



NEEDHAM PUBLIC HEALTH DIVISION



Board of Health Meeting Minutes DRAFT

Date: November 16, 2021

Location: Remote via Zoom per Governor Charles Baker's COVID-19 Executive Order 3/12/2020 and amended as of 6/15/2021

Members: Christina S. Mathews, MPH, Vice Chair
Edward Cosgrove, PhD, Member
Kathleen Ward Brown, ScD, Member
Stephen Epstein, MD, MPP, Member

Absent: Robert A. Partridge, MD, MPH, Chair

Staff Present: Tara Gurge, Assistant Director of the Public Health Division; Tiffany Zike, Assistant Director of Public Health; Mary Fountaine; Hanna Burnett; Karen Shannon; Carol Read; Michael Lethin; Lynn Schoeff and Diana Acosta

Call to Order

Ms. Mathews called the meeting to order at 5:00PM and initiated roll call. Present were Dr. Brown-Y, Dr. Cosgrove-Y and Ms. Mathews-Y. Absent were Dr. Epstein and Dr. Partridge.

The meeting was conducted in-person and remotely using Zoom consistent with Governor Baker's March 12th executive order and as amended on June 15, 2021, regarding COVID-19. The materials for this meeting were circulated previously and are available on the Town website. This meeting is being recorded.

Approval of Minutes – October 14, 2021

Upon motion duly made by Dr. Cosgrove and seconded by Ms. Mathews, it was unanimously voted to approve the above minutes as amended. Dr. Brown-Y, Dr. Cosgrove-Y and Ms. Mathews-Y. Motion passed 3-0.

Staff Reports

Public Health Nursing – Hannah Burnett, Mary Fountaine and Tiffany Zike

Ms. Fountaine reported that vaccination clinics for COVID and flu have been held at the Center at the Heights, Needham Housing Authority, Temple Beth Shalom and the Rosemary Recreation Center. Also, appointments for outside clinic hours were available.



NEEDHAM PUBLIC HEALTH DIVISION



Ms. Fountaine also reported that three contact tracers had been hired to staff the Needham team as well as the team on the shared services grant. There was one case of Legionnaire's disease in early October with no known source.

Ms. Zike reported that there has been an increase in requests for Gifts of Warmth, due to COVID-related issues, domestic violence and loss of employment. The last fundraiser was held in 2019. The Community Council gave a large donation last year.

Environmental Health – Tara Gurge, Diana Acosta and Monica Pancare

Ms. Gurge reported that a part-time health agent was hired with a starting date of December 6th, and a food auditor is scheduled to start on November 22nd.

Ms. Acosta reported ongoing issues with Mi Nina Tortilleria. Since it is a manufacturing facility, oversight falls to the state. A complaint was received from the gymnasium next door with regard to white corn kernels outside as well as a heavy grease smell. A site visit was conducted with the Water and Sewer Department since large cooking troughs are used and kernels were found in the main drain. Grease traps are in need of cleaning, and more diligent cleaning throughout the facility of dropped kernels. Ms. Acosta also reported that the operation responded to the issues and as of November 1st production ended and the facility is moving to Brockton.

Ms. Acosta also reported that The Rice Barn and Masala Art have been placed on administrative watch due to repeated violations. Berger Food Safety has been contracted to conduct food inspections. Many of the problems arise from high staff turnover and short staff, and staff not being properly trained. That training is being provided in order that the establishments qualify for 2022 food establishment permits. Berger Food Safety completed two sessions of training and a third is to be delivered next week. Additionally, Ms. Acosta is working on setting it up so that trainings can be uploaded. A reduced operation schedule can be put in place if necessary. Logs need to be maintained and submitted on a regular basis. A memo of understanding will be delivered to both establishments.

Following a report by Dr. Cosgrove of a dead rat in the parking lot, Ms. Acosta conducted a search around the perimeter of the parking lot at the Center at the Heights for evidence of rat infestation. No burrows were found. She did contact the dumpster vendor to clean up the area around it.

Ms. Acosta also reported on the complaints received from Housing Authority residents. Most complaints have to do with excess moisture caused by water possibly seeping up through the slab. The Housing Authority is considering installing gutters and other options for remediation. Dehumidifiers are not a good option because of expense of purchase and cost of running them. Ms. Acosta also reported that since there is no standard test to quantify presence of mold and mildew as there is for asbestos or lead, the inspector may simply report no problem. Continuation of testing for each unit may be a waste of money.

Discussion ensued on the remedies available for addressing long-term public housing problems, including partnership with the state and the possible use of ARPA monies.



NEEDHAM PUBLIC HEALTH DIVISION



Ms. Gurge noted that when a resident is taken from an apartment on an emergency basis and if the home is deemed unsanitary or unsafe, she follows up with the owner and social workers to make sure the home is habitable before a resident is allowed back into the dwelling.

Dr. Epstein joined the meeting remotely.

Substance Use Prevention – Karen Shannon, Karen Mullen, Monica De Winter, Angi MacDonnell and Jazmine Hurley

Ms. Shannon reported that the SPAN (Substance Prevention Alliance of Needham) quarterly meeting was held on October 5th via Zoom with a presentation about the focus groups held in the spring. Attendance was 23 people.

A representative of SPAN was present at the Needham Harvest Fair to engage the community and talk informally.

Five SALSA (Students Advocating for Life without Substance Abuse) students participated with the Needham Police in Drug Take-Back Day on October 23rd. 377 pounds of medications were collected, reflecting a six-month collection period since take-back day last spring.

The SPAN community action team focused on impaired driving. The campaign went live in October with postings on social media to inform youth and young adults about the dangers of driving while high from marijuana or any other type of substance.

SALSA students completed 262 hours of service, planning programs at the high school and working with “The 84”, a state-wide tobacco control program which is primarily youth-led.

Ms. Shannon also reported that she and Sara Shine conducted another session on Youth Mental Health First Aid with 12 wellness teachers at the high school.

Ms. Shannon also reported that work continues on the STOP Act grant to address underage alcohol use and vaping. Anecdotal reports reveals the continued practice of vaping. She plans to stay in touch with nurses, who administer the vaping cessation program, and expects actual data from the Metrowest Adolescent Survey to be available in the spring.

Ms. Read reported that she is continuing setting up the grant-funded program and is emphasizing equity and inclusion as required. She and Ms. Zike hired a public health school graduate to assist with the program

Ms. Read also reported that she is speaking with the Norfolk County Commissioner with regard to directing county-wide ARPA funds to the homeless in the area.

She also reported that District Attorney Morrissey sponsored training on the mental health impact of the pandemic on underrepresented population. Ms. Read attended two training sessions to support school staff and mental health staff.



NEEDHAM PUBLIC HEALTH DIVISION



Ms. Read also reported that Ms. Zike had attended a Medfield Board of Health meeting and presented terms of the shared services grant.

Travelling Meals – Maryanne Dinell

Ms. Gurge reported that the program is going well and the program has an adequate number of volunteers. Dr. Cosgrove noted that even with the many options for meal delivery now, the Traveling Meals Program is still a viable option for homebound residents.

Emergency Management Support – Taleb Abdelrahim and Michael Lethin

Mr. Lethin reported that the emergency management performance grant was approved by MEMA and the Town is waiting for the notice to proceed with hiring a contractor to work on the hazardous materials response.

Mr. Lethin is applying for an additional MEMA grant to conduct hazmat exercises with the Town's Emergency Operations Center.

All Emergency Operations Center staff have participated in ICS-100 level training. Job-specific training will follow.

COVID-19 Update – Tiffany Zike

Ms. Zike introduced Julie McCarthy, the new full-time epidemiologist. Ms. Zike reviewed the October COVID-19 data, including case prevalence, positive testing rate, demographics, as well as information about vaccination levels. See attached PowerPoint presentation for detailed information.

Covid-19 incidence
Daily confirmed cases
Incidence and percent positivity
Covid-19 confirmed cases by age
Rolling 7-day average case count
Cases in children under 12
School contacts
Vaccine uptake
Vaccine uptake among Needham ages
Massachusetts hospitalizations
State-level hospitalizations by age
Current CDC recommendations
Vaccination clinics for children

Ms. Zike reported that the first all-children vaccination clinic was held on Saturday, and it went really well. Close to 300 doses were used.



NEEDHAM PUBLIC HEALTH DIVISION



Ms. Zike also reported that of the 41 reported school cases, 34% were in the high school, 54% in elementary and 12% middle school. The Test and Stay program did not have any positive cases. Booster shots are available for those 18 and older.

Continued Discussion of #1688 Central Avenue proposed Day Care

Ms. Gurge reported that she had received correspondence from neighbors concerned about the environmental impacts of past activity on the site, i.e., cars, oil drums. The neighbors requested additional testing for lead and chemicals in the soil, especially due to the fact that this is to be the site of a new day care center. The Planning Board had requested the Board to further review the situation as to whether further testing was required.

Ms. Gurge reviewed the background history of the site. Endpoint Environmental proposed laying six to twelve inches of clean topsoil over a plastic demarcation barrier to limit the risk of exposure to possible soil contaminants. Ms. Gurge pointed out that testing lead in soil is difficult because any given sample may not contain lead, while another sample may.

Ms. Gurge noted that for the demolition process the Public Health Division requires evidence of asbestos abatement. Additionally, Needham requires a water truck to be used during the process to mitigate dust, and runoff is captured by a barrier around the property. The Health Division works in collaboration with the Building Department to consistently enforce water mitigation at all construction sites.

Residents Holly Clarke and Khristy Thompson appeared before the Board of Health. As Ms. Clarke is a long-time abutter of the site, she knew the history of the site being used as an unlicensed auto repair facility. Both residents expressed concern that testing of the soil was not being done. With over one hundred children expected at the day care facility, they believe that soil testing is prudent to ensure the safety of the children.

Rick Wozmak, of Endpoint Environmental, appeared before the Board of Health. He stated that his assessment begins with a visual and olfactory assessment to look for evidence of petroleum waste. There was no evidence of underground storage tanks. Inspection of the basement oil tank and line to the furnace did not indicate they were a source of a petroleum release. There were no cracks in the slab for oil leaks to permeate.

Mr. Wozmak added that his concern with testing is the possibility of a false-negative if any given sample does not contain lead. For this reason, random soil samplings are not considered effective. Instead, he works with the assumption that lead may be in the soil and the entire area is capped to eliminate exposure. The erection of a building and asphalt paving for parking acts as a cap on the soil. In accordance with guidance from MassDEP in dealing with lead in soil, different thicknesses of soil are used, i.e., six inches of topsoil to maintain landscaped areas and an additional six inches of topsoil for playground and ballfield areas as well as a plastic barrier under the added soil. He said that capping the area completely eliminates any possible contact lead exposure and is a conservative approach.



NEEDHAM PUBLIC HEALTH DIVISION



Mr. Wozmak stated that he had inspected the back of the property (which will not be part of the daycare facility) and found no evidence of leaking petroleum or waste oil.

Mr. Wozmak stated that testing would not be effective work in this situation and risks false negative reports.

Ms. Mathews noted that, since the state does not require soil testing, it is not the role of the Board to mandate testing. However, the Planning Board had asked the Board to consider whether to recommend further testing of the soil. It was the consensus of the Board that the item would be placed on the agenda for the next meeting when the other two Board members would be present, and the matter will be opened for further discussion and decision.

Continued Discussion of Camp Non-Compliance: Saint Sebastian's Summer Sports Camps

Ms. Zike presented the letter to be sent to St. Sebastian's for violation of state camp regulations. Dr. Cosgrove expressed his concern about St. Sebastian's deliberate violation of the rules and supported the statement that any violation in the future would result in immediate shutdown of camps. Ms. Zike said that she thought the fine was about \$3,000 per camp, which would be reviewed and assessed for future violations.

Public Health Accreditation: 1) Pathways Program Summary and 2) Upcoming Release of PHAB2022

Ms. Schoeff reported that the Pathways Recognition Program was put together in response to what was happening in the field, i.e., that smaller public health departments were not applying for accreditation. After many listening sessions and feedback, the Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB) developed the Pathways Recognition Program, five years in the making.

The point of the program is to allow smaller health departments, through smaller fees and achievable steps, to either move to accreditation or get recognition for significant achievement as part of accreditation. PHAB supports performance improvement, strengthening of infrastructure and facilitation of public health system transformation. This can serve as an endpoint in itself for health departments that do not feel equipped to seek full accreditation or it can be a steppingstone to the full application for accreditation.

Ms. Schoeff expressed confidence that accreditation is within the reach of the Needham Public Health Division. Needham has been accepted for one of the pilot programs. The pilot will run from December to the end of March 2022. A format for the Pathways program will be decided at the conclusion of the pilot program.

One model is the Core Plan Pathway, requiring submission of most of the documents required for public health accreditation.

The second, and more achievable model, is the Three Tracks Program, which allows for the department to choose one or all of three tracks to get recognition after completion of each of the tracks, which would put the department well on its way for accreditation.



NEEDHAM PUBLIC HEALTH DIVISION



The Board expressed its support of the plan as a doable way of achieving recognition and ultimately accreditation.

Ms. Schoeff then outlined the 2022 version of standards and measures. The required number of documents was reduced significantly. Diversity, equity and inclusion was also built into the domains, as well as lessons learned from COVID and the years of local public health involvement with FEMA in emergency preparedness and response. The twelve domains were also reduced to ten. The new document contains clear guidance and clear examples of what is and is *not* acceptable. Ms. Schoeff noted that the real value lies in reciprocity of requirements with other public health oversight organizations such as the National Association of County and City Health Officials. This allows for bypass of all duplicative processes required for so many guiding frameworks.

Ms. Schoeff will forward the summary of 2022 standards and measures to Board members.

Brief Update on HHS Priorities Identified for American Rescue Plan Act Spending

Ms. Zike reported that the general framework of proposals for monies were generally accepted by the Select Board, but most go to Town Meeting for final vote.

Discussion ensued on the continued need to advocate for funding for mental health programs not only in temporary ARPA funding but also permanent funding in the operational budget.

Discuss Timeframe for next January BOH Meeting Date

A doodle poll will be sent out for January meeting dates.

The next meeting is scheduled for December 14th @ 7:00PM.

Adjournment

Upon motion duly made by Dr. Cosgrove and seconded by Dr. Brown, it was unanimously voted to adjourn. Dr. Brown-Y, Dr. Cosgrove-Y and Ms. Mathews-Y. Motion passed 3-0. The meeting was adjourned at 7:09PM.

Attachment:

November 10, 2021 Meeting Packet