

JOHANNA RAVENHURST, Chair
TONY JUDGE, Vice-Chair
KAREN WALSH PIO, LICSW, LADC 1, Clerk
JESSICA COLLINS
CHRISTINE MCKIERNAN, MD

SHARON D. HART, Public Health Director

Board of Health Minutes

August 3, 2021

As Approved – September 28, 2021

Present: Johanna Ravenhurst, Chair; Tony Judge, Vice-Chair, Karen Walsh Pio, Clerk; Dr. Christine McKiernan, Board of Health Member; Sharon Hart, Public Health Director; Jennifer Jernigan, Assistant Public Health Director, Monasia Ceasar, Health Compliance Specialist

The Board of Health Meeting was called to order at 6:05 p.m. by Chair Ravenhurst.

1: Announcements and Open Forum:

Chair Ravenhurst verified there were no memos left on the google forum. She checked if the office had anything to share or bring forth. Director Hart mentioned there was a condemnation that needed to be ratified. Electric light informed the department of a shut off at 33 Spring St Apt B. The apartment was condemned. The occupant provided payment and power has since then been restored. Tony Judge questioned if SHELD is how the department typically learns that a dwelling has no power. Hart responded that the department learns about shuts offs through SHELD, the fire department, the water department, and/or by conducting inspections. The utility companies make attempts to work with the occupant to provide payment and only do shut offs if no efforts are being made to pay.

Chair Ravenhurst said she would accept a motion to ratify the condemnation. Dr. McKiernan made the motion and Judge seconded it. A roll call was taken.

Tony Judge: Aye

Dr. Christine McKiernan: Aye

Karen Walsh Pio: Aye

Johann Ravenhurst: Aye

2. Old Business:

(A) Board of Health Member Roles

Chair Ravenhurst suggested starting with the Master Plan. To her understanding, the Master Plan was still being reviewed by the Planning Board. The spreadsheet provided to the Board highlights the Board

of Health's responsibilities. She wanted to open the floor to a discussion now that the Board had an opportunity to review the material.

Dr. McKiernan shared her initial impression after reviewing the spreadsheet. She felt as though the appointed tasks were a lot to ask of a volunteer group who meets for a fixed amount of time per month. She suggested breaking up the responsibilities into feasible tasks. These could be pre-determined by prioritizing tasks that aligned with the Board's goals or by picking items that align with the Board's interest and areas of expertise.

Director Hart mentioned she had met in the auditorium and reviewed the requests made in spreadsheets. Some of the objectives have already been met. The department has instituted municipal water regulations and is currently working to identify which fixtures need testing. Another task from the Master Plan was getting message boards to the town, which has been done. Hart believes it is important to analyze each appointed task and determine the status of completion. If there are areas of deficiencies, the Board can determine the necessary measures to complete them.

Tony Judge questioned how much effort has been placed on mitigating the COVID-19 pandemic and the impact it has had on the department's ability to work on regularly appointed tasks. Director Hart shared that the majority of the department's effort was geared towards COVID-19 related work. When the case numbers were decreasing, the office was able to focus more attention on regular duties such as septic, housing, and food. She reiterated the need to review and identify the status of each appointed responsibility.

Karen Walsh Pio mentioned she had reviewed the spreadsheet and needed clarification on whether the Board is expected to curate answers to the requests listed in the spreadsheet. If so, she would need specification on what type of data the Board of Health should be sharing. Director Hart agreed that additional guidelines are needed as to what kind of data is desired, as the department currently shares data with various outlets. Walsh Pio questioned where the requests come from. Hart confirmed that the requests are deliberated and confirmed amongst the Planning Board. She suggested that maybe the Planning Board is requesting environmental data. In that case, the department has filed for a grant for air sensors from the DEP to test the air quality. The information collected could be shared. Typically, Hart has met with the Board to discuss the requested tasks and the work that has been done in each category.

Chair Ravenhurst shared that her interpretation of shared resources included ensuring that the residents have access to available resources. This may include resources on water quality, COVID-19 vaccines, mental health support, and government assistance programs. Ravenhurst proposed that in addition to identifying focus points, the Board should also initiate a way to evaluate the developed program's

success. Each task should have an evaluation component to allow for the necessary improvements to be made to increase the efficiencies of the implemented initiatives.

Karen Walsh Pio asked how the Board will communicate when a listed task has been completed, as some of them have already done. She also questioned the Board's approach to much broader tasks that are not clearly defined, referencing the regulatory section as an example.

Chair Ravenhurst shared she was unsure of the town bylaws implemented by the department. She suggested that the Board review the past bylaws and see if there are any gaps or areas that need additional regulations. Hart directed the Board to the E360 section on the town website, where all of the town bylaws are compiled. Ravenhurst mentioned she had reviewed them and got the impression that they were based upon state regulations and not the Board of Health. Hart referenced the bylaws on tobacco and floor drains as examples of bylaws instituted by the Health Department. Walsh Pio mentioned her involvement with the tobacco regulations.

Dr. McKiernan felt as though the group was getting off topic, and believed the original thought was focused on who makes the agenda and how discussion topics are chosen. Are they pre-chosen by the town Health Department, DPH, or resident concerns? The global tasks listed in the Master Plan were very general and overarching. The Board should identify feasible tasks with clear goals. She also mentioned the importance of distinguishing the difference in roles between the Board of Health and the Health Department. Chair Ravenhurst mentioned she was hoping to gain more insight on how to create an agenda that was aligned closely with the Board of Health's goals and increase the Board's productivity. Recently, Dr. McKiernan proposed helping the School Committee with a COVID policy for the reopening of the schools. This could aid in creating stronger partnership with other town sectors and departments.

Chair Ravenhurst expressed that the broadness of the items listed on the Master Plan creates room for flexibility and tailoring of the Board's initiatives. Walsh Pio recalled the Drug and Alcohol's involvement in the prescription take back program and the effort it took to implement it. At the time, residents were mishandling unused prescriptions, including flushing them down the toilet and there was the illegal consumption of prescription drugs by minors. This posed a potential hazard, as the prescriptions can get into the ground water and cause severe health impacts. There was an annual take back day at the town dump with pre-registration requirements, that did not quite meet the needs of the town. Eventually, an intensive prescription drop box program was implemented. Hart mentioned she had to collect data for five years prior to getting variance approval from the DEP to accept I and P listed hazardous wastes items. The program was developed by Director Hart to address a community need.

Hart mentioned that initiatives stem from personal interests, community problems, environmental issues, etc. The Board of Health can establish the direction of the efforts made to implement policies, regulations, and programs. Judge suggested prioritizing the items on the Master Plan based upon their practicality factor. He emphasized on maximizing the Board's efforts as they cannot do everything. Chair Ravenhurst proposed setting increasing the vaccination rates in town as one of the goals because we are still amid a pandemic. This could include sponsoring school clinics, sharing updated information, and implementing education initiatives. Dr. McKiernan suggested that the Board take advantage of everyone's strong suits and pursue goals that align with their field of expertise. Each member could lead an initiative in their preferred subject.

Chair Ravenhurst referenced her meeting with Town Administration, in which the idea of assigning liaisons to go to different community groups was introduced. She felt as though this could help reach some of the goals mentioned in the Master Plan targeting communication and working in small groups. Judge highlighted the work done associated with Chicopee Concrete and felt that reflected the Board's commitment to solving community problems. Walsh Pio mentioned her involvement in several community groups and felt as though it would be a reasonable request to require Board members to participate in other Town based groups. If made a requirement, the Board would have to outline the guidance for the official participation. Dr. McKiernan agreed participation in other community-based groups would be useful for the Board members. Participation could help build partnership and strengthen the initiatives surrounding a common goal.

Dr. McKiernan suggested that the Board set concrete goals. She proposed that each member become the point of contact for specific subjects. This included Johanna Ravenhurst as the point of contact for the Mosquito Control, Karen Walsh Pio as the point of contact for the Drug and Alcohol Coalition, Dr. McKiernan leading the efforts surrounding COVID mitigation strategies in the schools, and Tony Judge orchestrating the promotion of affiliated events and dispersing information. She suggested everyone begin work on their perspective subjects to avoid having to start from scratch at the next meeting.

Chair Ravenhurst agreed to help navigate the Town through the Mosquito Control opt-out process, if desired. She could provide relevant information to interested parties in addition to working on tick and mosquito prevention efforts. Walsh Pio vowed to be a conduit of information for the Drug and Alcohol Coalition. The Board could then identify if any areas presented need regulatory attention, or additional efforts. Judge proposed setting clear feasible goals based upon priority for the next 3-6 months.

Dr. McKiernan mentioned her interests in COVID and felt that mitigating COVID policy for the return to school should be the Board's number one priority. In addition to the return of school, she also felt that supporting student's mental health will be another imperative topic. As student's cope with the emotional and psychological toll that COVID caused with social constraints, mental health support will

be key. Walsh Pio expressed her commitment to this issue as she is a licensed clinician and has begun working on the mental health model that will be used in schools. The School Committee is aware of this issue and has begun discussion on ways to implement support for the students.

Director Hart shared that she believed the Board's efforts should be on COVID as we begin to navigate the surge in cases. Judge questioned if there is a reasonable way to target the under 25-year-old age group, as they are largely unvaccinated. Walsh Pio suggested possibly posting information about the vaccine at the Drunken Rabbit. Judge proposed having informative cards available at frequently visited establishments urging those to get vaccinated and providing locations to do so. Walsh Pio agreed that it is important to target college age students. Dr. McKiernan questioned if colleges were mandating vaccinations. Chair Ravenhurst verified that UMASS was requiring vaccinations and all international students would be given the vaccination upon arrival. Dr. McKiernan agreed that mandating the vaccine for this age group would be the best approach, as they do not have the same motivational factor as older age groups. There has also been a lot of misinformation circulating that leads to apprehension or fear about getting the vaccines. There may need to be privileges or lack thereof associated with the vaccine to encourage those who are unvaccinated to get vaccinated.

Dr. McKiernan expressed her concern with targeting the age group that is not going to college and is going straight into the work force. Judge mentioned it is possible to find and target that age group. Walsh Pio mentioned that the efforts should remain on those who are unvaccinated that reside in town. Chair Ravenhurst expressed her hopes of FDA approval for the vaccines. With FDA approval, more people may feel less apprehensive about getting vaccinated. She also proposed issuing out surveys to parents on why they have not been vaccinated or choose not to do so for their child, in hopes of being able to target those areas and increase vaccination rates. Dr. McKiernan highlighted that ages 12- 15 have higher vaccination rates than 18–19-year-olds, despite just getting clearance to get the vaccine. That age group could be targeted with education initiatives and planned mobile vaccine clinics.

Dr. McKiernan suggested that the group begin advertising the mobile vaccine van attending the September 4th fireworks. The information could be disseminated using the school newsletter, the town e-mail access group, the weekly blasts issued out by principals, and the Town Reminder. Director Hart mentioned that schools could also directly request for a mobile onsite vaccination clinic from DPH. The Board suggested utilizing the digital boards and state issued advertisements to promote the vaccine clinic being held at the September 4th Fireworks event. Walsh Pio suggested that the Board host mobile vaccine clinics at other town sponsored events to increase vaccination rates.

(B) What Health Departments Do

Chair Ravenhurst acknowledged the slideshow that depicted the Health Department's operating authorities and corresponding laws. She highlighted the inclusion of the E360 links that displayed all the

town's bylaws. In the interest of time, Chair Ravenhurst suggested going through the slideshow independently in more detail. Dr. McKiernan recognized the importance of learning the scope of responsibility within the Health Department in correlation to setting goals for the Board, but agreed it was not necessary to do so collectively.

(C) Pioneer Valley Mosquito Control District

Chair Ravenhurst began the discussion surrounding the opt-out application process by referencing the associated documents in the agenda packet. In a memo sent out by state representatives, frustration was expressed as many towns were denied the option of opting out. They believe this was based solely upon the area's risk factor of virus occurrence within that municipality. The proposed alternative mosquito management plans were not adequately considered.

Dr. McKiernan mentioned that aerial spraying was dependent on the risk level of occurrence within that town. The mitigation strategies were previously explained by the representative from the Pioneer Valley Mosquito Control District. She questioned if the Pioneer Valley Mosquito Control District was a state service being used by South Hadley. Chair Ravenhurst clarified that the Pioneer Valley Mosquito Control District is new, as they had to wait for enough neighboring towns to sign on. Towns pay a 5,000 dollar a year membership fee to get services. The services include education initiatives and trapping. There are currently two traps set in South Hadley. The mosquitoes are trapped and sent out for West Nile and EEE testing. As a new District, they are not currently offering mosquito control measures. Instead, they provide data used to indicate the risk level in the area. The risk level is dependent upon the test results, as the use of aerial spraying relies upon the occurrence rate of that area.

If towns are opposed to the aerial spraying, they may want to consider opting out for a year. The opt-out option would make them exempt from the aerial spraying for a year should an outbreak occur. Walsh Pio recalled that some towns were immediately rejected based upon their area's risk level. Director Hart mentioned that moderate to high-risk regions do not have the option to opt out. Chair Ravenhurst mentioned that in 2020 there were no EEE occurrences in the town of South Hadley. This would lead her to believe that the town would be considered low risk.

Dr. McKiernan referenced the previous presentation, in which the mitigation control strategies were explained. Aerial spraying is used as the last resort in case of an outbreak. She questioned if the opt-out option included opting out of all the services provided by the Pioneer Valley Mosquito Control District or just the aerial spraying. Director Hart mentioned that the area was not being monitored and that the town of South Hadley joined the Pioneer Valley Mosquito Control District to get data and educational services. The town pays a 5,000 a year fee from the Board of Health budget to get services. If the District expands its margin of services, the town will have to decide if they were interested in receiving those additional services at an assumed increase in cost.

Walsh Pio questioned what the course of action would be if an outbreak did occur in town. Hart replied that the state would determine the appropriate means of action. If the town chose to opt out, they would be financially responsible for executing the necessary control measures. Chair Ravenhurst mentioned if the town chose to opt out and an outbreak occurred, the town could target breeding sites and known mosquito habitats as a means of addressing the situation.

Dr. McKiernan asked for clarification regarding the opt-out option. Chair Ravenhurst replied that opting out would only make the town exempt from state aerial spraying. The town could still receive the data collection services from the Pioneer Valley Mosquito District. Director Hart suggested getting clarification on who would be financially responsible for properly managing the breeding sites and mosquito habitats within the town as well as clarifying if opting out meant the town was opting out of all the services provided by the Mosquito Control District. Dr. McKiernan highlighted the importance of getting the clear expectations of opting out and what that means for mosquito control. She understands the concerns surrounding aerial spraying but is concerned that opting out could mean the town is missing out on valuable resources and mitigation support.

Chair Ravenhurst agreed to follow up on that. She also referenced her previous work experience with the Central Mass Mosquito Control District. As an established District, they were able to provide more control services to their enrolled towns. These services included truck spraying problematic areas, ditch maintenance, tire recycling, identifying and targeting larval sites, etc. Hopefully these services will be available with the Pioneer Valley Mosquito Control District as they continue to expand. Director Hart mentioned that the Department would have to go to Town Meeting for an increase in budget to accommodate additional services. Dr. McKiernan proposed keeping this topic on the upcoming meeting agendas to gain more information surrounding the opt-out option. This will ensure that the Board can make an informative recommendation by January for next year's spraying cycle.

(D) COVID-19

Chair Ravenhurst introduced COVID-19 as it pertains to the opening of South Hadley Public Schools. Dr. McKiernan curated a letter on behalf of the Board of Health summarizing the current health and safety standards for schools. Dr. McKiernan highlighted the CDC and AAP guidelines and suggested reviewing the letter and making necessary changes, prior to sending it to the School Committee. The letter was structured as a summary of recommendations issued by professional societies opposed to recommendations made by the Board of Health.

Walsh Pio suggested clearly identifying the purpose of the notice at the beginning of the letter. Chair Ravenhurst agreed that an Executive summary should be included highlighting the intent and main points of the letter. Dr. McKiernan mentioned she wanted to be cautious of the word choice utilized in the letter.

The letter summarized the latest updates and guidance surrounding the reopening of school, excluding those issued by DESE. At the moment, the DESE guidance allows for children who are vaccinated to go unmasked. This contradicts the guidance issued by CDC and AAP. Dr. McKiernan shared her concerns with the DESE guidance. Some parents will be hesitant if not entirely opposed to sending their child to school, as their child may be susceptible to the virus if sitting next to an unmasked student. The teachers will also have a difficult time managing a classroom with both masked and unmasked students. Dr. McKiernan shied away from including the DESE guidelines into the letter as it offers conflicting data but is willing to incorporate it as a contrast. Walsh Pio also objected to including the DESE guidance into the letter as that may be controversial. She also expressed that the School Committee is directly sent DESE related correspondence and already has that material. The Board of Health is providing supplemental data. The letter compiles the available information concisely.

Dr. McKiernan questioned if the vaccination rates of South Hadley teachers was available for review. Director Hart mentioned she would have to follow up on that. That information would help determine if vaccination efforts should be geared towards faculty and staff in addition to the students and their families. Dr. McKiernan suggested including upcoming mobile vaccine clinics to be held in town in the letter. Walsh Pio agreed that would be helpful to include as it displays what the Board is prepared to do to assist in the efforts of increasing vaccination rates. Director Hart suggested offering the School Committee information on how they could directly request the mobile vaccine clinics.

Dr. McKiernan also highlighted the importance of mask wearing in schools in the letter. She referenced the Provincetown occurrence to support her claim. Although majority were vaccinated, the virus was still able to be transmitted amongst the group. This could very well be the case in schools, as majority of students are not eligible to get vaccinated. She also provided information for mask wearing on buses and implementing social distancing when possible. When mask wearing, transmission of the virus is very low even without being socially distanced.

Hand washing, staying home when sick, and getting tested were also included in the letter. Dr. McKiernan questioned if there were specific testing protocols in place for schools or should the schools defer to DPH. Director Hart shared she could provide some links with testing information. Dr. McKiernan then mentioned the quarantining guidance. The CDC guidance calls for quarantining if the exposed case came within 6 feet of other parties. However, in some states if both the exposed and index cases were masked, quarantining is only required if either party becomes symptomatic. Although helpful, Dr. McKiernan wanted to clarify that this tactic is not a formal recommendation made by the American Academy of Pediatrics or the CDC. She questioned if the group felt comfortable including it in the letter as it is the one thing not directly derived from CDC or AAP. Walsh Pio suggested adding in a clause that clearly states the claim is not CDC or AAP related prior to providing the data. If not, one may assume that it is CDC and AAP related as is the rest of the document. Chair Ravenhurst agreed that a clear distinction is needed as the letter is structured as a summary of issued guidance.

Director Hart shared that the quarantining guidance referenced in the letter was for summer programs as the fall school guidance have yet to be issued. She also shared that if a student gets exposed to a positive case, they can use Binax Now testing. It is available to schools free of charge. If asymptomatic, the student can get tested for five days and stay in school. It provides the option of keeping students in school. Dr. McKiernan agreed to include that into the letter.

Dr. McKiernan shared the screening and testing chart displayed in the memo. The chart outlined the need and frequency of screening and testing required, dependent on the vaccination and transmission rates. She also mentioned there were no specific ventilation requirements besides opening windows. There is also no need for deep weekly cleanings as the virus is not spread by surface contact. Chair Ravenhurst suggested referencing supporting documents in the letter to strengthen the claim.

To summarize, Dr. McKiernan mentioned the importance of in-person learning and the incorporation of masking, washing of hands, and staying home when sick is for prevention practices. The School Committee should also be mindful that guidance is subject to change as data becomes available.

Dr. McKiernan questioned the next course of action, as she would like to get the letter out prior to the next School Committee meeting but wants to ensure that all Board members are pleased with the memo. Director Hart mentioned the Board must agree on the changes being made and then the letter can be edited and submitted. Dr. McKiernan mentioned the areas of revision and editing as the following: inserting the related vaccine and testing links; changing the paragraph to focus on the Binax Now testing option, deemphasize the need for specific ventilation and deep cleaning, and placing emphasis on masking, personal hygiene, and vaccination as key prevention strategies. Chair Ravenhurst suggested adding in citations where necessary. Dr. McKiernan expressed her gratitude for the Board's insight and feedback on the letter. Walsh Pio proposed making a motion for the Board to accept the mentioned changes with the understanding that Dr. McKiernan will forward it to Chair Ravenhurst for a final review prior to submitting it to the School Committee. Chair Ravenhurst said she would accept such a motion. Walsh Pio made the motion and Judge second it. A roll call was taken:

Karen Walsh Pio: Aye

Tony Judge: Aye

Dr. Christine McKiernan: Aye

Johanna Ravenhurst: Aye

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The next virtual meeting was set for August 31, 2021, at 6pm. The meeting was adjourned at 8:14 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Monasia Ceasar
Health Compliance Specialist

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ATTACHMENT A

DOCUMENT	RECORD LOCATION
Letter - Pioneer Valley Mosquito Control District - Chris Craig	BOH File
2020 Mosquito Surveillance Season Report	BOH File
Areas of Operations and Authority Statutes	BOH File
Conway Application for Alternative Mosquito Management	BOH File
UMASS Amherst Aerial Spraying - Email Dated 7-2-21	BOH File
Masterplan: Goals and Objectives	BOH File
The Year in Review and a Path Forward - ABC Science Collaborative 6-30-21	BOH File