

Wellesley Board of Health
Remote Meeting via Zoom
Meeting Minutes
March 3, 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, 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 Nursing Supervisor
Joyce Saret, LICSW, Senior Community Social Worker
Vivian Zeng, REHS, RS, CP-FS, Senior Environmental Health Specialist

In attendance:

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

The meeting was called to order at 11:34 AM

Meeting minutes were approved for the following: February 24 and March 1, 2021.

1. Community Health

a) COVID-19: Community

Ann Marie McCauley reported that in the last two days, there were 19 new positive cases in the community and 8 positive cases at Babson College. Ms. McCauley believes that this increase may be indirectly related to the February school vacation week. The cases are reflective of both community and household spread.

Dr. Shira Doran reported that Tufts Medical Center is reporting the same number of hospitalizations in March as in February, with no decrease.

b) Covid-19: Babson College

Linda Oliver Grape reported that she is concerned about Babson College and the upcoming spring break. There was discussion regarding whether the break could be cancelled and what safety precautions could be put into place to prevent additional spread of COVID-19. She said that additional surveillance would be beneficial following students return to campus. Leonard Izzo reported that he and Ann Marie McCauley will be speaking with the College administrators.

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

Shepard Cohen reported that the Board of Health has agreed to take an advisory position as the schools plan a move to full in-person learning. Dr. Shira Doron and Dr. Marcia Testa Simonson have been working on a position paper that reduces the school distancing requirements from six feet to three feet. An executive summary will reference a separate document that outlines the science behind the change, as well as the mental health and social benefits of children returning to the classroom.

Leonard Izzo reported on newly released information that teachers and school staff (including grades K -12 faculty and childcare staff) have been moved up in the State's eligible group to be vaccinated beginning March 11, 2021. Mr. Izzo said that although this group will be eligible on March 11th, there is limited vaccine available and few appointments; it will be sometime before there is adequate vaccine for teachers to obtain their first dose.

Marcia Testa Simonson noted that this change in eligibility competes with the remainder of the groups (65+, co-morbidities) in the current Phase. She noted there are approximately 300,000 educators and school staff in the state and the state is only receiving 60,000 doses a week.

d) COVID-19 Vaccine and Clinics

Ann Marie McCauley reported that the Housing Authority clinic for seniors is scheduled for Friday, March 5, 2021.

Mr. Izzo said the Johnson and Johnson (aka Janssen) vaccine was sent to hospitals, but additional supply won't be available until the last week of March, or first week of April.

Dr. Doron reported that Tufts Medical Center will begin vaccinating with the Janssen vaccine on Thursday. She said the vaccine only requires regular refrigeration, but once the five-dose vial has been punctured, it must be used within two hours, thus making the logistics of moving it

from place to place challenging. This vaccine is 100% effective against hospitalization and death. It cannot be compared to the Moderna and Pfizer vaccines, as they were studied at different times.

Leonard Izzo and Ann Marie McCauley reported on the State's developing homebound vaccination plan, noting there are issues that need to be addressed.

Marcia Testa Simonson reported there continues to be delays in PrepMod scheduling.

Dr. Doron provided CDC guidelines (not in writing yet) on whether a fully vaccinated individual must quarantine after being exposed to a COVID positive individual. Fully vaccinated individuals do not need to quarantine (as long as it has been at least two weeks since they were fully vaccinated). In addition, fully vaccinated individuals do not need to be tested. MDPH has yet to adopt the CDC recommendations.

Dr. Doron reported that Massachusetts has not yet changed the travel guidelines.

Dr. Doron reported that in Israel, individuals do not need to use the card that comes with the vaccine. They scan a QR code and present their vaccine information at public locations. This is called a green passport.

e) Social Services/Mental Health

As noted at previous meetings, Shepard Cohen is gathering a group of mental health professionals to discuss how to leverage and expand upon existing mental health resources to meet students' mental health challenges. The meeting has been scheduled for March 19, 2021.

Beth Sullivan Woods provided clarification on Human Relations Service (HRS) resources available to the community. HRS provides ten hours of free services to those in the community who have been subject to racism or discrimination.

f) Marijuana Dispensaries

Beth Sullivan Woods reported that she has been contacted by Wellesley residents expressing concern that Natick is actively looking at applications for marijuana dispensaries. Public hearings are planned to discuss a location close to the Wellesley/Natick line on route 9.

2. Environmental Health

a) Tobacco Regulations

Leonard Izzo reported that a draft set of regulations will be reviewed at an upcoming board meeting. The regulations will be voted on at a later meeting, after the public notice has been posted in the Townsman.

b) Babson College

At the last meeting, Vivian Zeng reported on Babson's plan to have their annual Spring Day event, which includes food trucks and games.

At today's meeting, Leonard Izzo reported that he will be discussing student activities with Babson as they continue to request permitting of expanded social activities on campus. Mr. Izzo said they would like to have a "beer and wine tasting" on campus. Vivian Zeng noted that this was presented as a class, however it is not a one-time event and they intend to hold the event monthly. The Senior Week is called Senior Picnic however details indicate that this is a large-scale event.

Leonard Izzo reported that the Health Department cannot issue permits for social events unless the number of COVID cases are reduced. Mr. Izzo will be contacting the College in regards to their elevated case count and to further discuss these events.

Beth Sullivan Woods reported that she is not aware of Babson College coming before the Select Board requesting permitting. Vivian Zeng reported that she has been in contact with the Select Board office and that the College requested a liquor permit.

3. Administration

a) Emergency Preparedness

Leonard Izzo reported on the Region 4AB Coalition meeting, noting that they voted not to concur on the PHEP budget/plan. They are using this as way to send a message to the State regarding the exclusion of public health in the vaccination rollout; ultimately ignoring 20 years of emergency preparedness planning and training, instead opting for a brand-new plan.

b) Executive Session

The Board of Health moved into executive session at 12:25 p.m.

The next meeting of the Board of Health is scheduled on March 8, 2021, 12 noon.

Respectfully submitted,

Deadra Doku Gardner Administrator