

Advisory Council on Public Health | Meeting Minutes

Location:	Hybrid Denny Room, 11 Pierce Street and Virtual ACPH - January 18 Meeting Related Files
Date:	Wednesday, January 18, 2023
Time:	5:30 – 7:30 PM
Attendees:	Natalia Linos, MSc, ScD, Chair (virtual) Andy Epstein, RN, MPH Charles Homer, MD, Vice Chair Leonard Jokubaitis, MD, MPH Peter Moyer, MD, MPH, Affiliate Member (virtual) James Perrin, MD Rosemarie Roque Gordon, MD, MPH
Absent:	
Attending staff:	Sigalle Reiss, MPH, RS/REHS, Director of Public Health & Human Services John Kleschinsky, DrPH, Assistant Director, Programming & Policy Lesley Craft Archabal, PhD, Community Health Specialist (virtual) Roland Lankah, PhD, Assistant Director, Environmental Health Elizabeth Bennett, MSN, Public Health Nurse Wendy Machmuller, Administrative Support

A meeting of the Advisory Council of Public Health (ACPH) was held virtually and in person at the Health Building Denny Room on January 18, 2023. Dr. Charles Homer, Vice Chair, called the meeting to order and presided over it. All members of the Council were present.

Agenda Items

Announcements

There were no announcements.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Approval of minutes

No minutes approved.

COVID-19 Update

Nurse Bennett provides an update on COVID-19 in Brookline:

Brookline Public Schools reported 26 cases from Jan 6 – 12. Last year, during the same timeframe there were 200. There were no patterns detected otherwise.

After the holidays there was a brief spike in cases, as seen by the increase in waste water data.

Vaccination and boosters are not as high as expected and hospital admissions have decreased. As of December 18th, there was a sharp increase in flu cases, but it has since declined. On Jan 30th, there will be a COVID-19 and flu clinic at the Baker School; tentatively there will be a clinic in Feb, partnering with VaccinateRx.

Nurse Bennett answers questions from members and staff:

Commissioner Reiss asks if we continue to get registrations to the clinics. There continue to be registrations and public health staff is engaging the community through social media outreach.

Dr. Roque Gordon wants to know if there are any particular issues that the group should know about. Nurse Bennett questions why the bivalent booster rates are so low. They are getting messaging out regarding clinics. Primary care practices are backed up and unable to provide as many doses among the youngest age groups.

The group discuss the hesitancy among certain age groups, particularly youth. Dr. Roque Gordon mentions her experience with hesitant parents and difficulty persuading them to boost their children. Nurse Bennett also stresses that parents feel unsure of who they can trust. Dr. Linos suggests offering a walk-in option for clinics, but this is not an option for clinics operated by VaccinateRx.

Members also discuss the decrease in school cases and are not shocked to see the numbers down. They continue the conversation around mixed messaging being provided by public health experts around the efficacy of vaccines. There is a suggestion to look at the messaging provided by American Pediatrics. Dr. Homer adds that there is inconsistency around mask messaging.

The COVID-19 dashboard is currently under construction. Dr. Homer asks if there are any analytics available for the site. Nurse Bennett does not have the information on hand, but will check with the dashboard administrator.

Dr. Jokubaitis asks if there is any COVID-19 protocol for spring break. Nurse Bennett states that the department increases messaging prior to these types of events.

Public Health Code Book Introduction

Commissioner Reiss gives an introduction to the Public Health Code Book to set context, briefly recapping the prospective contents (referencing the one-page summary in the meeting packet).

The bio-tech consultant will be invited to the February meeting. EDAB will give a presentation.

Commissioner Reiss states she will be thinking about how to prioritize these initiatives [in the code book]. Dr. Homer asks what the Health Department is using for regulations. The department is using the state adopted FDA regulations. Commissioner Reiss further explains the ways the department implements local by-laws versus state laws.

Dr. Linos questions if schools and daycares are another place we could look at providing healthier beverages, even more so than restaurants. However, the Health Department does not have jurisdiction over daycares. The state has oversight. Dr. Jokubaitis asks if we can consider collaborating with Harvard, in setting policy, surveying Brookline Public Housing (BHA), conducting studies with academic partners to learn more about IAQ and gas burning stoves.

Ms. Epstein adds that providing education first is a good approach.

Brookline Marijuana Research Study Update

Dr. Lesley Archabal shares a power point presentation on the Brookline Marijuana Research Study. Health Resources in Action is taking the lead on the study. The goals of the study are to define impacts of marijuana and other substances, with a focus on youth and identify priority areas.

Dr. Archabal provides an overview of the research study process. At this point, the primary data collection is qualitative. The department will share this information with the ACPH and the public. They conducted a secondary data review of demographics and disparities, as well as a literature review. The primary data collection included interviews and focus groups, along with qualitative data. Additionally, they have reviewed stakeholder segments.

The roles and responsibilities of the steering committee are explained. Members of the committee are committed to ongoing engagement.

Finally, Dr. Archabal provides an overview of the project approach and timeline.

Questions:

- Should we assume we are not interviewing teams due to IRB? Commissioner Reiss responds that we will interview youth.

- What will lead them to come up with the research questions and indicators? Dr. Archabal responds that they are not doing quantitative research, but are looking at other surveys and resources. The focus is on secondary research.
- What do we see coming out of this [study]? Will it inform future regulations? Commissioner Reiss states that there will be recommendations and actionable items. Dr. Kleschinsky adds that this is where the consultants will be helpful as they have had experience in this area. Dr. Archabal responds that we have no predetermined outcome. We wanted to take wholistic view, tailored to our community, and determine where we should focus to be strategic.
- What are our assets, e.g., Teen Center, after school programming, etc.? Dr. Archabal replies that the study will look at increased risk factors, what is working well, and if we are doing some things effectively. We want to determine where we have gaps, our strengths and weaknesses.
- There have been some critiques about the focus on marijuana, but not on alcohol, etc. and a question about funding the study. Commissioner Reiss says there will be funding coming from the opioid settlement.

Draft 2023 Meeting Schedule

It is noted that April 12th should read as the 2nd Wednesday, not Tuesday. There is discussion around if the Council really needs two hours at most meetings, and consensus is that two hours may be needed closer to Town Meeting. All dates are agreed upon.

Director/Division Reports

Commissioner Reiss shares brief division updates on Community Health, Emergency Preparedness, and Environmental Health.

Dr. Moyer acknowledges the great work of Medical Reserve Corp in response to the recent emergency situation at 50 Pleasant Street.

The discussion turns to the rodent control plans. Dr. Moyer asks about the SMART boxes deployed by Modern Pest for rodent mitigation. Commissioner Reiss provides a brief progress report to date. Dr. Homer follows up with a question about the consideration of using birth control for rats. Based on results in other communities, there are mixed results. Dr. Roque Gordon expresses concern about hawks ingesting rodenticide.

Dr. Homer presents questions about the housing code. Dr. Lankah shares that the department is working on consistency among inspectors by developing standard operating procedures. Members ask about the types of housing complaints the department receives, condominiums versus apartments, and what are things outside of our jurisdiction, i.e., smoking.

Dr. Linos asks about the polystyrene regulations: What is the enforcement status? Are there staffing issues? Dr. Lankah explains that there was a supply chain issue during pandemic. Enforcement is complaint driven and our department tries to focus on educating restaurant managers.

Dr. Homer again commends the work of the MRC for the 50 Pleasant Street response. Commissioner Reiss gives kudos to Dr. Lankah and Sara Schaffer, Emergency Preparedness Coordinator, for responding over the holiday.

Other business and Discussion

Dr. Moyer provides an update about the artificial turf task force:

They have met 13 times and continue working on a draft version of the report. The group has discussed benefits and detriments of artificial turf. Dr. Moyer states that this issue has been contentious. He briefly discusses the Driscoll School project. Dr. Linos adds that there may be a time that ACPH needs to offer opinion about this issue. Dr. Moyer also references the Cypress Field debate. Dr. Jokubaitis asks about the field temperatures in warmer weather and how the surface temperatures can be mitigated.

Dr. Moyer will share the report with ACPH once it is completed.

Adjournment

Dr. Homer motions to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Dr. Perrin. The meeting adjourns at approximately 7:30 pm.