

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

September 28, 2021

As Approved – October 26, 2021

Present: Johanna Ravenhurst, Chair; Tony Judge, Vice Chair; Karen Walsh Pio, Clerk; Jessica Collins, Board of Health Member; 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 6:06 p.m. by Chair Ravenhurst.

1. Acceptance of Minutes

Chair Ravenhurst mentioned the minutes from the 8/3/21 and 8/31/21 meetings needed approval. She questioned if anyone had any corrections or changes to propose. No corrections were brought forth, so Dr. McKiernan made the motion to accept the 8/3/21 minutes and Walsh Pio second it. A roll call was taken.

Tony Judge: Aye
Karen Walsh Pio: Aye
Dr. Christine McKiernan: Aye
Jessica Collins: Abstaining
Johanna Ravenhurst: Aye

Chair Ravenhurst said she would accept a motion to approve the minutes from the 8/31/21 meeting. Dr. McKiernan made a motion, Walsh Pio seconded it. A roll call was taken.

Karen Walsh Pio: Aye
Dr. Christine McKiernan: Aye
Jessica Collins: Aye
Tony Judge: Abstaining
Johanna Ravenhurst: Aye

2. Announcements and Open Forum:

Chair Ravenhurst verified that there were no memos left in the open forum by the public and questioned if any of the members had anything to propose. Dr. McKiernan suggested the possibility of revisiting the goal and planning setting objective. As she wanted to clarify the set expectations previously mentioned regarding each member being a liaison for a specific topic. She also questioned if they were supposed to prepare material on their respective topics to be shared at the meetings. Chair Ravenhurst mentioned she was under the impression that Board members would reach out independently to get added onto the agenda.

Chair Ravenhurst asked Collins if she had a particular area of interest to pursue as she was not present during the meeting when the liaison positions were initially appointed. Collins mentioned she was interested in racism as a public health crisis and would follow up with Town Administration on the work done by the consultant. She also suggested following up on the objectives listed in the Master Plan. Chair Ravenhurst mentioned the Board discussed the Master Plan previously and have decided to focus on widespread vaccination as a part of its inclusivity efforts.

3. New Business:

(A) COVID-19 Update

Chair Ravenhurst introduced Director Hart to provide the COVID-19 update. Director Hart shared that there has been an average of 29 to 30 new cases weekly for the past month. It has stayed within that margin, leveling out to approximately 4 positive cases a day. Hart recalled the September 4th vaccine clinic held at the Fireworks and mentioned there would be drive-thru vaccine clinic hosted on October 7th at Beers and Story from 10 am- 2pm. The flu vaccine, Pfizer vaccine, and Pneumonia vaccine will be available. Walsh Pio questioned if Pfizer booster shots would be administered at this clinic and Director Hart confirmed they would be administered to eligible parties. Director Hart also recommended that people bring their original vaccination cards with them so that their new dose can be notated on their vaccination cards.

With the approval of the selectboard, Curative Labs has been administering COVID-19 testing for residents in front of Town Hall on Saturdays from 10 am- 2pm. The location is accessible as it is along the bus route. They have been averaging 40 tests a week. They have a contract with the state to administer vaccines that expires at the end of this month. Hopefully, it gets extended so that vaccine services can be offered at the testing site as well.

Walsh Pio mentioned that Pfizer boosters are widely available at both CVS and Walgreens. Director Hart confirmed that all pharmacies have the Pfizer booster shot available. Dr. McKiernan questioned the frequency of testing at the Town Hall. Director Hart reiterated that testing takes place on Saturdays from 10 am – 2pm at the Town Hall. There are hopes of getting their contract extended as they would not be able to administer the second dose before their contract expired this month. Chair Ravenhurst questioned the success of the September 4th mobile vaccine clinic at the town sponsored fireworks. Director Hart verified there were 25 participants. A following September 25th vaccine clinic was planned to administer the second dose. The coordinators opted to accommodate those who got vaccinated at the September 4th event at the Big E for their second dose instead. Walsh Pio questioned if the October 7th clinic was too late to serve as the second dose for the September 4th vaccine recipients. Director Hart confirmed it would be too late to serve the second dose, and that the October 7th clinic was a separate event.

Judge questioned the need for a booster shot for those who were given the Moderna vaccine. He also questioned the statistics on Moderna recipients compared to the Pfizer vaccine in town. Director Hart verified there was no booster for the Moderna vaccine at this time and that she was unaware of the statistics associated with the choice of vaccine in town. Judge also proposed if residents are required to bring their vaccination cards with them to get the booster shot. Director Hart recommended people to bring their vaccination cards, so that the third shot can be notated on their card. If not, those administering the vaccine can access patient information on a state database. Director Hart recalled using such database when conducting contact tracing. Hart suggested bringing your vaccination card if you were vaccinated out of state as your information would not be accessible in the database.

Dr. McKiernan mentioned that there is discussion in the medical field surrounding Moderna's efficacy rates against the Delta variant as it is a higher dose and was taken four weeks apart. The possibility of a third dose is currently being studied. There is also a study underway investigating the efficacy of pairing J and J recipients with a Pfizer booster to increase immunity. Moderna is awaiting data results to determine the need for a booster and potential FDA approval. Director Hart mentioned she has been seeing less case breakthrough with the Moderna vaccine. Dr. McKiernan mentioned this was a nationwide observation. Dr. McKiernan acknowledged the efforts being made to get residents vaccinated and believed they were moving in the right direction.

(B) Mold in South Hadley Schools

Chair Ravenhurst introduced the next topic of discussion as mold in the South Hadley Schools. Director Hart shared what she learned of the mold in the High School from watching the news. Upon finding out, Director Hart reached out to the Air Quality division at the DPH regarding completing an onsite assessment of the building. With approval from Superintendent Mosely, the state assessed the building.

Several areas of concern were identified during the assessment. These concerns included the direction of the landscape and drainage areas. An official report with findings is being curated. Director Hart asked if the state could perform assessments on all the school buildings. The state agreed to do so and is waiting to make the necessary scheduling arrangements.

DPH does not report on mold and does not advocate for mold testing. When conducting housing inspections, inspectors are not authorized to test for mold or advised to do so. Instead, the focus is placed on identifying areas of moisture and holding the responsible party accountable for eliminating the source. Examples of these sources include a leaky roof and pipe underneath the sink. The same approach was taken when assessing the High School. Officials made note of high ground water, drainage issues around the school, brick windowsills, etc. The school will be able to take the state issued report identifying areas of concern and moisture and move forward with an action plan. Director Hart felt it was important to assess and compare the other school buildings as well. The state agreed to work on scheduling those assessments while completing the assessment report on the High School.

Judge questioned if the High School was still closed. Director Hart confirmed that the High School was now open. She also mentioned that the Facilities Manager has reached out to the schools in hopes of developing a check list for buildings identifying what gets cleaned and how often. Judge questioned if it was the Health Department who notified the state about the mold at the High School. Director Hart clarified she reached out to the state as another means of resource for the school. The state has the necessary capacity, training, and knowledge to conduct thorough assessments on moisture identification. Collins thanked Director Hart for her work on this matter and questioned the frequency of when the check list would be executed. Director Hart clarified the check list had not been solidified. She sent over manuals that addressed mold in commercial settings as a reference for the schools when creating their check lists. The school custodians would create the check lists that would then be analyzed and reviewed for any additional suggestions or changes.

Dr. McKiernan expressed her gratitude for the risk assessments being done on the schools but questioned the possibility of schools being shut down based upon the findings. She experienced the negative drawbacks of the High School closure personally, as one of her children could not start in person learning after doing a year and a half of remote learning. She assumed this impact would be greater on younger students if those schools had to be closed as well due to mold. Would DPH just be identifying risk factors at the schools, or could they shut the schools down? Director Hart verified that DPH will be conducting assessments only as they do not have enforcement authority over the schools.

However, the Board of Health does have enforcement authority. If that were the case, the health of the students, staff, and faculty would have to be considered. Collins clarified that the Board of Health did not shut down the High School initially and that another governing body has the authority to shut down the schools. Director Hart verified the schools shut the High School down, although she was not sure on

whether it was the School Committee or the Superintendent who ultimately authorized the closure. Collins questioned if the assessment report will go to both the school and the Health Department. Director Hart mentioned that both would receive copies of the report, with the Health Department receiving it first. Dr. McKiernan questioned if anyone was investigating how this matter was only discovered the day before school started. If the schools were reportedly being deep cleaned for COVID precautions, how does an 800,000-dollar mold infestation take place at the High School. Director Hart mentioned this helps demonstrate the importance of why the check list is pertinent. It will help indicate what cleaning measures have been taking place and the frequency of it.

Dr. McKiernan questioned if that's something the Board of Health would be investigating or would someone else look further into that. Director Hart mentioned the Health Department conducts annual inspections of the schools. During these inspections trip hazards are identified, bathrooms are checked, exits signs are verified to be in working order, etc. This is typically done in the Fall. The check list will help identify cleaning areas. The necessary adjustments can be made to ensure it is being audited appropriately.

When assessing the schools, the State made note of the excessive rain and humidity experienced. With these conditions expected to be recurring, the state assumes issues of excessive moisture will be seen more often. It is known that the windows were left open based upon the mold type that was observed. This may have caused an issue allowing the moisture to enter the building. The assessment report will also include safe practice recommendations for the staff to follow.

Judge questioned if the School Committee informed the Health Department about the mold issue at the High School. Director Hart confirmed the Department learned about the incident from the local news. Judge asked if there were any statutory regulations requiring them to do so. Director Hart confirmed it is not a written expectation, but the Department should have been notified. Moving forward it would be a good idea to work collaboratively with the School Department to improve communication and relative procedures.

Chair Ravenhurst mentioned she had reached out to the chair of the School Committee to verify if they need any assistance from the Board of Health regarding this matter. It was confirmed that no additional support was needed at this time, while the report is being created. She also noted that this was a great opportunity for system improvements and communication efforts. Moving forward it will be important to be proactive and implement audit schedules to monitor similar situations.

Collins recalled the confusion surrounding governing authorities for municipal boards and departments during the pandemic and offered this situation as an example. She mentioned the benefits of the checklist as it will help outline clear expectations and procedures. Chair Ravenhurst noted when the

assessment report is issued, the board can review the assessment and have a further discussion on a follow up plan.

(C) Mosquito borne diseases in MA, discussion of potential opt-out of aerial spraying

Chair Ravenhurst introduced the next agenda item. She referenced supplemental links and information sheets that were provided in the agenda. She also highlighted that there have been no positive EEE cases in both human and in animals recorded in the state. However, there has been 136 positive West Nile mosquito samples detected, 1 animal case, as well as 7 positive human cases detected in the state. There has been a slight increase in risk in the Hampden County area that can be attributed to the positive mosquito samples found. This is important as Chicopee is in that county and is relatively close to town.

Chair Ravenhurst noted that she wanted to include the status of mosquito borne diseases in relation to the town. She also reached out to verify if a date had been set for the Special Fall Town Meeting. This would be when the town meeting members would discuss the opt- out option for aerial spraying. The next step to securing the topic for discussion at the Special Town Meeting would be to write a warrant and submit corresponding information to the town meeting members for consideration. Chair Ravenhurst asked the Board if there were any additional questions or requests for additional information. This information would be used to determine the risk level of mosquito borne diseases in town and issuing a recommendation on whether to apply for the opt-out of aerial spraying of the town.

Judge questioned if the Board came to a consensus on the opt- out option to issue a recommendation to the town committee members. Chair Ravenhurst responded that a discussion was had but no consensus had been made. The Town missed the deadline to apply for this year, so efforts are being made to ensure that does not happen for the upcoming year. Dr. McKiernan proposed getting Chair Ravenhurst's interpretation and personal recommendation, as this is her field of expertise. There are conflicting views surrounding this issue. Prominent people have expressed concerns about the spraying, while the presentation done by the Pioneer Valley Mosquito Control District demonstrated a different bias. Dr. McKiernan hoped Chair Ravenhurst could help the Board make sense of the data and risk associated with the aerial spraying and mosquito borne diseases.

Chair Ravenhurst mentioned South Hadley has a low risk of EEE occurrence, so she is doubtful the State would order aerial spraying for the town. Despite that, there are still many people who are opposed to the spraying. Chair Ravenhurst proposed the need for further discussion surrounding health risks associated with the pesticide used in aerial spraying. The mention of aerial spraying can cause an increased sense of fear. To combat this, a discussion on the risk level to human health is needed. Chair Ravenhurst mentioned she would do research on epidemiological studies on the human health risks

associated with spraying. She does not have a strong standpoint at this time and will continue to do research and have further discussions regarding this topic.

Judge asked if different pesticides are used to combat EEE and West Nile virus. Chair Ravenhurst clarified that the pesticide used targets adult mosquitoes and is not virus specific. For example, if cases of EEE are found in mosquito species of concern in a residential area, spraying would kill all active adult mosquitoes. This would reduce the risk of disease transmission. Currently, the Pioneer Valley Mosquito Control District only offers trapping and testing of the mosquitoes. Chair Ravenhurst proposed that the Board consider allocating funds for alternative mitigation strategies to combat potential outbreaks associated with mosquitoes. This would help provide additional support to the Town opposed to going straight to aerial spraying in the case of an outbreak.

Collins recalled the presentation from the Pioneer Valley Control District representative and questioned if the presented documents were made available to the public. Chair Ravenhurst mentioned she was under the impression they were put on the town website but was not certain if that was done. Dr. McKiernan added she does not believe information was provided because the Board did not make a distinct standpoint on the issue. Collins also mentioned that the presenter clarified that the aerial spraying does not happen spontaneously. People reached out in a panic under the impression that aerial spraying is prematurely executed, rather than being a drawn-out process with alternative means of mosquito mitigation considered. Collins requested the public receive more clarity and a distinct outline of the decision-making process.

Chair Ravenhurst noted that the state website provides a clear description and corresponding information on aerial spraying. Ravenhurst proposed that the Board consider other ways to distribute information to the public besides sharing things on the town website. Walsh Pio suggested putting information in the Town Reminder.

Dr. McKiernan acknowledged that aerial spraying is an emotionally charged issued. After hearing the presentation from the Pioneer Valley Mosquito Control District and gaining knowledge on the process and other mitigation strategies used prior to considering aerial spraying, she was reassured that aerial spraying is executed when deemed necessary. She was also reassured that the pesticide used was not the toxic chemical she had previously envisioned. McKiernan expressed she is personally not in favor of opting out as it may eliminate all preventive strategies in addition to aerial spraying. She also mentioned the importance of dispersing related information to interested parties.

Dr. McKiernan proposed the possibility of the Board coming to a consensus on a recommendation to opt out of aerial spraying or not, as she feels they have received enough information to do so. Walsh Pio shared she believes all of the steps are necessary. If this is an all or nothing proposition, she is in favor of not opting out as the other mitigation strategies used prior to aerial spraying are valuable.

Judge questioned if Chair Ravenhurst had begun writing a warrant for the Special Town Meeting. Chair Ravenhurst replied that seemed to be the next step if the Board wanted the opt-out to be considered at the next town meeting. She was unsure if the special town meeting would be held due to COVID related complications. She also mentioned that she was under the impression that opting out would not cancel the services provided by the Pioneer Valley Mosquito Control District.

Collins proposed sharing the relative information with the public. This will allow for residents to become informed on the matter, which in turn may help lower any premature fear or panic associated with aerial spraying. Constituents will be able to form and share their opinion based upon information made available. Collins suggested the Board wait to vote until they receive input from the constituents.

Director Hart shared it may be beneficial to collaborate with Christopher Craig from the Pioneer Valley Mosquito Control District to review the opt-out plan prior to submitting it to the state. If the town is deemed a moderate risk, the state is most likely to reject the plan due to elevated risk. A thorough review of the plan by a familiar figure will ensure that the created plan is efficient and effective. Hart clarified that the Pioneer Valley Mosquito Control District only provides surveillance services. If there was an interest in getting the town sprayed, a request for an increase in budget would have to be made at town meeting to secure the funding. She also noted that it was confirmed with the Conservation Department that there are no known areas of concern in town in relation to mosquito breeding, as there are no White Cedar swamps in towns.

Dr. McKiernan suggested a plan be established if the Board was going to move forward with an education initiative and receiving feedback from the public. She questioned the strategies that will be used to solicit feed back from the public as this will influence the Board of Health's recommendation to the town committee members. Collins proposed reaching out to Christopher Craig the representative from the PVMCD to retrieve any educational or informative documents that could be shared with the public. Chair Ravenhurst agreed to work with both Christopher Craig and Director Hart on drafting up an informative piece for the public that could be reviewed at the next Board meeting.

Dr. McKiernan recalled the documents that were included in the presentation given by Christopher Craig from the PVMCD. She highlighted the surveillance report and letter that depicted the PVMCD's goals and objectives. The surveillance report displayed the negative readings and would be a good document to share with the public as it represents the low risk in the town.

Director Hart shared that the surveillance reports for both EEE and the Arbovirus are on the department's website. There is also information on protective measures that can be used against mosquitoes and ticks on the page. Collins mentioned there are two veins of education associated with the topic. One being protective measures and the other being the opt-out process. She questioned if the opt-out information was made available on the website. Director Hart confirmed the opt- out

information was sent forward to Town Administration for the town's website but was not put on the department's page. Chair Ravenhurst ensured that an informative piece will be drafted up to be reviewed at the next meeting.

(D) Updates about the Drug & Alcohol Prevention Coalition

Walsh Pio shared that the coalition has recently undertaken a new initiative. The new initiative is the Safety and Alcohol Awareness Campaign that is in conjunction with Brunelle's Marina that kicked off in August. The intention behind the project was to inform boaters coming out of the marina about the impact of alcohol and boat safety. The boaters were given informative cards issued by the coalition. They were able to get good coverage that day and reached a lot of people. The river has a lot of activity and will benefit from the efforts of this campaign.

Walsh Pio mentioned a new business recently launched in the area by the name of Pedal n Party. The business offers customers the opportunity to access the river on hydro bikes. They have a policy against alcohol consumption and operating the equipment listed on their website. The river is unique to the town of South Hadley and provides the coalition with a platform to create different initiatives that meet the needs of the town.

Judge questioned who created the material distributed at the marina. Walsh Pio shared that the documents came from resources that are available to the coalition. The coalition has access to messaging created by the Drug Free Community and SAMHSA. The coordinator of the coalition was able to access this information and print up informational cards to disperse to the boaters. Judge acknowledged that the marina is a good target area as they usually have high activity levels. Collins mentioned she received an informative packet in the mail urging for participation and community involvement from the coalition. Walsh Pio mentioned promotional efforts like that are used to increase the networking and coverage in town.

Walsh Pio exited the meeting.

(E) Emergency Order to Vacate: 69 Lathrop St, Bldg. 19, Unit 8-Ratify

Jernigan mentioned that 69 Lathrop St Building 19 Unit 8 was a condemnation order. Director Hart shared condemnations are typically issued for electricity shut offs and sanitary concerns. All three of the listed condemnations were issued based upon sanitary concerns. These concerns can include hoarding, unsafe animal keeping, unsanitary living conditions. Chair Ravenhurst said she would accept a motion to ratify the condemnation order at 69 Lathrop St Building 19 Unit 8. Collins made a motion to ratify the condemnation and Dr. McKiernan second it. A roll call was taken.

Tony Judge: Aye
Dr. Christine McKiernan: Aye
Jessica Collins: Aye
Johanna Ravenhurst: Aye

(F) Emergency Order to Vacate: 64 Richview Ave-Ratify

Chair Ravenhurst said she would accept a motion to ratify the condemnation order at 64 Richview Ave. Dr. McKiernan made a motion to ratify the condemnation and Collins second it. A roll call was taken.

Tony Judge: Aye
Dr. Christine McKiernan: Aye
Jessica Collins: Aye
Johanna Ravenhurst: Aye

(G) Emergency Order to Vacate: 93 Pitroff Ave-Ratify

Chair Ravenhurst said she would accept a motion to ratify the condemnation order at 93 Pitroff Ave. Collins made a motion to ratify the condemnation and Dr. McKiernan second it. A roll call was taken.

Jessica Collins: Aye
Tony Judge: Aye
Dr. Christine McKiernan: Aye
Johanna Ravenhurst: Aye

Tony Judge questioned how the department typically learns of the unsanitary conditions in these settings. Director Hart mentioned it varies for each scenario. In this case there was a request for an inspection, a referral following a wellness check done by police, and a complaint from the police.

(4) Set Next Meeting Date-(TBD) at 6:00 pm Virtual Using Zoom

Chair Ravenhurst confirmed the next virtual meeting for October 26, 2021, at 6 pm. Chair Ravenhurst adjourned the meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 7:11 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Monasia Ceasar
Health Compliance Specialist

ATTACHMENT A

DOCUMENT

Anvil Fact Sheet

RECORD LOCATION

BOH File