

Wellesley Board of Health
Remote Meeting via Zoom
Meeting Minutes
January 6, 2021
11:30 AM

Present:

Board:

Shepard Cohen, MPA, Chair
Marcia Testa Simonson, MPH, PhD, Vice Chair
Linda Oliver Grape, PA-C, MPH, Secretary

Staff:

Jessica Cliff, Environmental Health Specialist
Leonard Izzo, Director
Cheryl Lefman, Community Health Coordinator
Ann Marie McCauley, Public Health Nurse Supervisor
Vivian Zeng, Senior Environmental Health Specialist

In attendance:

Shira Doron, MD, Resident
Beth Sullivan Woods, Member Select Board

The meeting was called to order at 11:36 AM

Citizen Speak:

No one was in attendance who wished to participate in Citizen Speak.

1. Administration
2. Community Health
 - a) Wellesley Public Schools – Metrics

Marcia Testa Simonson said the school metrics committee will discuss moving from a hybrid to a fully in-person model.

Dr. Shira Doron reported that metrics from last August no longer apply and assessed the risk-benefit ratio of moving to a fully in-person learning mode. She noted the mental health benefits of in-person learning. Dr. Doron said the City of Cambridge is reevaluating their metrics to open fully in-person, despite the rise of cases in the Commonwealth.

Marcia Testa Simonson said the emphasis should be on compliance metrics and more structure in the schools.

Leonard Izzo reported there was discussion on modifying the metrics, noting that more is done on the micro (versus the macro) level. Dr. Doron said using district-wide metrics doesn't make sense; specific school metrics matter the most.

Beth Sullivan Woods said discussions with the school metrics task force should include clarity around decision making.

b) Wellesley Public School – Testing

Testing continues and results have indicated an exponential increase in number of positive cases of COVID-19.

Dr. Doron reported that COVID-19 vaccination is better than natural immunity. Dr. Doron said there could be false positives or negatives from antibody tests.

c) Wellesley Public Schools - Vaccination and Teachers

Teachers are included in Phase 2. The teacher's union is pushing to have teachers vaccinated in January (not February).

Marcia Testa Simonson directed the group to the Mass.gov website [When can I get the COVID 19 vaccine](#). She noted that those who do not come into contact with direct care patients are not currently a priority and remain in a lower group in Phase 2. There has been no movement for the K-12 group to move up to an earlier part of the phase.

d) COVID-19 Vaccine Clinics

Leonard Izzo reported that COVID-19 vaccination clinics for First Responders will commence next week, beginning on Monday, January 11, 2021. Mr. Izzo reported a high compliance rate among Fire and Police. There will be an opportunity to obtain additional doses for these clinics. The police at local colleges and private schools will be included at clinics as supply allows.

e) COVID-19 Testing – Newton Wellesley Hospital (NWH)

Leonard Izzo reviewed the testing agreement with NWH for symptomatic individuals unable to obtain a timely test through their primary care provider. Those symptomatic individuals may contact the Health Department nurses, who may recommend them for testing at NWH. This referral resource is designed as a safety net service. Mr. Izzo noted that if their insurance does not cover the test, or they are underinsured, the Town will cover the associated costs.

f) COVID-19 Update

Ann Marie McCauley provided a case update. She continues to receive approximately six-seven new cases per day.

Ms. McCauley reported one new volunteer was trained on the State's MAVEN system, however, other staff and volunteers assisting with contract tracing have yet to receive training on MAVEN.

Ann Marie McCauley reported on COVID-19 vaccine administration in the long-term care facilities. At Newton-Wellesley Center for Alzheimer's Care, as well as Elizabeth Seaton, all but a few residents received their first dose of COVID-19 vaccine. There was hesitancy among some staff to obtain their first dose and approximately 40-50% opted to delay. Linda Oliver Grape inquired about if/how the Health Department staff may assist with education to alleviate vaccine hesitancy. Ms. McCauley will check back with the long-term care facilities including Waterstone. She noted that CVS vaccinators will return to those facilities to administer the second dose to residents and staff.

g) Communication

Cheryl Lefman reported on new vaccine information pages from the Commonwealth. She will work with the town's Communications and Project Manager Stephanie Hawkinson on messaging and frequently asked questions. Ms. Lefman thanked Dr. Doron for sending FAQ's from Tufts Medical Center. Dr. Doron will forward consumer/patient centered resources when completed.

3. Environmental Health

a) Boston Sports Institute (BSI)

Vivian Zeng reiterated concerns at the BSI (sports complex) following weekend sports activities including a high school hockey tournament. Ms. Zeng conducted an inspection there yesterday and reviewed capacity guidelines. The facility capacity under the current mandate is a maximum of 160. During the hockey tournament, there were 65 spectators (two parents per child). Ms. Zeng was concerned about activities post games and provided guidance on dispersing after the games, outside of the building and in the parking lot. Ms. Zeng noted that other businesses in the BSI complex were in compliance with guidelines.

Ms. Zeng reported she has received complaints about salons from other salon owners.

Vivian Zeng reported that both the Cottage and Tavern restaurants have temporarily closed and are in "hibernation". It was noted that The Cottage is offering take-out and delivery from 5:00-9:00 PM each night.

Ms. Zeng reported on renovations at the Wellesley Middle School cafeteria and Wellesley Green condominium pool.

Linda Oliver Grape reported the restaurant at Wellesley Country Club is closed until January 13, but the tennis and gym facilities are open.

This meeting was adjourned at 12:30 p.m.

The next meeting of the Board of Health is scheduled on January 11, 2021, 12:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Cheryl Lefman

Community Health Coordinator
