

Wellesley Board of Health  
Remote Meeting via Zoom  
Meeting Minutes  
February 24, 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:

Wanda Alvarez, LSW, Community Social Worker  
Jessica Cliff, MHA, Environmental Health Specialist  
Deadra Doku Gardner, MS, Administrator  
Leonard Izzo, MS, RS, CHO, Director  
Cheryl Lefman, MA, Community Health Coordinator  
Ann Marie McCauley, RN, Public Health Nurse Supervisor  
Joyce Saret, LICSW, Senior Community Social Worker  
Vivian Zeng, REHS, RS, CP-FS, Senior Environmental Health Specialist

In attendance:

Shira Doron, MD, Resident  
Beth Sullivan Woods, Member, Select Board  
Lloyd Tarlin, MD, Resident and former board member

The meeting was called to order at 12:05 PM

Meeting minutes were approved for the following date: February 17, 2021

1. Community Health
  - a) COVID-19 Update

Ann Marie McCauley provided a COVID-19 update. There have been ten new cases since Monday afternoon. This increase is most likely a result of February school vacation activities.

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

At the last Board meeting, Dr. Lussier re-stated the need for teachers to be vaccinated to go full in-person teaching, and hopes they can receive their first shot in March. He stated the first dose is essential in the WPS reopening plans. Dr. Lussier reported on new guidance issued by CDC, which maintained the requirement of six feet of physical distancing. He said that even at three feet, not all students could go back to full in-person.

Shira Doron reported on CDC guidelines released on February 12, 2021, which surprised the medical community (and were not well received). Dr. Doron spoke before the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) on Tuesday, highlighting the science of the vaccine and research that has been done on transmission. Dr. Doron also testified before the Board of Education on how the science supports reducing the six-foot rule in school to three feet. A letter has been sent letter sent to DESE supporting the three feet rule by the medical community. Residents, parents, and teachers need to have a better understanding of the protocols for what is safe for students in school buildings. Dr. Doron stated there is an educational deficiency, and a need for constant and consistent messaging among the school community. Families need to be educated on any changes taking place in the school as well changes instituted by DESE and the Board of Education.

Dr. Doron said she has offered multiple times to present an educational program for the teachers and faculty of the Wellesley Public Schools. Dr. Doron reported that there has been no interest. She stressed the importance that the community understand that there has not been one case of virus transmission from a teacher to a student. She elaborated on the notable increase in mental health issues of school age children and thus the importance of getting children back to the classroom. She said the Education Commissioner will eventually take remote and hybrid learning hours off the table for satisfying required annual school hours, and that this type of classroom time will no longer count towards the mandated education time for schools.

Beth Sullivan Woods reported on the Wellesley School Committee meeting held last night. Wellesley teachers want to be vaccinated before they go back to school. She said the Committee is sending a point of view letter to the Governor's office prioritizing the teachers in the vaccination line. Ms. Sullivan Woods reported it is important for someone to talk to the teachers about what the vaccine will do for them. Vaccine is the most protective measure we have. The vaccine may protect not only the recipient from the virus, but also those around the recipient. The first dose

of the vaccine appears to be between 85 – 90% effective depending on the particular vaccine (Pfizer and Moderna) administered.

Marcia Testa Simonson reported that the Board of Health should draft a letter stating its position based on the science. Dr. Doron has offered to draft a statement.

Shepard Cohen will be contacting Linda Chow to gather a group of mental health professionals to discuss how to leverage and expand upon existing mental health resources to meet the student mental health challenges.

Linda Oliver Grape suggested that the Board of Health obtain local data on mental health issues from the Director of Human Relations Services, Mark Kline.

#### c) COVID-19 Vaccine and Clinics

Leonard Izzo reported that the Johnson and Johnson vaccine is likely to be approved by the FDA. It was not officially approved until February 27, 2021. This is a one dose vaccine.

Marcia Testa Simonson reported on the various operating clinics and appointment availability around the Commonwealth since vaccine became available for those over 65 and those with two comorbidities. The current concern is that 60,000 residents have been able to secure vaccine appointments in the age group of over 65, however those over the age of 75 years old have had difficulties obtaining appointments. She stressed that for local public health, the over 75 population should be the priority, since they are the most susceptible population. The Commonwealth has opened the flood gates so they can get to Group 3 quickly. It is called targeted mitigation strategies.

Dr. Doron commented on the messaging to "flatten the curve" since March 2020 in order to avoid overloading hospitals because of elevated rates of people needing to be hospitalized - flattening the curve means slowing the spread of this virus over time. In this scenario, efforts are made to flatten the curve so as to have hospital beds available.

Leonard Izzo reported on the DPH call of yesterday highlighting various clinic operations and their vaccine dosage would use supply and not dosage scenarios. He provided an example of the possibility of an individual being provided a first dose at one location, and then the same location may not be available to administer a second dose.

Ann Marie McCauley reported on the clinic that was offered at the Health Department yesterday. The clinic, which served approximately 18 residents, ran smoothly.

d) Social Services/Mental Health

Joyce Saret commended the Council on Aging on assisting seniors with obtaining vaccine appointments. She said residents are concerned that they are unable to get appointments.

Ms. Saret reported that many parents of school age children remain concerned about their children not being in school full-time and the resulting deleterious effects.

Ms. Saret reported that she, Wanda Alvarez, and Jessica Cliff are working with Cheryl Lefman to update the mental health resources guide on the Health Department website.

2. Environmental Health

Leonard Izzo reported the staff is working on updating the Tobacco and Nicotine Delivery regulations. A draft will be forwarded to the Board before the March 3<sup>rd</sup> Board meeting for review. Before there is a Board of Health vote on the regulations, Mr. Izzo will post the information in local newspapers, giving residents and impacted businesses a chance to attend board meeting and provide their feedback.

Leonard Izzo and Vivian Zeng also reported minor changes have been made to the Food Establishment and Body Art regulations.

Vivian Zeng reported there has been increased interest in microblading.

3. Administration

a) Budget Update

The Board of Health will be presenting their budget to the Advisory Committee this evening, Wednesday, February 24, 2021.

Marcia Testa Simonson reported that she was able to reduce the budget increase (FY22 over FY21) to 14%.

The Board of Health approved and voted on the FY22 Budget.

b) Human Resources Board

Linda Oliver Grape and Shepard Cohen will be presenting a request to the Human Resources Board.

As posted in the Human Resources Department agenda (<https://wellesleyma.gov/AgendaCenter/ViewFile/Agenda/02242021-4938>) staff have been unable to use vacation time during the FY21 fiscal year due to the pandemic.

c) Emergency Preparedness

Lenny Izzo reported on a webinar regarding Emergency Preparedness funding thru the FY 2022 budget period. The requirement includes a series of mass vaccination drills, annual dispensing site drills, two table-top exercises to demonstrate abilities, and a full-scale emergency preparedness exercise; all of which the Department has been doing since 2001. Mr. Izzo reported that the Department will have to sign on to this, however he questions the reasoning. Marcia Testa Simonson reported that this is the usual appropriation, and it was facilitated by the state's COVID command. Dr. Testa Simonson noted that what occurred this year is novel and unique.

This meeting was adjourned at 1:26 p.m.

The next meeting of the Board of Health is scheduled on March 1, 2021, 12 noon.

Respectfully submitted,

Deadra Doku Gardner

Administrator