

Wellesley Board of Health
Remote Meeting via Zoom
Meeting Minutes
March 3, 2022, 10:00 a.m.

Present:

Board:

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

Staff:

Deadra Doku-Gardner, MS, Administrator
Leonard Izzo, MS, RS, CHO, Director
Cheryl Lefman, MA, Community Health Coordinator
Joyce Saret, Senior Community Social Worker
Vivian Zeng, REHS, RS, CP-FS, Senior Environmental Health Specialist

In attendance:

Ashley Hulme, Director of Nursing, Wellesley Public Schools
Catherine Mirick, School Committee, Wellesley Public Schools
David Lussier, Superintendent, Wellesley Public Schools
Beth Sullivan Woods, Select Board

The meeting was called to order at 10:05 a.m.

The Board approved the meeting minutes dated February 9, 2022, and February 17, 2022.

Chair report

Shepard Cohen reported that he will be participating at the Wellesley Club town Affairs meeting scheduled for March 14, 2022.

The Board and staff members will be attending the Wellesley Sustainability program being held this evening.

Director report

Leonard Izzo provided an overview of COVID related changes within the state and locally. Mr. Izzo reported that the number of positive cases has dramatically reduced in recent weeks.

1. Community Health

a) COVID update

Leonard Izzo reported on behalf of Nursing Supervisor, Ann Marie McCauley. Mr. Izzo reported that the numbers of positive cases have dramatically reduced in Wellesley. Between February 18th and March 3rd fifty-seven (57) positive COVID cases have been reported. Of these fifty-seven (57) positive cases, twenty-seven (27) are from the two colleges. Thirteen (13) cases from Babson College and fourteen (14) from Wellesley College. The remainder (16) are Wellesley residents.

b) Mask Requirements – Town Buildings

Leonard Izzo reported that effective March 7, 2022, the mask requirement for town buildings will be lifted.

c) Wellesley Public Schools (WPS) Update

Dr. David Lussier reviewed the WPS COVID-19 transition document noting that positive cases have dramatically reduced. He reported that the schools had a total of 15 cases for the week and there has not been a surge of new cases coming off the school vacation week. Vaccination rates across the school district are high.

Dr. Lussier reviewed the upcoming plan voted on by the School Committee at their last meeting. Schools are transitioning from “mask mandatory” to a “mask optional” environment for all students and staff and will become effective March 7, 2022. There will be exceptions in buildings where individuals will be required to wear masks such as in health offices and for those returning to school after a positive diagnosis. PreK students will follow the state guidance which allows parents to make the determination as to whether their child will wear a mask.

Dr. Lussier reported that with the mask mandate being lifted other restrictions will also be lifted. Lunches will transition to a more normalized indoor “pre-COVID” lunch at tables in the cafeteria. Outdoor lunches will continue to be encouraged whenever possible. Visitors and volunteers will be returning to their usual procedures. Athletics and performing arts have already returned to normal. Field trips are beginning again.

Dr. Lussier stressed that those individuals with concerns and those with medically complex situations can be discussed with the school nurse and principal as needed.

Dr. Lussier elaborated that COVID testing every Monday will continue thru the month of April. WPS has their own set of test kits that they have been providing to families as well as those issued by the Commonwealth. Schools are having the air filtration systems upgraded however water fountains will remain closed. Water bottle filling stations will remain open. Classrooms will include keeping fresh air coming thru by opening the windows. Masks will be available to students or staff should they wish to wear one.

WPS will continue to work with the health department and shall carefully monitor the COVID indicators and make any adjustments to mitigation practices as necessary.

Dr. Lussier responded to Linda Oliver Grape inquiry as to end of season sports banquets which will begin on Monday, March 7.

Marcia Testa Simonson reported that the State is looking at how to monitor the virus going forward. The Board of Health agrees that it is important to get the message out as to how monitoring in the state and community will be done. Dr. Lussier reported that there are still perceptions and concerns about students under the age of five. Shepard Cohen suggested that there be a community wide program for parents of children under the age of five.

d) Private Schools and Colleges

Lenny Izzo will contact the private schools (St John, Star Academy, Dana Hall) to inquire as to their plans to monitor covid cases in their locations.

Linda Oliver Grape suggested that Mr Izzo follow up with Babson College to determine whether they will have a testing plan for those students returning to campus following spring break.

e) Mental health

Joyce Saret gave a summary of activity noting that she and Wanda Alvarez have been very busy. Meals have been distributed in the community as a "Drop and Go" program. Both social workers are working on a few community presentations around nutrition and mental health.

Ms. Saret reported on the Sustainable Wellesley program scheduled for this evening from 7p to 8:30p tonight. The speakers are from the BU Center for anxiety disorders.

Ms. Saret reported that she is hearing residents discuss the situation in Ukraine and it is just another issue for parents to talk to their children as the anxiety levels increase.

f) Vaccine Clinics

Leonard Izzo reported that there has not been interest among residents to have additional COVID vaccine and booster clinics, however the nursing staff has put an order in for a small amount of vaccine.

g) Council on Aging – Vaccination policy and masking policy

Leonard Izzo reported that the Council on Aging (COA) Board made a policy of a mandatory vaccination policy and a mask policy. Anyone entering in the programs would have to provide proof of vaccination and wear a mask.

Beth Sullivan Woods reported that this new policy went into place yesterday. Marcia Testa Simonson inquired as to enforcement. Ms. Sullivan Woods reported that there will be an employee stationed at the front door monitoring vaccination cards and mask use.

Ms. Sullivan Woods noted that the transportation system is not subject to these policies. The Ride Program is open to all whether vaccinated or not.

h) Town of Wellesley Election

Linda Oliver Grape reported that the Town election results from March 1, 2022 are now official.

2. Environmental Health

a) Food Establishment

Leonard Izzo and Vivian Zeng reported that construction has begun at the new Pizzeria located in the former Upper Crust location. In addition, there have been plans for five new restaurant buildouts.

Vivian Zeng reported that the office park locations have plans to open and are requesting opening inspections.

Ms. Zeng reported that she is working with the high school to develop a compost program. Ms. Zeng reported on the Barton Road Community Fridge project noting that food safety is imperative should this move forward.

b) Tobacco Variance

Vivian Zeng reported that the anticipated request for a variance has come from the tobacco retailer, Blue Moon Smoke Shop. The request will be put on the next Board of Health meeting agenda.

c) Camps

Vivian Zeng reported that camp packet has been revised and is being uploaded today. Packets will be due on May 4, 2022. Ms. Zeng has reinstated a camp operator orientation which will require attendance at one of two webinars. Webinars will be 90 minutes in durations and are scheduled for March 16 and March 23.

d) Office space

Leonard Izzo reported that next step is to meet with members of the Select Board as well as the Recreation Commission to agree on a mutually agreeable space.

The Board of Health adjourned to executive session for review of contracts and to discuss human resources issues.

The meeting was adjourned at 11 a.m.

The next Board of Health meeting is scheduled for March 17, 2022, at 10 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Deadra Doku Gardner, Administrator