

Meeting Minutes of the Chelsea Board of Health
November 16, 2021

Attendance: Names of members and Participants

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

Board Members:

- 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

Guests:

- Cheryl Sbarra, J.D., MA Association of Health Boards
- Bonny Carroll, The Six City Tobacco Initiative

Adoption of the Minutes of the August Board Meeting

The Board adopted the minutes from the September 2021 meeting by unanimous voice vote of members present at that meeting. As there was not a quorum of members present who were also present at the October meeting, adoption of those minutes will be taken up at the December meeting.

Public Health Updates

Paula McHatton, Public Health Nurse:

- There were two enteric diseases reported last month – one case of giardia in a recent arrival from Guatemala and one case of norovirus was also reported, and a case of streptococcus virus.
- The patient with TB that was being monitored has returned from Guatemala. They are showing improvement. The patient was recently admitted to the hospital and is being evaluated for renal failure.
- Flu: There were no reported flu cases in October, and for the month of November there have been 7 reported cases. At recent flu clinics, the city has vaccinated 40 city employees and 78 school staff. A recent city-wide flu clinic held in conjunction with Cambridge Health Alliance vaccinated 227 people.
- COVID-19:
 - To date, Chelsea has seen 9,389 cases of COVID-19.
 - The city is seeing about 47 cases/week, up from 24 cases/week last month.
 - The positivity rate last week was 1.96%, up from 1.30% the previous week.
 - The incidence rate increased from 12.4/100,000 last month, to 14.1/100,000.
 - Chelsea's vaccination rate is 75.4%.

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- The Contract Tracing program will terminate its assistance to local boards of health on 11/30. Local boards of health will be responsible for contact tracing after that date. MA DPH will assist in monitoring data to help with case prioritization.
- Through a grant, the North Suffolk Public Health Collaborative has received funds to hire a public health nurse who will start 12/1.

Dr. Flor Amaya, Director of Public Health

- COVID-19 Vaccination Efforts:
 - Current vaccination efforts are focused on pediatric vaccinations. On 11/20, in coordination with Chelsea Public Schools, a vaccination clinic will be held at Chelsea Public Schools.
 - Pediatric vaccination began at the Chelsea Senior Center two weeks ago. At that site, 126 children have been vaccinated in total, and 50 were vaccinated last week.
 - La Collaborativa, working with Mass General Brigham is holding Tuesday vaccination clinics from 2pm – 7pm.
 - The City is also working with Mass General Brigham to provide booster shots to elderly residents.
 - The City is partnering with the Chelsea Project, and the Chelsea Housing Authority on a rapid testing project to teach seniors how to administer rapid tests. Several companies have donated rapid tests.
 - The **Stop the Spread** testing program is scheduled to end 12/31/2021.
 - The City continues to bring booster and vaccination shots to worksites. On November 4 OSHA released communication that worksites with a 100 or more employees have to implement a weekly testing protocol for unvaccinated workers. Kayem, local temp worker agencies and other local businesses have called seeking information on vaccinations and to set up worksite vaccinations.

Mask Mandate Discussion

Dr. Amaya distributed recent metrics for the Board to consider in discussing whether to implement an indoor mask mandate.

Dr. Xerras and Joshua Merson noted the infection rates and other metrics were similar to where they were when this discussion first came up.

Dr. Amaya read an email from City Manager Tom Ambrosino speaking against implementation of a mask mandate given the current metrics. She also noted that while cases in Chelsea are up, they are much lower than last year, and the incidence rate is lower than in Boston.

Joshua Merson asked where people are contracting COVID-19 in Chelsea. Dr. Amaya responded that people are contracting the virus in households, and worksites outside of Chelsea.

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Dr. Amaya noted that vaccination rates for Hispanics and Blacks/African American residents are the lowest in Chelsea, and rates for Blacks/African American are lower than the statewide average. The City recently passed the statewide average for Hispanics.

The Board did not institute a mask mandate but will continue to monitor the data for future consideration.

Public Hearing on Proposed New Tobacco Control Legislation

- No members of the public registered to speak regarding the proposed tobacco regulation changes.
- The Board unanimously adopted the revised tobacco sales regulations by unanimous voice vote, with an effective date of 1/1/2022.

Tobacco Legislation Next Steps:

- Stephon Treadway will have a notice placed in the Chelsea Register and send a notice to tobacco retailers.

New Business:

Dr. Amaya asked what the legal authorities of the Board of Health/Inspectional Services Department were regarding a hoarding incident in a condominium. The situation generates fruit flies and odors. In discussing the situation further, she noted there have been no fire code violations, and that the Chelsea Fire Department has done an inspection.

Cheryl Sbarra suggested there are likely housing code and nuisance regulations violations that may be applicable. Sbarra noted that "hoarding" is now being considered in a broader context which includes mental health and is being referred to as "excess collection" to help de-stigmatize the issue.

The resident has been referred to local social services, and Inspectional Services is aware of the situation and is taking action.

Next meeting: 12/14/2021, at 5:30pm, virtually.

The meeting adjourned at 6:57pm.


Allen Jackson, Clerk

12/11/2021
Date

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