



CITY OF NEW HAVEN
COMMUNITY SERVICES ADMINISTRATION
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

54 Meadow Street, 9TH Floor • New Haven, Connecticut 06519



Board of Health Commissioners
Meeting Minutes
December 9, 2020

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

Staff: Maritza Bond, Director of Health

Call to Order:

Commission Chair Hadler called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

Approval of Minutes:

Commissioner Hadler moved to approve the November 18, 2020 minutes; Commissioner Reynolds seconded; minutes were approved unanimously.

The Board welcomed new Commissioners Alice Forrester and Gregg Gonsalves. Commission Chair Hadler noted that the Board is now complete with six members. Generally, a new Commissioner is appointed each year with one rotating off. Due to changes in administrations, the Board has deviated somewhat with vacancies unfilled. Director Bond and the Commissioners introduced themselves.

Public Comments or Statements:

There were no members of the public present at the meeting.

Board Composition Overview/Charter:

Commissioner Hadler reviewed the City Charter section that deals with the establishment of boards and commissions.

The Board serves not only as an advisory group to the Director of Health but also can raise issues and pose questions. The Board selects the Director of Health with the approval of the Mayor and Alders. Also, the Health Commission decides to renew term of Director of Health. The Board consists of six members, two of whom must be medical doctors with not less than five years' experience. Commissioners are appointed by the Mayor. Commissioner Hadler discussed the section regarding duties of the Board. On the recommendation of the Director of Health, the Board has the authority to establish rules and regulations. Director Bond will send a copy of the Charter section to the Board of Health to the Commissioners for their review. Since there is a new administration, Director Bond informed the group that the Mayor's Office is formulating an orientation for boards and commissions, so there might be additional information forthcoming.

Director Bond added that there will be a strategic planning process in place soon. Will include Charter duties and develop strategic priorities for the next three to five years. A Request for Proposal (RFP) has been posted through the City's procurement process. The Department will have a consultant assigned to assist in getting feedback from the Board of Health, Administration, staff and external partners and do a thorough analysis.

COVID-19 Resurgence Update:

Director Bond shared a resurgence and situational update on COVID-19. Cumulative cases since the first case was reported in March are 5,775 positive cases with 129 case fatalities. Continuing to monitor cases by gender, race, ethnic background and age group so that the Department is able to create specific public health interventions. 45 percent of cases in New Haven are aged 25 to 49 years old; only 13% are over 65 years old. There's a big increase in the younger population ages 18 to 24. Have been doing press releases/events to report over the past two weeks (between November 25th and December 8th) there were 485 positive cases. Ethnic background has 52% unknown, and the Department continues to bring to the attention of those ordering tests that background information must be completed. There are a significant number of unknowns for tracing ethnic backgrounds. It is critical to complete this information. Working with State Health Department to address the problem. Most case fatalities are those who are over age 65.

Discussion about State Department of Public Health Indicators, which monitor the positivity rate, number of hospitalizations as well as flu surveillance happening in cities and counties. Every county is basically in the red. College cases – currently most students are off campus. Discussed Unified Command meetings which are held twice a week with Mayor, Director Bond and major department heads responding to the pandemic. Constantly monitoring nursing homes – no positive employees, they are doing well. However, Regal Care is being closely monitored as they've been cited by the State Department of Health and are on a corrective action plan for issues found. New Haven Health Department Epidemiologist is closely monitoring, as well. The Governor's updates show the State is 97% in the red.

Hospitalization numbers – another major indicator in decision making. 241 in-house COVID patients and 59 ICU patients. Had a slight change of 1.3%. Dr. Mongillo usually has latest update. These number represent the Yale-New Haven system – greater New Haven service area – not just residents. Reviewed heat map over two-week case period and where cases are happening - drives public health interventions – testing logistics team consists of Yale and community health centers

provide testing – can increase or expand testing in the community. Currently, there’s a high density of cases in Fair Haven, predominantly Latinx communities. Increase in messaging around that community and work with community influencers as well as make sure local businesses in that area are following the rules – mask compliances, signage, etc. During the last two weeks, Director Bond met with all community management teams to share data and charge community management teams to support pandemic response. Case dot map – shows highest density. Also, continuing to monitor the sewage data, which is used as an indicator of what’s coming.

Commissioner Forrester asked about Mayor’s order for companies to report positive cases and where data goes. Director Bond explained that the Governor’s Order did not technically require New Haven businesses to report cases to the Health Department. There was inconsistent reporting. Developed Mayor’s Executive Order No. 6 in order to get compliance and mitigate the pandemic as much as possible. Using Veoci dashboard (emergency response system) – contact tracing through Veoci. Created a portal for employers to report positive employees on a secure site, which helps to determine who needs to isolate, quarantine.

Director Bond discussed the creation of the COVID-19 Task Force Team. Any establishment that’s licensed under the Health Department, there is a Veoci dashboard where complaints are logged into the system and are designated to Sanitarians, who are required to follow up. Anything not covered by the Health Department is directed to Jim Turcio, the City’s Building official. The two departments work closely together, inspect and make decisions together. The team visits different neighborhoods every week unannounced. So far, twelve warning letters were issued.

Mass Vaccination Plan:

A plan is being developed at the local level with limited restrictors. At this point Director Bond is not sure what the local department role will be. The local health department will be getting Moderna vaccine, because the refrigerator life is 30 days, and most health departments have the capacity to store it. The Pfizer vaccine needs to be frozen. Those vaccines are being sent to hospitals and long-term care facilities. Different phases of distribution: first, Healthcare workers, nursing home residents and first responders; second phase, critical workforce, other congregate settings, adults 65+ and high risk under 65; last phase, under 18 and the remaining over 18 population. Initially, Connecticut will receive about 31,200 doses for the entire state. Hospitals will be responsible for vaccinating first responders. Department will designate public health nurses and activate medical reserve corps (individuals protected under State statute for liability) and will do strike teams in the community similar to what’s been done with testing.

The mass vaccination plan needs to include comprehensive risk communication efforts. City is partnering with Yale-New Haven Health System so that there will be consistent messaging. Commissioner Forrester suggested working with food distribution organizations targeting the homeless to distribute flyers promoting vaccination as well as working with the school food distribution program to disseminate information.

Commissioner Reynolds raised the question about screening for COVID before giving vaccination. Will people who have had the virus be vaccinated, or is it assumed they have immunity? Everyone will be pre-screened to be sure they are asymptomatic. Health Department hasn’t received clear

directives from the State Health Immunization Division, but once Director Bond receives the information, she will provide updates to the Board. Also, there was discussion about quarantine guidelines change proposed by the CDC, possibly shorten the quarantine test out after seven days. No decision has been made at the local level; still working in conjunction with the State Department of Public Health. Director Bond will email the risk communication plan to the Commissioners, and they can add any ideas they have.

There was a question about the status of the Deputy Director and other vacant positions (Program Director for Environmental Health, Lead Inspector and Vital Records Director). Director Bond will meet tomorrow with Human Resources to assess the priorities for the Deputy position and develop the test. She reminded the Commissioners that each have been assigned to evaluate different categories of the position. The test will be emailed to each of the candidates, they'll have a timeframe to complete it, and then the Commissioners will receive the completed tests to use as part of the interview process.

Director Bond will continue to keep the Board updated on Health Department issues via Zoom meetings, separate from the regular monthly meeting. These meetings occur every two weeks on Wednesdays at 6:00 p.m.

Commissioner Hadler moved to adjourn the meeting; meeting unanimously adjourned at 6:45 p.m.

The next meeting is scheduled for January 13, 2021 at 5:30 p.m., via Zoom.

Attest:

Brenda Pantelis

Brenda Pantelis
Executive Administrative Assistant

12/21/20

Date

Approved:

James Hadler

James Hadler, Chair
Board of Health Commissioners

1/13/21

Date