

Wellesley Board of Health  
Remote Meeting via Zoom  
Meeting Minutes  
March 30, 2022, 10:00 AM

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  
Ann Marie McCauley, Public Health Nursing Supervisor  
Joyce Saret, Senior Community Social Worker

In attendance:

Shira Doron, MD, Resident  
Ashley Hulme, Director of Nursing, Wellesley Public Schools.

The meeting was called to order at 10:03 a.m.

Chair report

Shepard Cohen reported that he, Linda Cohen and Joyce Saret recently met with representatives from Human Relations Services (HRS) in regard to the HRS annual contract.

Mr. Cohen reported on the recent Newton Wellesley Community Benefits meeting. He noted that the new Community Health Coordinator will be representing the health department at future meetings.

In addition, Mr. Cohen reported on the FDA and CDC announcement allowing certain immunocompromised individuals and people over the age of 50 (who received an initial booster dose at least 4 months ago) are eligible for a fourth booster. This booster expectation is to increase protection against severe disease from COVID-19. Mr. Cohen reported that the timing of the announcement is a bit controversial.

## Director report

Leonard Izzo announced that the candidate for the Community Health Coordinator has accepted the position. The start date has yet to be finalized.

## 2. Community Health

### a) COVID update

Ann Marie McCauley reported that positive COVID cases in the community are down. Ms. McCauley noted that our cases are flat and that the reporting system averages about four to five a day, half are adults, half are under the age of 18. Colleges have an increase in cases as expected as they are just returning from spring break.

Ann Marie McCauley reported that the 4th booster is available for those who are over the age of 50. Ms. McCauley reported that the nursing staff has had one clinic already where most of the residents were there for their fourth dose. Most of these individuals were vaccinated however a few were asked to return to the next clinic as not a sufficient period had passed since their last vaccine. Ms. McCauley reported that she has two additional clinics scheduled and she has plenty vaccine.

Ms. McCauley noted that the appointment program, COLOR, is not allowing people to sign up for this 4th booster and there are a few glitches in the states system.

### b) 4<sup>th</sup> COVID booster

Staff announced that the CDC and the FDA have authorized certain individuals (those over 50 years old and those that are immune compromised) to obtain a fourth booster. Both Marcia Testa Simonson and Shira Doron reported that it is highly unusual for the agencies to make a recommendation so early before the advisory committee meeting.

Dr. Shira Doron reported that the COVID vaccine is still under the federal emergency order and that this announcement is premature as the FDA vaccine advisory committee is not meeting until April 7<sup>th</sup>. She questioned why the FDA and CDC decided to announce this recommendation yesterday. At their meeting next week, they are expected to review all the data, hashing out the pros and cons. To communicate those pros and cons after their advisory meeting would allow physicians to have those nuanced conversations with their patients.

Dr. Doron reported that if the booster is offered now and there is the approval of a more effective protein-based vaccine in the meantime (against the Omicron variant which is more contagious) that the individual may be ineligible for the more effective vaccine. She further noted that consideration also has to be given to a possible future surge - should an individual have been vaccinated too early, that vaccine may be already waning. There are concerns about the timing, not the safety and the data are not clear as to who exactly would benefit most from the vaccines. Dr. Doron believes that the agencies have “jumped the gun” and “that it is not an emergency”.

Marcia Testa Simonson explained that the FDA vaccine advisory committee reviews the data and then offers their opinion and recommendations. There are three vaccine considerations that are reviewed: 1) the vaccine efficacy - does it work 2) risk benefit and 3) safety.

Linda Oliver Grape reported that it is important to continue to review wastewater and any upswings in cases which may indicate a surge.

c) Wellesley Public Schools (WPS) Update

Ashley Hulme reported on the COVID cluster coming out of the theatre production of Frozen at the Middle School. During the last several weeks there were multiple positive cases due to the event. This week the number of positive cases has reduced.

Linda Oliver Grape inquired as to families and testing. Ms. Hulme reported that over 3500 staff and students are testing on Mondays. Out of 5200 WPS staff and students, 3500 are testing. She also noted that this week the school will be distributing additional test kits to families.

Ashley Hulme reported that there have been multiple cases of flu on the rise at the elementary school level. Ann Marie McCauley reported that the department has plenty of flu and anyone interested in a flu shot should contact her.

d) Mental Health

Joyce Saret reported that she continues to work on programming.

Leonard Izzo reported that Wanda Alvarez will be working half days at the Barton Road Housing Authority.

2. Environmental Health

a) Mosquitos and ticks

Lenny Izzo reported that he is anticipating a very bad tick season. Currently there are no indicators for mosquitos.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:50 a.m.

The next Board of Health meeting will be announced.

Respectfully submitted,

Deadra Doku Gardner, Administrator