

Justin Elicker, Mayor • Maritza Bond, MPH, Director of Health

Board of Health Commissioners
Meeting Minutes
February 9, 2022

Present: Dr. James Hadler, Chair; Dr. Frank Mongillo, Heather Reynolds, Dr. Darnell Young, Gregg Gonsalves, Dr. Alice Forrester

Staff: Maritza Bond, Director of Health

Call to Order:

Commission Chair Hadler called the meeting to order at 5:35 p.m.

Approval of Minutes:

Commission Chair Hadler requested a modification to the January 12th minutes to clarify the Test and Stay program model. Commissioner Forrester moved to approve the minutes for the January 12th meeting; Dr. Mongillo seconded; minutes were approved with no objections.

Public Comments or Statements:

No members of the public

Updates:

Director Bond presented the following status updates:

COVID-19 Situational Awareness & Response Efforts

Current response efforts are mass vaccination, communication efforts, contact tracing, compliance, sustainability, outreach, and technical support in the community.

Omicron is now the dominant variant in the United States and in Connecticut, based on current metrics used by the Connecticut Department of Public Health New Haven is still considered to be in high-risk transmission. The average daily rate is significantly dropping and currently no epidemiological models are showing that there's any potential spike. Cases in school are being

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closely monitored to ensure there is not a potential outbreak. Schools are consistently seeing a significant drop in cases.

New Haven vaccination rates continue to increase. The first dose is at 78.1% and second dose is at 68%. However, The Department is behind on vaccinating youth, partly because there is a mistrust of the vaccine, and the severity of the disease is not as high in youth. The Department is working on a campaign to creatively educate the community. Director Bond recently finished a video with several children from New Haven and gift cards are being offered to those that are 12-24 years old as another metric to boost the numbers for that age group.

Personnel Updates

A permanent position was not offered to the Director of Public Health Nursing. Though he's had management experience from other clinical sectors he was not a good fit for the Health Department.

A Vital Statistics employee of almost 30 years recently retired. This created an opportunity for the job description to be updated and now staff at Vital Statistics are called Assistant Registrar's. This was done to make sure the department is not going a bottleneck approach. For example, historically the supervisor was the only person that could sign off on marriages, now the Assistant Registrars can all cosign and can allow the supervisor to focus on higher level work.

A previously terminated employee will be returning. This will be a conditional return with a last chance agreement.

The Department continues to recruit, interview and vet for different vacancies. Director Bond has requested to appoint a Special Assistant to The Director of Health. The special assistant will focus on policy support both at the state and local level as well as focus on preparing The Department for Public Health accreditation.

Grants and Other Key Activities

Director Bond has asked Epidemiology staff to look at different metrics to be able to set criteria to lift the mask mandate and be able to reverse the lift of the mandate if the city is impacted by another variant that is going to cause severity of Covid-19. The Department wants to invest in testing sewage wastewater to use as an early indicator of disease surveillance. Secondly, The Department wants to assess length of hospital stay for hospitalizations because hospitalization numbers can be faulty when you do not look at the length of stay. Director Bond is looking to decide in the next two weeks about lifting the mask mandate in a modified way depending on the setting, for example schools may not have the mandate lifted for the remainder of the school year. The report is still being drafted by the Epidemiology team and the Medical Director. Director Bond wants to ensure that a decision is made based on the metrics available and

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scientific findings. A discussion ensued as to whether The Department should follow the Governor's lift of the mask mandate at the end of February.

The Department is proposing to amend the food establishment local ordinance to include a rating system. The Department feels that food service rating empowers consumers to make informed decisions about the places they patronize and encourages food service establishments to be compliant with regulatory inspections. The proposed scoring system uses a standardized inspection form that is used across the state of Connecticut. The Department is proposing to use a 4-star system or ABC system used by surrounding towns. Director Bond has invited the Board members to participate in meetings to justify the support of this new policy or submit written statements.

Commission Chair Hadler moved to adjourn the meeting at 6:30pm.

The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for Wednesday, March 9, 2022, at 5:30 p.m., via Zoom.

Attest:

Damaris Velez

Damaris Velez
Office Manager

03/06/2022

Date

Approved:

James Hadler, Chair
Board of Health Commissioners

Date