

Town of Concord
Board of Health

Minutes of the Meeting

Tuesday, June 16, 2020
7:00 p.m.

1. OPEN MEETING

Chairman Dr. Deborah Greene introduced herself and opened the meeting by informing the public that the meeting was being held on the ZOOM platform in accordance with the Towns Policy Directive and Guidelines issued on April 1, 2020 as amended. She read a brief meeting format protocol and noted that the meeting was being recorded and would be available for later viewing on the Town's website. All Board votes will be taken via a roll call, including an attendance roll call.

Roll Call for Meeting:

Dr. Deborah Greene, present
Jill Block, present
Mark Haddad, present
Alma Healey, present
Ray Considine, present

Susan Rask, Public Health Director, present
Karen Byrne, Administrative Assistant CBOH, present

Audience:

Christopher Carmody (Zoom Host, Town Manager's Office)
Jane Hotchkiss, Select Board Liaison

2. DISCUSSION – COVID19

Update on the Phase 1 & 2 Massachusetts Reopening Plan (Restaurants and Retail, Camps, etc.)

Public Health Director Rask summarized how the Phased 2 (part 1) Reopening of restaurants was going in town. She advised that outdoor seating was allowed under the Governor's reopening plan with restrictions and that the Health Division was working collaboratively with other departments to both develop and expedite an application and guidelines for restaurants to be able to do that safely. Several restaurants including, the Ninety Nine, Woods Hill Table, Trail's End Café and Paparazzi have been opened with outside seating. She explained that each restaurant must develop a Covid19 Safety Plan based upon the industry specific guidelines put out by the State (Department of Labor Standards).

Beaches and Camps

Covid19 Guidelines for operating semi-public beaches have been issued under the Governor's Reopening Plan and staff has been working closely with all (4) semi-public beaches to ensure a compliance for a safe reopening. White Pond (Town Beach) plans to reopen with restrictive guidelines such as size limits, social distance measures marked out and face coverings. Water Quality Analysis for all beaches began

the week before Memorial Day. Public Health Inspector Gabrielle White has been closely monitoring pool re-openings and working with pool operators in advance of anticipated pool guidelines in Phase 3.

Many of the summer camps that were planning to operate in Concord in the summer of 2020 have opted not to do so due to the pandemic. Summer Camp Regulations are difficult for some to adhere to under normal circumstances, the added COVID19 required guidelines make it near impossible – particularly with the social distance and limit requirements. In many cases, it makes better sense to defer to next summer. As of now, only the Town Recreation Department and Greg Carter’s Hockey camps will be operating in town under the new restrictive guidelines.

Update on Options for Protecting Public Health at Annual Town Meeting

At the May meeting the Board recommended that PHD Rask reach out to the Town Moderator and Town Manager to go on record stating the importance that it and the Public Health Director be involved in providing input to the public health measures taken for Town Meeting after not being included to do so initially. Since that time, Ms. Rask informed the Board that she and Town Moderator Carmen Reiss had been in touch and were continuing to review several scenarios for Town Meeting but that nothing had been decided to date and that it was unlikely it would be held before the fall.

Select Board Liaison Jane Hotchkiss noted that the under the state law, the Town Moderator only has authority to continue (suspend) for thirty days (30) from its last continued date (and had done so through) June 29, 2020. Ms. Hotchkiss said it was likely that until such time a meeting can be held safely, the Moderator would continue to declare additional recesses and continuances.

Dr. Greene wanted to ensure that the Board of Health was not caught flatfooted and would have sufficient time to review the protocols that would be in place regardless of the forum. She said the Board would likely need more than several days to discuss and comment on safety protocols.

PHD Rask assured the Board that its message to be included as the Public Health entity for the Town had been received and it would have ample time to review the COVID19 protocols in advance of the meeting. Ms. Rask and Ms. Hotchkiss felt confident that the meeting would not be held in July.

Update on Police Officers Appointments as BOH Agents during Covid19 Pandemic

At the May meeting, the Board voted to approve the appointment of Police Officers as Health Agents while the State of Emergency remained in effect or until otherwise determined unnecessary by the Board of Health and Town Manager Stephen Crane officially appointed them. PHD Rask advised the Board that to her knowledge it had been going well and she had not received any negative feedback. She explained that they had mostly been policing public areas encouraging and educating residents and others to adhere to the face covering and social distancing protocols.

Phased Reopening – miscellaneous items

PHD Rask informed the Board that she was sitting in on the Health and Safety Group developing guidelines on how best to reopen the schools in the fall within the framework of the Governor’s reopening plan. Because the State guidelines are fluid due to the ever changing Covid19 cases it has been increasingly challenging to determine the best way to get them opened and students back into some type of normal education routine. As the process continues, she will keep the Board apprised.

Many daycare facilities are also holding off until the fall to determine how they will reopen. Ms. Rask noted that the only two she was aware of with an anticipated opening date on June 29th were Concord's Children Center and the Milldam Nursery School. Board member Jill Block stated that she had heard the State had already changed the guidelines for daycare facilities twice since issuing them. Ms. Rask said that juggling the daily changing guidelines/policies continued to be one of the biggest challenges for all local health departments and that it was extremely frustrating. She explained that often times the guidance is ambiguous at best "...wear a mask...unless you cannot" OR "...maintain six feet of distance...unless you cannot" – to that she closed by saying we are all doing the best we can do in the best manner we can do it to help folks stay safe.

3. BOARD CALENDAR & MINUTES

The next regularly scheduled meeting for the Board is Tuesday, July 21, 2020. It will likely be held on the Zoom Platform and information will be sent to the Board accordingly.

The minutes from the meeting of May 8, 2020 were reviewed and discussed. Jill Block moved to APPROVE as written. Alma Healey seconded it. All VOTED in favor. Roll Call for the Vote (Block, Healey, Haddad, Considine, Greene – YES; Motion carried 5-0).

4. BOARD MEMBER REPORTS

Chairman Greene briefed the Board on a potential pilot Covid-19 Testing study to determine the town's immunity to the virus. Dr. Greene said that Concord resident Eric Schnaudig initially approached Emerson Hospital Serology about the possibilities of testing 500-1000 Concord residents to see where the virus stood in Concord and offered his fundraising capabilities to fund the project. Since that time, Dr. Greene said that it had evolved to trying to join up with the Harvard School of Public Health and become part of that effort. At this time, she explained that the effort had support from hospital administration and tentative support of Town Manager Stephen Crane and PHD Rask. It is a work in progress but if Concord could be a model to get it up and running, she said the serology testing data would really be able to tell the community how well it was doing as it related to Covid-19 immunity. She said it would be free information to benefit public health as a whole with concrete public health data the hospital and Town could utilize.

Jill Block wanted to give a kudo and plug for the efforts of Open Table (Food Bank located in Maynard, but serving Concord, Sudbury, and Acton and others as well) for maintaining service and assisting more than two times its normal clientele during the pandemic. She wanted to let people know that it has the capacity to assist more families or households and suggested members go onto the website and pass the information along. Dr. Green suggested she reach out to School Superintendent Laurie Hunter because she was certain there were families/households that could use the assistance with people out of work.

5. MISCELLANEOUS

Chairman Greene noted that Select Board member and staff had forwarded an email chain from Mr. Mark Gailus, 62 Prescott Road stating that if Public Works does not delay the water main construction project on Prescott Road then he would like the Board of Health to make a formal request for CPW to at a minimum take special measures to reduce stress and other negative impact on the health of him and his wife and neighbors during construction but particularly during the pandemic. The Board also reviewed correspondence from CPW Director Alan Cathcart responding to Mr. Gailus' concerns.

Dr. Greene said she thought Mr. Cathcart's response was appropriate and expressed her reluctance for the Board of Health to weigh in on other department's projects. She understood and sympathized with the residents but from a public health perspective in her opinion - it was better for contractors to start earlier in the summer months due to the heat.

Board members Block and Healey concurred; they felt it becomes a very slippery slope to mandate how other departments operate or run their projects. Both recognized the homeowner challenges but felt Mr. Cathcart did a good job outlining the ripple effects of postponing projects and explaining the measures in place to assist in abating some of the concerns.

Ray Considine inquired whether the Health Department staff was routinely asked to provide input to these types of projects and how long they expected the project to last. PHD Rask said not unless there was a complaint or specific input was needed. Ms. Rask would have to defer to CPW for the length of time for this section of the project but that she was aware this is multiyear project that had been planned for several years.

Mark Haddad agreed with Dr. Greene and other Board member's assessment in that it was inconvenient and noisy but it hopefully would be short lived. He noted that Mr. Gailus was on the Zoom Call and may want to speak specifically to the issue.

Mark and Tanya Gailus expressed concerns about proceeding with this type of project during the pandemic stating that it would have a detrimental impact to their overall health. He stated that due to the Covid-19 State Guidelines/Advisories (over 65, vulnerable health groups) he and several of his neighbors are advised to work from home because of the virus and in his opinion to add anticipated dust and noise would create additional stress and trauma. Mrs. Gailus asked the Board to require CPW crews and contractors to start at 8 am or 9 am or if that was not possible, to restrict the time the trucks could be started and left idling before commencement of the day's work. Mr. Gailus stated that the residents of Prescott Road had been traumatized by the effects of several large tear down and rebuild construction projects over the past few years and that Covid-19 added another layer of stress and now the added disrupt of the road project – he said it was a lot to handle.

After several minutes of discussion, Dr. Greene reiterated her reluctance to weigh in on the start/stop times of CPW construction projects as well as restating her opinion that earlier start times in the summer were better for the workers and their health had to be considered as well. Although she was not dismissing the Gailus' concerns, the project had an end date and both CPW and the contractor would need to adhere to specific Covid19 guidelines to proceed and felt they would be highly motivated to comply considering the shutdown and not working. Dr. Greene said that the Covid-19 pandemic has affected every single aspect of everyone's life and she appreciated the Gailus' bringing this item to their attention. She said every task from grocery shopping, to taking a walk, schools, religious services and construction projects all had to be looked at differently and additional safety steps adhered to in proceeding. She suggested keeping an eye on the project and if anything relating to noncompliance came up, the Board could take another look.

No further action was taken.

6. STAFF REPORTS

PHD Rask provided the Board with a copy the slide presentation by MDPH of the 2020 Arbovirus (EEE/WNV) Surveillance and Response plan for its review. She noted that the State is updating protocols for initiating communication between camps, schools and sports organizations promoting the use of insect

repellent as well as adding additional trapping locations to expand surveillance, etc. She noted that it was expected to be another challenging year with both EEE/WNV but felt the State was taking good measures to remain on top of it and had learned a lot from last year's difficult summer/fall.

Board members asked whether staff should reach out to the Athletic Directors to inform them of what the State is thinking and to anticipate closings, etc. if the mosquito borne illnesses increase. Ms. Rask stated that at this point in time due to the Covid-19 pandemic no one knows what organized sports will look like in the summer or fall and it was highly unlikely they would operating in the same manner or frequency as last summer but she would forward the information.

Mark Haddad recommended that the Health Division provide the information as a public service announcement or on the web encouraging the use of bug spray particularly with more and more people socializing outside and outside dining as the likely operating plan for restaurants. He noted that some restaurants in Maine offer packets of repellent while customers are waiting in line.

Administrative Assistant Karen Byrne reminded the Board that the Concord Business Partnership had invited it to meet with them in person under the tent at Verrill Farm (social distance measures in place) at its next meeting. Greg Higgins, Chairman was on the call and said the Partnership was interested to discuss the types of issues the Board was facing – Covid-19 and all the many other issues it addresses. He said it was a friendly forum to get to know each other over a scone and coffee.

7. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at approximately 8:30 p.m. (Roll Call to Adjourn the Meeting: Block, Healey, Haddad, Considine, Greene – YES. Motion Carried 5-0)

Board of Health
Signature Page – electronic approval for the

Minutes of the Meeting
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Minutes of the meeting approved at Board of Health meeting on 8/16/20 – Via Roll Call Vote (Greene, Haddad, Considine, Healey, Block 5-0).

Respectfully submitted by,

Karen M. Byrne

Karen M. Byrne, Administrative Assistant
Concord Board of Health

Dr. Deborah Greene, Chairman
Mark Haddad, Esq.
Jill Block
Alma Healey, RN
Raymond Considine