

Meeting Minutes of the Chelsea Board of Health
January 18, 2022

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

City of Chelsea Staff:

- Dr. Flor Amaya, Director of Public Health
- Paula McHatton, Public Health Nurse
- Mark Rossi, Assistant City Solicitor

Guests/Members of the Public:

- Rigoberto Chavez

Adoption of the Minutes of the October and November Meetings

A motion to adopt the minutes from the December meeting was unanimously approved.

Updates

Dr. Flor Amaya, Director of Public Health

- **COVID-19 testing:** Lines for testing in the first two weeks of January were long, prompting complaints from residents. To address the situation, "ambassadors" were deployed to the testing lines to manage the lines and set expectations for people waiting for tests. Demand has since decreased, and the testing sites are no longer turning away people seeking testing. Mass. General Brigham has started offering drive-through and walk-up testing near Spruce Street on Wednesday and Thursday. Dr. Amaya noted that many people seeking tests were doing so to respond to a need for a negative test for their employer. She also noted that many employers will not accept an antigen test as proof of a negative test.
- **The Chelsea Project:** The Chelsea Project's weekly rapid testing study has been expanded to include about 40 city employees. The study provides weekly rapid tests and follow-up antigen tests to participants that test positive for COVID-19.
- **Wastewater monitoring:** The city is seeing a decline in COVID-19 detected in the wastewater, mirroring a decrease in case counts from the previous week.
- **Vaccinations:** Through 1/11, 35,921 Chelsea residents have received their first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine. This figure represents about 95% of the City's population. 29,714 residents are fully vaccinated. 9,281 residents have received their vaccination booster shots. Starting 2/4/22, vaccinations will resume at the Senior Center.

Paula McHatton, Public Health Nurse

- There were two enteric diseases both cases of norovirus, reported last month.
- There were no active cases of TB reported.
- There were 54 reported cases of the flu-A strain.
- Reported cases of COVID-19 increased each week during the month of December:
 - 149 cases reported the first week December
 - 187 the second week
 - 307 the third week, and
 - 884 in the final week of the month.

This trend continued into January 2020, as there were:

- 1,379 cases reported the first week of the month, and
 - 1,209 cases reported the second week.
- In total, there have been 14,399 confirmed cases of COVID-19, with 480 new cases since Friday.
 - The COVID-19 positivity rate steadily increased during the month of December from:
 - 3.96% in the first week to
 - 5.05% the second week to
 - 6.26% the third week to
 - 8.7% in the fourth week of the month.

The positivity rate continued to increase in January 2020, and stood at:

- 19.13% in the first week
 - 29.68% in the second week of the month.
- The incidence rate last week was 538.3/100,000, reflecting the surge in cases.
 - The CDC recently shortened the quarantine isolation period from 10 days to 5 days. MA DPH will follow this guidance, paired with risk reduction messaging.
 - The Dept. of Elementary and Secondary Education is changing its testing and contact tracing protocol in schools. Their new protocol will provide weekly take-home testing to students and staff. The Department reported that 99% of students and staff test negative.

Following up on a question from Corinna Culler, Paula clarified that at home testing will replace the pooled testing in schools. Culler also asked about the severity of symptoms of Omicron infections. McHatton reported that symptoms produced by the Omicron variant are mild, and the most common reported symptoms associated with an Omicron infection are runny nose, headache, sore throat, and congestion. Josh Merson clarified that symptoms are mild among vaccinated individuals.

Request regarding the keeping of chickens

Rigoberto Chavez came before the Board to ask to be allowed to keep four hens. Local ordinance only allows residents to keep two hens.

Mr. Chavez noted that the hens are like pets to his children. He stated that having the hens allows him to take fewer resources from local food pantries. He keeps their pen area clean, and states that he has received no complaints from neighbors.

Corinna Culler asked whether there was any danger of the hens going into neighboring yards and whether they were kept in pens. Mr. Chavez responded that the hens are currently in a coop, and that one of his neighbors' fence is falling into his property, and he is working with the City to get the fence repaired.

Allen Jackson asked how he makes sure rodents don't get into the chicken feed. Mr. Chavez responded that he stores the feed in containers, and feeds the chickens via a hanging mechanism, ensuring that no food is left on the ground for rodents feed on.

Mr. Chavez does not have a vet for the hens but will ask a vendor he deals with what he can give them to keep them healthy.

Corinna Culler notified Mr. Chavez that the Board will place a notice in the paper inviting public comment and will vote on his petition next month.

A motion to hold a public hearing on this issue was approved by a unanimous voice vote.

Follow up from previous meetings

- Josh Merson wondered what the Board could do to combat COVID misinformation, given the information one of the speakers at the last meeting presented. Members discussed the rights of members of the public to be heard in a public forum.
- Corinna Culler reminded the Board that we would be interested in hearing from organizations in the City working on health-related issues, and members should send her a note of names of organizations we could invite in to present their work. Olay Bayode questioned whether the Board needed to follow-up on any previous invites to local organizations. Allen Jacksons suggested looking at meeting minutes from around that time for guidance.
- Dr. Amaya recalled calls that her office received regarding excessive heat that some residents were reporting. She suggested drafting a communication to employers, landlords etc. regarding heat exhaustion and safety for vulnerable populations.

Next Meeting: Tuesday, February 8, 5:30pm, virtually.

Next Steps:

- Dr. Amaya will ensure that a notice inviting public comments regarding Mr. Chavez's petition will be placed in the Chelsea Record.
- The Board will review previous meeting minutes for follow-up items regarding inviting local organizations to present to the Board on their health-related activities.

The meeting adjourned at 6:19pm.

Allen Jackson

Allen Jackson, Clerk

2/22/2022

Date