

Meeting Minutes of the Chelsea Board of Health

November 17, 2020

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Attendance: Names of members and Participants

Board Members:

- Ola Bayode
- Corinna Culler
- Allen Jackson
- Emmanuel Tellez

Guests:

- Chelsea Lynn, MA Community Tracing Collaborative
- Ric Bayly, Student, Tufts University School of Medicine

City of Chelsea Staff:

- Paula McHatton, Public Health Nurse
- Luis Prado, Director of Health & Human Services
- Cheryl Watson Fisher, City Solicitor
- Pam Johnson, Law Office Clerk

Roll Call and Welcome New Board Member Ola Bayode

The Board welcomed Ola Bayode, who is a member of the Chelsea Young Adult Alliance. He comes to us from CA and has a background in technology sales and marketing. He has been a Chelsea resident for four years.

Adoption of the Minutes of the October 13 Board Meeting

The Board adopted the minutes from the October 13 meeting by a unanimous vote.

City Solicitor Cheryl Watson Fisher's COVID-19 response updates

- The City has begun distributing more than 2,000 *Chelsea Eats* debit cards. Each card is loaded with up to \$400. The city will run food pantries through November. Private food pantries are still providing services.
- The **Public Health Director** position has been posted, and calls and resumes are coming in. The City would appreciate the Board continuing to do outreach for the position.
- If people are quarantined or need food delivered, they should call **311**.
- **Stop the Spread** testing is continuing at City Hall, as are testing sites at Beth Israel and outside the Chelsea Police Station. The City is looking for private properties as sites for indoor testing as we get deeper into winter.
- City Hall is considering downsizing the number of employees at City Hall given the anticipated uptick in COVID-19.
- On 12/3/2020, the **Recreation Department** will be holding a family candy cane scavenger hunt at the Bellingham Hill Park, pending Board approval. The event will adhere to social distancing requirements, will be by appointment and is structured similarly to the October Halloween event. The Recreation Department and the Chelsea Chamber of Commerce will hold a "Phone Call from Santa" event on 12/7/2020. The Chamber of Commerce and MassHealth will be distributing holiday bags at St. Luke's Episcopal Church on 12/12/2020, and at the Burke Elementary complex on 12/14.

The Board reviewed the Recreation Department's plans for the candy cane hunt. Corinna Culler, Ola Bayode and Allen Jackson voted to allow the Department to hold the event. Emmanuel Tellez voted against holding the event, feeling that we should not encourage a false sense of security regarding COVID-19.

A motion to allow the candy cane hunt to proceed passed 3-1.

- The City is providing small business loans, with many going to local restaurants.
- Housing clinics have begun, and the City will be getting a second round of RAFT rental relief funds.

Luis Prado, Director of Health & Human Service, sent signs about staying safe during COVID-19 to large housing facilities and received notes of thanks from several owners. The signs are for large apartment building and are provided by the State.

Corinna Culler commented that her complex had not received any. Prado will send around the list of the complexes that received them.

Residents must sign up for reverse 911 calls. People can sign up for text alerts by going to the City of Chelsea website. Corinna Culler wondered whether there was a central location where the public health messages are being produced. Cheryl Watson Fisher replied that the City Manager's office is tracking this. Luis Prado will send a copy of the messages that have been sent out to the Board. Also, the MA Department of Public Health (DPH) has a clearinghouse for these messages as well.

Emmanuel Tellez commented that it may be time to focus more on enforcement. Cheryl Watson Fisher commented that the City and State are focusing more on enforcement. She noted local businesses have been cited for events recently. The City is considering hiring "ambassadors" to help spread the COVID-19 prevention messages in Bellingham Square. She agreed with Emmanuel Tellez's sentiments on increased enforcement, and Corinna Culler noted her concern about complacency.

Ola Bayode wondered whether we could encourage businesses to do temperature checks and provide hand sanitizer to customers. He expressed concern about people talking on the MBTA busses without masks. Corinna Culler questioned whether there was good evidence on that issue, and Emmanuel Tellez commented that this is really an MBTA matter. Corinna Culler added that encouraging mask wearing is most in the Board of Health's sphere of influence.

Cheryl Watson Fisher reported that the Inspectional Services Department has only given one citation to date. The Police Department has not been issuing citations. Cheryl Watson Fisher will speak to the police chief, the captain in charge and Director of Inspectional Services to follow up on this.

Luis commented that the MA Department of Labor Standards conducts investigations, and they notify the Chelsea Inspectional Services Department and provide him a copy of the citations. He can provide them to the Board. He added that DPH wants people to call the Department of Labor Standards, although he noted the department does not currently have the capacity to deal with all the complaints they currently receive. If Board members have questions on this, they should email Luis Prado separately to avoid violating open meeting laws.

Ola Bayode suggested the Board encourage vitamin D supplements as part of health communications. Luis Prado reminded everyone that the Board can share published information on this and other issues, it should avoid providing clinical recommendations.

Updates from Luis Prado, Director of Health and Human Services

Luis Prado's comments included that:

- Several public health messaging documents have been produced by the State. We should find better ways of distributing these messages.
- Testing – there have been more than 44k tests conducted in Chelsea. The Stop the Spread campaign will continue through December. Contract tracing is also important.
- About 500 people have received the flu vaccine and his department has been thinking about how to increase vaccination rates in the city. Mass vaccination information will come from the State.
- Research on COVID-19 spread in Chelsea should continue to be supported.

Chelsea Lynn, Contract Tracing Collaborative (CTC)

Chelsea Lynn is the Chelsea representative for the Contract Tracing Collaborative. She presented a slideshow on the Community Tracing Collaborative. Highlights include:

- The CTC is a collaborative program of the Governor's COVID-19 Command Center, the MA Health Connector, Partners in Health (workforce) and Accenture (technology).
- CTC works with many nonprofits and public health departments. The four major aspects of their contract tracing program are: testing -> tracing -> isolation/quarantine -> support.
- Once in the case investigation phase, an investigator will conduct a symptom review, evaluate the case's ability to quarantine at home, ask about close contacts and provide guidance on safe isolation. Then, contract tracers reach out to the case's contacts for a similar process. They can also clear people from isolation/quarantine and can provide employer letters etc. They follow a symptom-based protocol which is recommended by the MA DPH and CDC.
- Care Resource Coordination includes identifying vulnerabilities (ex. Do they have food? PPE? A primary care provider?) Once a need is identified, they refer the case to a Care Resource Coordinator to make referrals to community resources such as rental assistance programs.
- Local Health Liaisons work with health departments at in the 351 cities and towns in MA. She works closely with Paula McHatton, the City's Public Health Nurse. The Epidemic Intelligence Unit works to stop transmissions by investigating cluster events and providing information from their investigations to local health departments and MA DPH.
- In Chelsea, CTC has traced 2,487 cases and had more than 1,777 contacts since 4/2020. Between 5/15 – 10/31/2020 they interviewed and followed up with 70% of contacts and 60% of cases. About 325 individuals were provided resource assistance – the primary need was food assistance.

Corinna Culler wondered whether Chelsea residents are more or less likely to respond to the contact tracers. Chelsea Lynn stated she would contact her data team and follow up. They have the average response rate across the state and can pull that info for Chelsea.

Emmanuel Tellez had questions about Partners Health's structure. Chelsea Lynn clarified that the CTC is staffed by Partners in Health, an NGO. They receive money from the State. The Mass.gov website has a section on the CTC program, as does Partners in Health. The CTC program does not have a website, but all staff are employed through Partners in Health.

Ola Beyode wondered whether there was any way to improve the conversion rate for contacts. Chelsea Lynn responded that CTC's response rates statewide may be higher than reported and are strong for contract tracing. The program auto-generates SMS messages to potential contacts and has dedicated phone line for contacts to call into if the tracers miss them. They do not collect information on immigration status and do provide information to law enforcement.

The CTC meets every Monday with the City Manager.

Paula McHatton, Public Health Nurse

- There were no communicable diseases reported to the City.
- The Department, in partnership with CVS and the Cambridge Health Alliance has held multiple flu clinics at various locations around the city. The City provided logistical support and helped recruit volunteers from the Medical Reserve Corps.
- 156 uninsured people (~ 500 total) were vaccinated at flu clinics on 10/31 and 11/7/2020. Another 63 uninsured (100 people total) were vaccinated at clinics on 11/11 and 11/14/2020.
- COVID-19:
 - 30 confirmed cases today, 4,439 in total.
 - Chelsea had a 6.31% positivity rate this week, up from 5.25% last week. The State average this week – 2.29%.
 - Incidence rate – 57.8/100,000 on 11/12/2020, up from 45.1/100,00 the previous week. The incidence rate measures the average number of daily cases over a 14-day period.

Memo from Deputy Commissioner of Public Works re: MIT/BIOPOT

Cheryl Watson Fisher updated the council on the MIT COVID-19 wastewater monitoring program, where wastewater from designated sites around the city would be monitored for the presence of COVID-19. Chelsea is one of the test cities. Discussion focused on learning more about how wastewater testing was designed, how it could be used to pinpoint outbreaks along different points in the system and at specific locations within the city. If Board members have questions, they should email her.


Corinna Culler questioned whether targeted testing would be available if a particular sample is high. Cheryl Watson Fisher responded that that can be a response once a particular sample is high, but we are just at the start of the project, so we have not had any such notification like this yet. Ric Bayly added that testing is showing that the prevalence of COVID-19 is increasing.

Cheryl Watson Fisher noted that the map attached to her email showed areas where samples were being taken, continuing that the ability to test for COVID-19 at the local level would be helpful.

Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held December 8, 2020 at 5:30pm, virtually.

The meeting adjourned at 7:36pm.


Allen Jackson

12/9/2020

Date