

Approved November 29, 2023

**Advisory Committee Meeting  
Zoom Video Conference  
Wednesday, November 15, 2023, 6:30 p.m.**

Wendy Paul, Vice Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. Vice Chair, Gail Sullivan, took roll call of members of Advisory in attendance.

Those present from Advisory Committee included Susan Clapham, Secretary; Wendy Paul, Vice Chair; Gail Sullivan, Vice Chair; Al Ferrer; Pete Pedersen; Christina Dougherty; Rani Elwy; David Prock; Tamara Sielecki; Hanna Bonin; Phil Jameson; Jay Prosnitz; Lucienne Ronco; and Donna Stoddard.

Absent: Madison Riley

Also in attendance were Lenny Izzo, Director, Health Department; Marcia Testa-Simonson, Chair, Board of Health (BOH); Shira Doron, BOH; Linda Grape, BOH; Deadra Doku-Gardner, Administrator, Health Department.

**Citizen Speak**

There was no one present for Citizen Speak.

**Board of Health Overview**

The BOH called their meeting to order and reviewed a PowerPoint overview of the Health Department and its responsibilities. (see link below).

**Questions**

- A question was asked about the labs on Route 9 and the BOH's involvement with those labs.
  - There has not been a recent update on the status of the labs. The Health Department interacted early in the process. The labs would need to have a biosafety committee that would review processes and the Health Department would have a role in that.
  - The pandemic created a heightened state of awareness and concerns raised about lab leaks. In reality, those situations are extremely rare with the right procedures and policies in place.
- A follow-up question was asked if there were a need for community outreach about safety issues would the Health Department be involved.
  - Yes, there will be an information session with questions and answers.
- A question was asked about noise concerns in town and whether the Health Department would be involved with regulating noise.
  - Noise is legally considered to be a nuisance if it's something that impacts the health and well-being of individuals. There are acceptable noise levels for repeated noise not to exceed 55 decibels. This hasn't been an area that the BOH has been involved with, but the BOH has the jurisdictional authority and could pass a regulation that forbids a certain type of noise as a nuisance.
  - There are two (2) issues: hearing damage, and the mental health implications of nuisance noise.
- Are there areas that the BOH has identified with gaps in services?
  - Because there are many state laws and regulations, the BOH could use additional environmental health specialists. The biggest gap is in providing mental health services, as mental health is not improving in the community. The Health Department has had

difficulty retaining employees due in part to less competitive pay rates; it is difficult to find people who have knowledge of public health laws.

- A question was asked about the Health Department's tools for communication, given the amount of information available on the Health Department's website, and given that there is interaction with other departments. How does the Health Department keep up with all of this or is there a need for more administrative help?
  - The Health Department is involved with many areas in town and the department is well respected and trusted. The department has very good relationships with all departments in town and has support for outreach to the community through public health communications and education. The department also has a Twitter account and Facebook, so it has a social media presence. The department also has a monthly newsletter and works with the Town's Public Information Officer to push out information. The Swellesley Report has also been helpful. The department is working on a survey to residents to identify those with medical needs reliant on electricity in the event there is an outage or emergency
- A question was asked about the program to place Narcan in the various town buildings and whether the Narcan program would be similar to the defibrillator program.
  - AEDs are in all town buildings. The thought was to place the Narcan next to the AED. It would be similar to a fire box. The AED boxes were purchased with a grant. There will be some community outreach as well.
  - The opioid settlement money that the state received (and will receive over the next 10 years) could be used for this. Wellesley has received over \$250,000 in opioid settlement funds.
- A question was asked about the interaction and interface between the school adjustment counselors and the Human Resource Service (HRS) 1.5 FTE contract with the schools.
  - The HRS counselors are HRS employees, and they provide direct client service in the middle and high schools. The adjustment counselors don't fall under the Health Department.
  - The adjustment counselors would refer someone if there were a clinical mental health issue. The school adjustment counselors are more restricted in the service they can provide.
- A comment was made that, with limited budgets, if the Health Department needed more funding, it would be to provide more mental health services in the schools. Since there is an HRS contract with people in place, has there been consideration to or conversations about increasing it?
  - It has not increased recently but was increased a few years ago. It is an area that is getting worse. The Surgeon General declared an epidemic of loneliness. The WHO also announced forming a world task force to combat social isolation.
- A comment was made that the schools are working hard on addressing students' lack of belonging feelings in their school.
  - HRS is also having hiring challenges.
- A follow-up comment was made that if a student needs clinical services, and that they may wait months to receive services, then it would be good to have more short-term services through HRS until long-term services can be set up.
- A comment was made that hiring and retaining experienced and qualified people has been a challenge for all departments and that it is important to find the funds to pay people appropriately. Concern was expressed over student attendance.
  - Having more money spent in smart and efficient ways is what is needed because there is a cultural problem that we can try to treat. The Health Department is trying programs that intervene at the school level. Social media has not helped, and some districts are prohibiting cell phones in schools.

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- A comment was made that 42 attorneys general throughout the country are suing Meta in federal and state courts alleging that the company knowingly created harmful features on Instagram and its other social media platforms that purposefully addict children and teens. It is hoped that money could potentially come from these lawsuits to address issues related to loneliness and addiction. Our former Attorney General was the one who secured the opioid settlement for the state of MA.
- Can some of the opioid settlement money be used to help solve these issues?
  - There are tight controls on how the money is spent. It needs to be spent on recovery resources. The department will work on a motion to be presented at Annual Town Meeting to access and spend those funds. There is more information coming and perhaps Wellesley will partner with some of the neighboring communities to jointly spend the funds in the best way possible.
- Is Narcan being placed in the school buildings?
  - The Health Department has had preliminary conversations with the head of school nursing and there will be additional conversations.
- Does the Health Department have a role in preventing sales and distribution to minors of THC and nicotine vaping devices?
  - There are nicotine tobacco regulations that cover it. The department will be discussing revising the regulations and reducing the number of available permits.
  - Vaping has increased over the last 3 years. The Health Department recently visited the high school to look at confiscated products so the department could update what the current vaping trends and devices look like; the department is working to help raise awareness for parents to see how these products are built into everyday devices. It is no longer something that looks like USB keys. For example, it could be a hoodie with the vaping unit in the tassel that looks like a string hanging from the hoodie.

### **FY25 Board of Health draft Budget**

There was a review and discussion of the BOH's draft FY25 budget and the open positions that need to be funded and filled. Previous classification adjustments were covered by the personal services dollars associated with the vacant positions. However, if the vacant positions are filled, the FY25 budget increase will be over guidelines. The previous struggles in filling positions were discussed. The BOH hopes that, with the new HR director in place and the compensation study completed, these hiring challenges will be addressed. Advisory members felt that it was premature to advise the BOH on their budget and that once the final FY25 budget was ready, Advisory would vote supportive or unsupportive on the budget.

- A question was asked if HR could put forth an article asking for a larger sum of money for increases associated with re-classifications.

The BOH adjourned their meeting at 8:08 p.m.

### **Administrative**

- Advisory members were reminded to sign up for the WPS Budget Academy.
- There will be an MBTA Communities presentation sponsored by the League of Women Voters and other groups in town on November 30, 2023, at 7:30 p.m. at the WFL library. If Advisory members have questions at the forum, they should identify themselves as Advisory members but that they are speaking as an individual.

### **Minutes Approval**

Christina Dougherty made, and Rani Elwy seconded a motion to approve the November 7, 2023, minutes.

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**Roll Call Vote**

Al Ferrer – yes  
Pete Pedersen - yes  
Christina Dougherty - yes  
Rani Elwy - yes  
David Prock – yes  
Tamara Sielecki - yes  
Gail Sullivan -yes  
Hanna Bonin – yes  
Phil Jameson - yes  
Jay Prosnitz - yes  
Lucienne Ronco - yes  
Donna Stoddard - yes  
Susan Clapham – yes

The November 7, 2023, minutes were approved, 13 to 0.

**Liaison Updates**

*CPC/Phil Jameson* – At the recommendation of Town Counsel, CPC approved a motion to engage a historical preservationist. The consultant will evaluate the anticipated \$726,000 request from the Wellesley Historical Society to renovate 323 Washington Street to determine which expenses are CPA-eligible. The request for \$20,000 for the historical preservationist will come from administrative funds. CPC presented to the Select Board (SB) a site map of the proposed North 40 conservation restriction. Who holds the conservation restriction, and the acreage are still being discussed. It was recommended that the Wellesley Conservation Land Trust hold the conservation restriction. SB is negotiating the price that CPC will pay the holder of the conservation restriction. For ATM Recreation is expected to recommend \$750,000 - \$1 million for the next phase of the MoPo project

*Library/Christina Dougherty* – provided an overview of the recent Trustees meeting: roof repairs were completed and covered under the roof warranty; positions are being filled and there is another opening; there was a discussion of cybersecurity and the need for multifactor authentication (which may pose an issue with union over equity and the use of personal phones at work). There was a discussion regarding a cybersecurity solution for the entire town. The library will be discussing this with Brian DuPont, FY25 budget will be over guideline due to cybersecurity costs if the town doesn't do a townwide solution; FY25 capital requests and the 5-year capital plan were reviewed. The Narcan installation was discussed and there will be training sessions for interested employees. The library will use state aid to install a granite bench next to the new sculpture. There was a review of fines and which ones to keep and which to abolish. They discussed having security detail on early release days to help with behavior issues with high school students. The library needs additional on-site help which the police cannot provide. The police are available if called.

*NRC/Hanna Bonin* - provided an update of the recent NRC meeting where guidelines for the FY25 budget were reviewed; amenities and field studies for parks is scheduled for 5-year planning; the 5-year capital plan was approved; the MoPo operating budget was approved; online permitting portal for parks is being worked on; dredging at Reeds Pond, Duck Pond and Boulder Brook for the winter; discussed Article 15 communication during STM as the NRC is trying to assess the risks of certain outcomes with this property. NRC asked to be on the SB agenda to discuss regarding a path forward. NRC has taken a position on the Sisters of Charity property because of Centennial Park and the desire to protect the 5 wooded acres of land. NRC acknowledges that they don't have a solution.

*CAC/Hanna Bonin* – CAC has determined that the natural gas system in Wellesley needs to be replaced due to the number of leaks and the amount of time required to repair the leaks. CAC is looked into a network geothermal heat exploration for Wellesley and whether it is viable. There are locations in Wellesley where it would work. CAC is focusing on providing services citizens through various

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initiatives and outreach for residents including energy coaching and outreach. The new website was previewed. The FY25 budget was reviewed. Article 15 was also discussed.

*DPW/Pete Pedersen* – BPW meeting update was provided. The FY25 budget was discussed. PFAS was discussed: there is confirmation that the medium in the treatment system at Morses Pond needs to be replaced (this is in the FY24 budget); there will be warrant placeholders for PFAS treatments for Longfellow and Rosemary. DPW is being very cautious as federal and state standards are not known yet. However, they are thinking about possible solutions when those standards are released. Stormwater enterprise fund was discussed, and numbers should be complete by the end of the month. The largest number is the possible MWRA connection. This is unknown in terms of actual costs due to whether the interconnection is required or if other towns will contribute to the cost.

*Schools/Donna Stoddard* – at the recent School Committee (SC) meeting the success of language program in elementary school was presented and the effectiveness of global citizenship which comes from adding languages to elementary schools was discussed; Star Academy located in the former St. Paul School wants to add 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade. SC must approve private schools in town. Class revisions and curriculum upgrades were discussed. Bullying in schools discussed; there has been a reduction from 43 to 11 bullying incidents.

*CAC/Gail Sullivan* – CAC discussed their FY25 budget and an upcoming capital request for community engagement.

*Select Board/Wendy Paul*– FMD presented to the SB and will be presenting to Advisory on December 13.

### **Adjourn**

Pete Pedersen made, and Hanna Bonin seconded a motion to adjourn.

### **Roll Call Vote**

Al Ferrer – yes

Pete Pedersen- yes

Christina Dougherty - yes

Rani Elwy - yes

David Prock – yes

Tamara Sielecki - yes

Gail Sullivan -yes

Hanna Bonin – yes

Phil Jameson - yes

Jay Prosnitz - yes

Lucienne Ronco - yes

Donna Stoddard - yes

Susan Clapham – yes

A roll call vote was taken, and the meeting was unanimously adjourned at 8:37 p.m., 14 to 0.

### **Meeting Materials** [November 15, 2023, meeting materials](#)

- Draft 11/7/23 minutes
- BOH Advisory 11/15/23 Meeting – PowerPoint
- Health FY25 Operating Request – Draft