

Meeting Minutes of the Chelsea Board of Health  
June 27, 2023

**Attendance: Names of members and participants**

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

**Board Members:**

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

**City of Chelsea Staff:**

- Flor Amaya, Director of Public Health
- Paula McHatton, Public Health Nurse

**Members of the Public:**

- Angi Coronado, Health Equity Director, La Collaborativa
- Julie Levinson, MGH Chelsea
- Jose Moncada

**Lead Exposure from Tobin Bridge**

The Boston Globe recently ran an article about lead paint chips falling from the Tobin Bridge, impacting the neighborhood in the area. Greenroots wrote to the MA Department of Transportation (DOT) asking for, among other things, proactive lead testing for residents near the bridge. DOT responded, citing MA Department of Public Health (DPH) guidance that residents should seek lead screening through their primary care provider. Flor Amaya has been coordinating members of the Chelsea Project, including Julie Levinson, Regina LaRocque and other Chelsea residents and advocates to formulate a response.

Julie Levinson added that in 1982, a New England Journal of Medicine (NEJM) article documented lead paint chips falling from the Mystic River Bridge, impacting Chelsea and Charlestown. Recommendations then included superficial soil sample testing and bringing testing to the community. The group wrote a letter to DPH that highlighted several issues, including the impact of lead exposure on childhood development. DPH which is preparing a response.

DOT has stated that they will do soil testing and has acknowledged that this remediation is their responsibility. Flor Amaya added that the group will advocate for DPH to support proactive lead testing, and work on reconciling the CDC's and MA DPH's allowable lead exposure levels.

DOT will hold a public meeting on 6/28/2023 to discuss the repainting and repair of the Tobin Bridge.

Josh Merson suggested publishing a letter to the editor of the of NEJM responding to the 1983 article with an update on the lead paint falling from the bridge.

Next steps: The Board of Health agreed to send a letter to DPH and supporting the physicians letter send by the Chelsea Project. Board members will send Flor their appropriate names and titles for the letter.

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### **Public Health Initiatives**

Flor Amaya, Director of Public Health reported that:

- a. The special needs registry launched on 6/15/2023. To date, there have been 27 registrations. Mailers were sent out last week, and the group working on this is brainstorming other outreach opportunities.
- b. The childhood immunization program application was approved by DPH on 6/25/2023. Vaccine doses have been ordered and should be received this week. The program will provide immunizations for children ages 4 – 18. The program will launch on 7/13/2023 and will be held on the second Thursday of the month from 12pm – 4pm. Unfortunately, there are many immigrant high school students over 18 who will not be eligible for the program
- c. The City received funding from the State, which was intended to YMCA memberships for residents. The state has informed Chelsea that funding cannot be used for this purpose.
- d. The City is working to establish partnerships with the MGH Institute for Health Professions (IHP). Flor has been in contact with IHP around engagement activities for students. For example, discussions with Tracy Nowicki, Director of Elder Services for the City of Chelsea have focused on having students work with local seniors. Josh Merson is chair of the physician's assistant section, and Flor Amaya is a graduate of the program.
- e. Additionally, Flor mentioned an opportunity to advocate for a new proposed bill: Cover All Kids bill (HR. 1237/S. 740), sponsored by Sal DiDomenico that would provide comprehensive MassHealth coverage for all kids regardless of immigration status.

### **Communicable Disease Report**

Paula McHatton, Public Health Nurse, reported that:

- There were 7 enteric diseases reported this past month:
  - A case of amebiasis was diagnosed in a resident. They were seen by a GI doctor after having symptoms for 1 week. The resident had history of irritable bowel syndrome and had not traveled recently.
  - A case of campylobacter was diagnosed in a resident who recently vacationed in Argentina.
  - Cyclospora was identified in a resident who usually dines in a particular restaurant. The patient reported symptoms for two weeks. They had not traveled recently and was not a food handler. DPH intervened to complete a foodborne illness report.
  - There were two cases of salmonella:
    - One case was exposed at Las Amigos taqueria in Brighton.
    - One case was a close contact of another person infected person. They had symptoms for 3 days and had not recently travelled. Follow-up phone calls to the person have gone unreturned.
  - There were 2 cases involving Shiga toxin-producing organisms:
    - A 1-year-old developed a rash on the legs, hand, feet and mouth. Multiple phone calls to the child's caregivers have gone unanswered.
    - A 9-month-old developed symptoms after an older sibling developed symptoms but was not tested. The child drinks formula and does not attend day care. Parents were educated on cross-contamination, hand washing and safe food prep.
- There are 3 active cases of TB:

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COMMUNICABLE DISEASES OFFICE  
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- The TB case previously reported on, where the patient was noncompliant, was discharged from the Shattuck on 5/27/2023 with medicine and completed treatment on 6/5/2023.
- The first new case is doing well and tolerating the medicine. Their estimated date of completion is 8/28/2023.
- A case was diagnosed in a 42-year-old female who was partially treated in 2015 and 2018, but treatment was discontinued due to pregnancy. She has 10 children, ranging from 2 – 23. The patient was admitted to Shattuck hospital, but is currently home and doing well.
- A case was also diagnosed in a 26-year-old female with a history of positive TB skin tests and who developed an inflamed lymph node. A biopsy was positive after an initial smear and culture. They started TB meds on 6/24/2023 after returning from trip.
- There were 2 reported cases of the flu.
- COVID-19:
  - The positivity rate in Chelsea is 1.45%, down from 5.14% in June. The June spike was due to an outbreak at the Soldier's Home. City staff reached out to DPH who sent an emergency response team to provide assistance.
- Other updates:
  - Several food items sold at Walmart, Target, Trader Joe's and similar vendors were recalled due to possible listeria contamination.
  - DPH has issued summer safety guidance on preventing tick and mosquito bites, car safety and other topics.
  - DPH also issued guidance regarding the recent spike in opioid-related deaths. The agency is encouraging all providers to increase Naloxone availability and train staff on its use. Chelsea is part of the Naloxone community purchasing program and is working with health navigators who administer the treatment to people who have overdosed.
  - The Chelsea Senior Center is no longer providing COVID-19 vaccinations.

### **Public Comments**

There were no public comments.

### **Body Art Regulations**

Flor Amaya reported sending inspection notices to the two remaining establishments yet to be inspected that their inspections will occur in July. These inspections will be conducted using the current inspection form since the new body art regulations are not yet finalized.

The timeline to finalize the body art regulations is as follows:

- August: Fully drafted regulations ready for review.
- September: Public hearing.
- October: Draft regulations adopted.
- November: Inspections begin.

### **Follow-up from Previous Meetings**

Tobacco product letters were sent, providing retailers with a sell-down period of the recently reviewed flavored tobacco products through 6/15/2023. When Bonnie Carrol returns from vacation, she will conduct inspections to ensure that the products of interest are not being sold. If they are, the retailers will be fined, and the Board will hold hearings as outlined in the tobacco control regulations.

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Additionally, the renewal period for current tobacco retailers ends 6/30/2023. One retailer has closed, so the City will have one fewer tobacco license, and as of the last update, there were about 30 businesses that had yet to complete the required license renewal paperwork.

***New Business/Items for Discussion***

Corinna Culler will be resigning her position on the Board of Health, as she will be relocating. Board members thanked her for her service and wished her well in the future. The Board unanimously elected Josh Merson to serve as Chair.


The August Board of Health meeting will be cancelled.

Flor Amaya suggested that if the size of the Board was increased, we'd have a better chance of regularly achieving a quorum. She will look into relevant regulations.

***Next Meeting***

The next meeting will be held on 7/25/2023.

The meeting adjourned at 6:53 pm.

  
Allen Jackson, Clerk

7/27/2023  
Date

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