

Wellesley Board of Health
Remote Meeting via Zoom
Meeting Minutes
January 27, 2021
11:30 AM

Present:

Board:

Shepard Cohen, MPA, Chair
Marcia Testa Simonson, MPH, PhD, Vice Chair
Linda Oliver Grape, PA-C, MPH, Secretary
Carol Hannenberg, MD, Associate Member

Staff:

Jessica Cliff, Environmental Health Specialist
Deadra Doku Gardner, Administrator
Leonard Izzo, Director
Cheryl Lefman, Community Health Coordinator
Ann Marie McCauley, Public Health Nurse Supervisor
Joyce Saret, Senior Community Social Worker
Vivian Zeng, Senior Environmental Health Specialist

In attendance:

Shira Doron, MD, Resident
John Lanza, Liaison, Advisory Committee
Marie Taylor, Resident

The meeting was called to order at 11:34 AM.

The Board of Health approved the following set of minutes:

1-25-2021

Citizen Speak:

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

1. Administration
2. Community Health
 - a) COVID-19 Update

Ann Marie McCauley provided a case update. There continues to be many new cases; a few spread out in the community, but most are among those college age and younger, through household/family spread. Babson

College still has many cases. Ms. McCauley is in regular contact with Babson Medical Director Polly McCabe. Ms. McCauley and Linda Oliver Grape reported that a different group of students (sophomores and seniors) have returned to Wellesley College.

Vivian Zeng reported she has been working with Wellesley College to aid them in students' safe return. The College is again using the Verve Hotel in Natick to quarantine students before their return to campus. Ms. Zeng is working with Wellesley College's Food Director to ensure students have meals. Ms. Zeng is also working with the Food Services Director at Babson to ensure meals for students in isolation.

Dr. Shira Doron reported The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) is holding an open meeting today to discuss testing after vaccination. It is hoped that a fully vaccinated person two weeks out won't need testing or quarantine. Dr. Doron reiterated that people must continue to be meticulous about mask wearing, social distancing and hand hygiene protocols. She restated that in Germany, everyone must now wear a medical mask. Dr. Doron said if this becomes a mandate here, there will be issues with the supply chain. She is not in support of medical grade masks or double masking; a single cloth mask with two to three layers is sufficient.

b) COVID-19 Update – Wellesley Public Schools (WPS) Dashboard

Marcia Testa Simonson reminded participants that a staff and community meeting about the updated dashboard is scheduled this Thursday from 6:30-8:00 PM.

c) COVID-19 Vaccine Clinics

Ann Marie McCauley reported that the first round of doses for first responders and others in that category have been administered. The first responders will receive their second dose during the weeks of February 8 and February 15. Leonard Izzo said the State has guaranteed an allocation for that purpose.

Mr. Izzo described the process for requesting an allocation for the community. There is no guarantee that the amount requested will be granted. At present, municipalities that have confirmed they plan to stand-up local clinics may request up to 100 doses each week. As supply increases, the hope is to host larger community clinics.

Mr. Izzo said today is the first day those 75+ could begin signing up for appointments beginning February 1st. Many in the community reported great frustration about the complexities of the State's website, as well as their inability to find any location with available appointments.

Leonard Izzo, Cheryl Lefman and Joyce Saret joined a call with COA director Heather Munroe, Assistant Director Greg Wilson and Stephanie Hawkinson to strategize about handling the volume of calls/inquiries to several town departments. The COA will activate a call-center, with several volunteers to address seniors' concerns, and help them navigate the system. In addition, messages will continue to be disseminated to the community. There was discussion about options to assist seniors who may have transportation, technology or other challenges. Health, COA and the Town's Communications and Project Manager will continue to collaborate on mitigation strategies and communication.

Dr. Doron reported that Johnson and Johnson will be applying for EUA from the FDA for its vaccine. If granted, it will provide another option for vaccine distribution.

Ms. McCauley is learning the PrepMod system in order to administer COVID-19 vaccine clinics.

d) Social Work

Joyce Saret provided an update on the virtual chat on self-care with Health Department social workers on Thursday, January 28, 2021 from 1:00-2:00 PM.

e) Environmental Health

Vivian Zeng reiterated that there are no outbreaks at any grocery store in Wellesley. This is in response to a complainant who went to Roche Bros.' Customer Service Department, demanding to know the number of positive cases of staff. The complainant wanted a type of dashboard of the number of active cases of employees in local businesses. Ms. Zeng said this was not possible and redirected the caller to what is most important to shoppers, including masking, social distancing and hand hygiene.

Marcia Testa Simonson said it would be illegal to disclose that type of information as it breaks HIPAA law. She agreed that it is more important to follow mask, distancing and handwashing protocols.

Dr. Shira Doron said there is confusion about the manager's responsibility; s/he may think it is her/his responsibility to provide information about positive cases. At her place of employment, they have begun using deliberate language and clearly state they should not announce if there is a case in their department, and in fact, it is illegal to do so. They reiterate any and all close contacts to the case have been contacted.

Jessica Cliff reported she has been working on housing issues involving sewage back-up and clean-up. She also responded to a concern at JP Licks; that construction next door may have impacted the food quality at JP Licks, producing a strange flavor. Ms. Cliff ordered them to throw out their food.

Leonard Izzo reported the Health Department has begun receiving requests from agencies wishing to hold summer camps. Mr. Izzo stressed this is not a priority at this time. He said policies related to summer camps may be changing. Mr. Izzo stated the definition of camps has changed to allow for those wishing to offer camps during February and April school vacation weeks. Vivian Zeng said review of medical records and other documents needed for camp approval is a strain on the nurses, who are already at capacity conducting contact tracing.

Ms. Zeng provided an update about youth sports, noting she received a field permit request for intertown games and lacrosse. Ms. Zeng said the BSI complex is looking into changing their turf to a semi-indoor turf (indoor basketball turf). She noted that Needham High School's closure of in-person learning because of a high number of positive cases, has affected Wellesley because of the increase in close contact tracing.

Dr. Doron reported on an opinion piece in JAMA, stating that school education is more important than sports, bars and restaurants. She noted that some say it is important for a child's mental health to engage in sports.

John Lanza questioned whether fees for the permitting process for sports and camps, which is radically different today, and involves more staffing

resources, could be increased. Mr. Lanza inquired whether there are specific programs that are stressing the department because of their requirements and associated responsibilities, such as contact tracing.

f) Advisory Committee

Shepard Cohen reported the Board will present its budget to the Advisory Committee on February 24, 2021.

John Lanza requested the Board provide an executive summary.

Shepard Cohen said the Board will provide information to the Advisory Committee on two social services/behavioral health areas: 1) a report on the enhanced town-wide services, including the hiring of the senior community social worker and the second full-time social worker, as recommended by the now defunct inter-departmental Mental Health Task Force, and 2) a summary of services provided by Human Relations Service under the Health Department contract. Mr. Cohen said information on mental health issues related to the pandemic will be included.

This meeting was adjourned at 12:37 p.m.

The next meeting of the Board of Health is scheduled on February 1, 2021, 12:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Cheryl Lefman

Community Health Coordinator