

City of Chelsea

Board of Health Meeting Minutes

November 10, 2015
6:00 PM – Public Library

Attendance:

BOH: Christopher Miller (Chair), Catherine Maas, Madeleine Scammell, Dean Xerras. Luis Prado (Agent/HHS), Joan Cromwell (City of Chelsea Public Health Nurse), Amy Lindquist (Assist. City Solicitor), Cheryl Sbarra (MAHB), Mike McAteer (ISD).

Public Comment:

855 Broadway: Noreiliz DeJesus, Organizer with the Chelsea Citywide Tenants Association at the Chelsea Collaborative presented concerns with a large number of residents at 855 Broadway, known as Broadway Glen. After the building was flooded deliberately by vandals in September, the management company has been very irresponsible and slow to make repairs. The tenants acknowledged that Mr. McAteer and ISD has been super helpful, and they have established a new tenant council; they are now organized. However, they came to the BOH to share what has been happening. They recommend above all, improved communication between city officials and first responders. With the evacuation and emergency response after the flood, there was not clear communication among the various authorities and it was not clear who in Chelsea was responsible for the response. If something like this were to happen in the future, it would be good to know who will give directions. They invited BOH members to attend a meeting on Dec. 2nd 8:30 PM at the Chelsea Collaborative which will include Chelsea Fire Dept., Chelsea Police and city officials) to discuss any future evacuations or relocation.

Tenant Council members then explained the variety of problems they have experienced with the current management: In the eleven story building elevators regularly do not function water damage coming through new walls that are being constructed, mold, rodents, bedbugs, heating problems, broken washing machines, broken ovens. They showed photos and explained that some of them are sick, and afraid to go back to their apartments. They have no confidence in management that hazards will be effectively mitigated. They are afraid for everyone in the building. They have spoken with HUD, and sent letters to the governor, and the mayor of Boston. Several are presently staying at a hotel. One woman described how she lived there 8 years. In that time the building has been sold three times. So many property managers, hard to deal with. Often both elevators are down. Impossible for elderly or disabled to come down or go up. "We've had firefighters working around the clock on this problem. People stuck in the elevators."

Complaints about pests include that extermination has never been thorough. Management never treats all the units and they are "living in an unhealthy building." Over the winter they were without heat for three days. According to residents, managers preferred to be fined than fix the problems with the heat in a timely manner. They also moved residents to a hotel until the heat was fixed. Some were heating with the ovens. The water is never hot enough; luke warm. 6 of 10 washing machines have been broken at any given time.

Tenants showed photos of dead rats in the basement that are left there to rot.

Jose Rodriques moved in 3-4 months. He says the dust and mold have made him sick since he moved in... he alleges that when contractors work on the site, they work without a

permit, water is turned off without notice. Rich Zullo ISD helped with mediating with the management company. They make promises but they go right back to their old ways.

Chris Miller instructed that Mr. McAteer would be the person to cite the property owner. Tenant association will send a detailed email of what is happening in the building to Luis Prado and asked that we consider visiting the building.

Tobacco Regs: Peter Lam, owner of Liquid Labs, an e cigarette store in the City, requested information on the process for obtaining a permit to sell nicotine delivery containing products. He has an occupancy license for his new business. The city requires a permit from the state, but the state doesn't have a permit for e cigs. There is no state dept. of revenue permit yet. BOH needs to seek legal advice.

Mr. Lam also requested information on the use of e cigs indoors. Are they permitted or not? The BOH determined that new regs consider e cigs a tobacco product. Once Liquid Lab is considered a retail tobacco store, vaping will not be allowed indoors.

Substance Use in Chelsea: Leslie Aldrich, MGH Center for Community health and Improvement presented on a recent community health needs assessment required of all nonprofit hospitals every three years.

In 2012 substance use identified as the number 1 issue for city via surveys, focus groups, and public health data. Moving forward MGH and city formed a collective impact model in the community. Hired Dan Cortez to work with organizations to tackle substance abuse issue together. A lot of education and awareness came out of that process. New people got engaged and passionate about the issue. Combined efforts with Chelsea Thrives worked on access to care issues, specifically at Mass General. One big outcome was to bring this issue to the larger Mass General; the number one community issue at the table with over 100 people at the table to consider how to better deliver services to people with substance use disorders. They have recovery coaches now in their clinics, multidisciplinary teams that help deliver and access services in the community.

A new Hub and Core program brought to Chelsea from Canada via ROCA- at risk individuals are identified on a weekly basis. A collaborative effort where police, social service agencies (north Suffolk mental health, DCFS, CAPIC, etc.) city navigators, sit at a table once a week at talk about cases where risk factors are identified they plan an intervention, a plan of action, to deal with people at high risk of harming themselves or others. The group still meets once a week. Described by Leslie as a fascinating collaborative effort.

The navigators on the street are also part of this process. We are contracted for two but we have only one right now. Contracted through North Suffolk. They engage people in Bellingham Square, finding out what they need, walk them literally through the process, to get services. MGH recovery coach and city navigator sit at the table each Thursday morning.

At MGH there are now more prescribers of Suboxone. The Healthy Chelsea portal is a website that puts all the information into one location/web portal. Upcoming work will organize it by category.

They are just finishing the 2015 assessment for which they have received 5-600 responses and conducted four focus groups. They tried to focus more youth and looked at data from YBRFSS. Low crime neighborhoods, good schools and affordable housing were the top characteristics identified by residents. Leslie shared preliminary results:

Affordable housing almost doubled in importance since 2012. Housing is a big issue in the city.

Mass DPH is changing their BRFSS process. They may not do it again. MGH is now trying to work with other teaching hospitals to be collecting additional data... .

Housing and homelessness significantly increased since last round.

49 percent of people overdosing in this city are not from this city. Of those, 70% was reversed with Narcan with a significant number from bystanders.

Overweight and obesity remains a challenge.

Mental health issues are substantial in our community. Death due to mental health illness has increased. Youth depression is huge. 40% of kids report depression. 14% attempting suicide in Chelsea where state is at 6% School social workers and all school personnel are now being trained in this realm.

Question asked about immigration status. Is it a risk factor? Not sure we can address this.

Housing and food security; difference between Latinos and non-Latinos. Food insecurity is huge.

Youth want more athletic opportunities, more gym times, more engagement.

MGH is working to hire a person to replace Melissa Diamond who ran the Healthy Chelsea coalition. In a transition phase. Still want to hire someone, a community organizer with a background in substance use disorders.

City Manager Tom Ambrosino requested the BOH approval on agreement with Chelsea, Winthrop and Revere collaboration. He was mayor in Revere when the collaboration began. Former City Manager Jay Ash, Mr. Ambrosino and the Manager of Winthrop got together regularly to figure out how to collaborate (they work on crime and energy together) so they thought public health was an area they could do something. MAPC was brought on board to help the city draft an agreement to formalize the relationship. Three managers have agreed to it. It should work similarly to the way the three communities collaborate on the opioid problem. We each will do our own city specific efforts, but we also have the Winnisimmet Opioid Collaborative whereby we discuss best practices and share ideas. Not diverting resources from local effort but the collaborative will hire someone as an administrator to help us look at things from a broader perspective. Not an effort to take away authority or resources from the Chelsea BOH in any way shape or form. Talk about public health issues that may be falling through the cracks (obesity, TB,) etc. The communities would like to execute the agreement this calendar year. Starting the Collaboration also means hiring someone who would be an employee of the City of Revere. They have been the lead city and they have the space. City council of Chelsea approved the position when they approved the budget in June. The BOH agreed to consider the proposal and vote on Dec. 8th

Mr. Ambrosino assured us there is an opportunity to edit, change, if there is anything alarming. Luis sent us an electronic copy yesterday. Details have not been worked out re. logistics of meetings. Some rep. from each city and boards would go to periodic meetings.

Regulations and Fee Structures: City Council has received our notice. To be discussed in January.

BU, Harvard and Chelsea Collaborative study: Madeleine summarized goals of study to examine determinants of indoor air quality in 100 Chelsea living units this summer. She requested to meet with City Manager and ISD about sharing data on housing code violations as per the new ordinance. Both agreed to meet.

Tobacco Control: announcement needs to state where the public can get copies of the draft reg. Luis will also make sure the city manager gets a copy.

Tobacco control reported that over 30% of sellers sold to minors in most recent check (last week).

Next meeting at the Senior Center Tuesday Dec. 8th at 5:00 PM

Public hearing at the Senior Center Tuesday Dec. 8th 6:00 PM

Target tobacco regulation to be effective March 15, 2016 in order to give retailers time to sell their products.

Respectfully submitted,
Madeleine Scammell