

Meeting Minutes of the Chelsea Board of Health
August 10, 2021

Attendance: Names of members and Participants

Board members, City of Chelsea staff and guests were introduced.

Board Members:

- Ola Bayode
- Corinna Culler
- Allen Jackson
- Joshua Merson
- Dr. Dean Xerras

City of Chelsea Staff:

- Dr. Flor Amaya, Director of Public Health
- Paula McHatton, Public Health Nurse
- Stephen Treadway, Asst. City Solicitor
- Dan Cortez, The Chelsea Project, Chelsea P.D.

Guests:

- Cheryl Sbarra, J.D., MA Association of Health Boards
- Samantha Bates, Center of Complex Interventions
- Barry Keppard, Metropolitan Area Planning Council
- Karthik Dinakar, The Chelsea Project
- Bonny Carrol, The Six City Tobacco Initiative

Adoption of the Minutes of the December 8 Board Meeting

The Board adopted the minutes from the July 2021 meeting by unanimous voice vote.

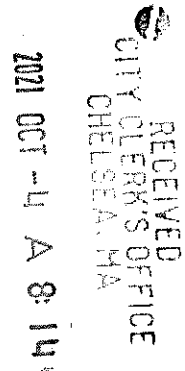
The Chelsea Project

To become better informed about other local groups working on health in the city, the Board decided to invite local organizations to present about their work.

This month, the Board invited representatives from The Chelsea Project in to give an overview of their work. Dan Cortez, Samatha Bates and Karthik Dinakar spoke about The Chelsea Project, which began about three years ago when a Karthik and his team from MIT visited The Chelsea Hub. After COVID began to spread, the group began to think about how they could leverage their expertise and resources to help the city address the spread of COVID-19.

From there, they developed relationships with city leadership and leaders of other public health initiatives and moved to proactively consider actions that they could take together to address the pandemic.

Other highlights from their presentation included:



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- The group convenes the Chelsea Public Health Hub, which brings together public health professionals from various local organizations to share information and strategize;
 - The group also focuses on bring together relevant data, outreach capacity and expertise to enhance the City's capacity to learn about and plan appropriate responses to the pandemic; and
 - Through this work, the Chelsea Project has accurately predicted each of the three waves of COVID-19 spread in Chelsea. Another big wave is predicted to strike Chelsea in fall or winter. They predict it is unlikely the city will reach herd immunity given reports and data from Iceland. The research community believes the virus is one or two mutations away from a state where vaccines will be ineffective. Chelsea should prepare for additional booster shots or annual vaccinations.

Later in the meeting, Karthik Dinakar expounded on the report from the Public Health Commissioner of Iceland which found that despite the country having vaccinated 96% of residents over 12 years of age, they had experienced a significant delta variant wave. Given the new infectious variants, and the dense population of the city, it would be wise to expect a rise in infections in Chelsea during the fall/winter. He predicted that testing needs will increase, and infections will likely rise as winter comes. He suggested the Board should consider issuing guidance for booster doses. He is also working on a policy dashboard simulator to model the outcome of various policy choices (ex. Mask mandates, optimal test center locations etc.). He expects the simulator to be available relatively soon.

Paula McHatton, Public Health Nurse, noted that last year, there were no reported flu cases in Chelsea.

Role/Authority of Boards of Health

Cheryl Sbarra, J.D., Executive Director of the MA Association of Health Boards gave a presentation on the legal authority, duties, and obligations for boards of health in MA. Highlights included:

- The MA Association of Health Boards is a nonprofit membership association representing the 351 local boards of health in MA, all of whom have the legal authority to enact local public health laws. It provides virtual trainings, technical assistance, and a free legal handbook for members.
- The organization also provides certificate programs, draft regulations, and other guidance to local boards.
- MA General Law authorizes boards of health to "make reasonable health regulations" and it is generally accepted function of government to protect public health even at the expense of individual liberty. The MA Supreme Judicial Court has consistently upheld the authority of local boards of health to enact health regulations.
- Boards of Health derive their authority from statutes protecting health, safety, and welfare.
- MA public health law is anti-preemptive – local law can be stricter than state regulations.

- Ch. 111, Section 122 – Nuisance is a very important section with respect to public health law. It gives boards of health the authority to examine “nuisances, sources of filth and causes of sickness” and can give boards the authority to pass regulations.
- Board of Health members are considered public employees under MA General Law.
- In reviewing reasonableness, courts will not substitute their judgement for the judgement of a local board of health when the board passes a regulation.

Dr. Xerras asked whether FL Governor Ron DeSantis would have any recourse if the local public health departments and school districts decided to disregard his mask mandate. Sbarra responded that FL is a preemptive state so the health departments have less legal authority to enact stricter regulations but felt most boards of health would do it anyway because most residents want the mandate. In MA, local boards of health can require mask mandates universally.

Dr. Amaya asked whether unions had any authority to ignore a public health mandate. Sbarra replied that they do not. An emergency public health order would supersede a labor contract.

Corinna Culler asked about the difference between an order and a regulation. Sbarra clarified that a regulation is a long-term local law. Orders focus more on a specific event and are rescinded when that event is over.

Because time was short, the tobacco regulation language changes Sbarra was prepared to discuss will be discussed at the September meeting.

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Updates

Paula McHatton, Public Health Nurse:

- There were two communicable diseases reported over the last month, one case of salmonella, and one case of norovirus.
- The one active case of TB is doing well and tolerating the medications. Their course of treatment will finish in February 2021.
- Flu vaccinations will be available around August 2020. Several flu clinic dates are being planned, including a city-wide flu clinic.

COVID-19

- Since mid-July, cases have increased steadily. Chelsea has seen 9,035 total cases since the start of the pandemic. The city reported 49 cases last week and 28 cases have been confirmed this week.
- Percent positivity has increased to 2.32%, while it stood at 1.32% last week.
- The incidence rate has increased from 5.6/100,000 last week to 11.2/100,000 this week.
- Chelsea's vaccination rate is 66.9%, outpacing the statewide rate of 62.8%.
- In total, 24,608 Chelsea residents are fully vaccinated. The delta variant is present in Chelsea.

Dr. Flor Amaya, Director of Public Health:

COVID-19

- Compared to statewide statistics, Chelsea is underperforming with regard to vaccinations among Black/African American and Latino residents, and 20–29-year-olds. This age group also accounts for a significant number of breakthrough cases in the city. Dr. Amaya continues to work with the school department to vaccinate 12–15-year-olds.
- The **Stop the Spread** testing campaign has been extended through October, and the CTC contract tracing contract has been extended through December.
- The city has adopted a mask mandate for all municipal buildings. The Board of Health could institute a city-wide mask mandate given the relevant data and its rulemaking authority.
- Dr. Amaya reported that OSHA was investigating an event at Wash Cycle. She followed up with Rob, the OSHA representative and is waiting to hear back from him. This investigation would take several months.
- Dr. Amaya and Corinna Culler met with representatives from the Boston Public Health Commission about inspections of body art businesses. Dr. Amaya is waiting to hear back from them. The city is looking to partner with Cambridge to conduct inspections of Chelsea's three body art businesses.

Dr. Xerras questioned whether there was a mask mandate for Chelsea Public Schools. Dr. Amaya pointed out that relevant guidance recommended it, but it had not yet been implemented, although the City Manager and school superintendent were in favor of it. Josh Merson pointed out that the next Board of Health meeting would happen after the start of the school year. The Board decided that Dr. Amaya would reach out to the school superintendent to let them know that the Board would support them in instituting a mask mandate for public schools.

Follow-up/Review Action Items

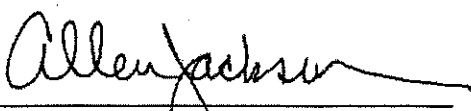
Corinna Culler suggested creating two new permanent agenda items to help the board keep on track: **Follow-up** and **Action Items**.

Follow-up/Action Items:

- Dr. Amaya will reach out to the Chelsea Public Schools superintendent to let them know the Board would support them in issuing a mask mandate.
- Board of Health members will review tobacco regulation document in preparation for next month's meeting.

Next meeting:

September 14, 2021, virtually.


Allen Jackson, Clerk

9/14/2021
Date

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