for FY23.

Following discussion and upon motion duly made by Dr. Cosgrove and seconded by Dr. Brown, it was unanimously voted to continue the current reduced fee schedule through FY22 with an increase back to pre-pandemic levels effective July, 2022 for FY23. Dr. Brown-Y, Dr. Cosgrove-Y, Ms. Mathews-Y and Dr. Partridge-Y. Motion passed 4-0. Dr. Epstein had left the meeting

Warming and Cooling Centers Emergency Plan – Timothy McDonald

Mr. McDonald reviewed the Board of Health warming and cooling center plan vs. 1.1 (see attached.) Needham had worked with the Norfolk County-7 Public Health Coalition to develop a plan in 2016 that was tweaked in 2018. Discussion ensued on the heat index referenced for the continuous number of days and the accessibility of public places in town designated for relief. Discussion also ensued on whether the town is serving those most in need in public housing with no access to nearby facilities. Mr. McDonald will further research and update the Board at its next meeting.

Freon Removal from Building Demolitions – Tara Gurge and Diana Acosta

Ms. Gurge reported she received a complaint from a resident that a home was torn down with A/C units still remaining in the windows and also that a refrigerator was destroyed by the excavator. The fire inspector and building inspector revealed that it is the responsibility of the contractor/owner to remove these freon-containing items. These specific items will be added to a pre-demo inspection list and the fire inspector has agreed to conduct a final walk-through inspection prior to demolition to verify that all freon-containing items have been properly removed.

Next Board of Health Meetings

June 23 – Covid meeting – 9:00AM

July 29 – Regular monthly meeting – 9:00AM

August/September - tbd



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Adjournment

Upon motion duly made by Dr. Brown and seconded by Dr. Cosgrove, it was unanimously voted to adjourn. Dr. Brown-Y, Dr. Cosgrove-Y, Ms. Mathews-Y and Dr. Partridge-Y. Motion passed 4-0. Meeting was adjourned at 11:05AM.

Respectfully submitted,

Christine Martin Barraford

Attachments:
June 9th Meeting Packet