

Harvard Board of Health Meeting Minutes
Town Hall, Volunteer Meeting Room
Tuesday, March 10, 2020
2:00 P.M.
Approved: March 24, 2020

Board of Health Members present: Sharon McCarthy; Libby Levison (via Skype); Tom Philippou, Chair.

Attending: Alison Flynn, Board of Health (“BOH”) Clerk; Ira Grossman, Health Agent, Nashoba Associated Boards of Health; Linda Dwight, Superintendent, Harvard Public Schools; Shannon Malloy & Suzanne Allen, Harvard School Committee; Colleen Nigzus, Nurse Leader, Harvard Public Schools; Tim Bragan, Town Administrator; Ed Denmark, Police Chief; Joan Eliyesil, The Harvard Press.

Mr. Philippou called the meeting to order at 2:05 p.m., and announced that the meeting was being audio recorded by Ms. Eliyesil.

PUBLIC COMMENT- None.

NEW BUSINESS

a. COVID-19 planning, response & messaging- Mr. Philippou advised that he attended a meeting at the request of Dr. Dwight regarding the concern in the school community regarding COVID-19. Dr. Dwight expressed that the biggest concern is what the schools can do to limit the virus from being spread. Ms. Nigzus added that the families that they are aware of that have recently traveled have been cooperative with suggested self-quarantine, but the schools do not have complete knowledge of whose parents may be traveling and if there is a need to test students and/or quarantine. Mr. Philippou explained that the responsibility of the BOH is to communicate with the Department of Public Health regarding any positive diagnosis, to work with the Department of Health in enforcement quarantine and isolation, and then to report back to the Department of Public Health what is observed of those residents in quarantine and isolation. Dr. Dwight noted that it would be beneficial if there is a single voice that can relay information to the residents. Ms. Levison indicated that last weeks’ telephone conference with the DPH included an explanation that the Department of Public Health is responsible for quarantine and isolation, and that DPH is asking local boards of health to assist with providing information to residents and ensuring mechanisms are in place to assist with delivering food and medications to those patients in quarantine or isolation who have no other means. Mr. Philippou indicated that he has a call in to DPH to clarify on whether the LBOH have the authority to independently issue quarantine and isolation orders. Dr. Dwight asked whether LBOH has the authority to compel testing in the case that a resident fits most or all of the criteria and the treating physician is reluctant to order the testing. The BOH members indicated they do not. Ms. Levison indicated that the DPH is following CDC guidelines for testing of persons under investigation, and physicians currently can refer the patient to a hospital which has the safety measures in place to test, but then the hospital physician needs DPH to approve the testing.

Dr. Dwight expressed frustration that a student who recently traveled to a Level 3 country who is now exhibiting a fever has been turned down for testing. The group discussed concerns that not as many tests are available as needed, and Mr. Philippou indicated the White House stated more tests will be available shortly. Ms. McCarthy added that it has been reported that private labs will be up and running for testing shortly, as well.

Ms. Levison indicated that the base message is for residents to consult the MA DPH and CDC websites. Ms. McCarthy noted that the CDC has specific outreach for each community group, including posters. Ms. McCarthy suggested there needs to be outreach to other groups in town, including private schools and churches. Ms. Levison noted that Ms. Nigzus and Ms. Flynn can obtain posters on personal hygiene for interested parties from the MA Clearinghouse. Ms. Nigzus and Dr. Dwight indicated that the CDC handwashing posters have already been hung in the schools and library. Mr. Philippou noted that the CDC instructions need to be updated in that they still instruct that a first step of wetting the hands is not required with liquid soap; Ms. Nigzus and Dr. Dwight altered the posters they hung at Mr. Philippou's advice.

Mr. Philippou suggested a child who is being denied testing might request a chest x-ray as an alternative method for diagnosis; Ms. Nigzus was doubtful that this would help to diagnose a child with mild, non-respiratory symptoms. Ms. Levison suggested that while the current status is frustrating, she is hopeful that the CDC categories for who can be tested will evolve as more test kits become available.

It was asked if the BOH is aware how long the virus lives on surfaces. Ms. McCarthy indicated that the DPH has stated that a "deep clean" is not necessary, and that several cleaning agents are marked as EPA effective. Ms. Allen noted that she reviewed an article in the Journal of Hospital Infection that states the virus can survive three days on surfaces in normal conditions.

Chief Denmark suggested that the Public Safety Building would be an appropriate Emergency Operations Center (EOC) in the event of an outbreak, with another site set for any food or supplies that would be distributed. He indicated that criteria would need to be established for who would be admitted to the EOC, and that CERT Manager, Pat Natoli, has a list of trained volunteers who can be ready to assist if necessary.

Ms. Levison reported that she has spoken to the West Acton Pharmacy and New Family Pharmacy in Ayer and they are willing to provide same day delivery to Harvard residents if prescriptions are received by noon, and will allow for pick-up by non-family members if they receive verbal consent from the customer. Ms. Levison will provide the contact information for these pharmacies to be included on the Public Outreach Meeting FAQ. Ms. Nigzus noted she believes CVS Pharmacy will also deliver to Harvard.

Ms. Eliyesil indicated that the COA is looking to the BOH for best practices for the Harvard Help & COA van drivers. After discussion, it was agreed that the EMS squad would be best qualified to offer advice on this subject. Ms. McCarthy noted that this should be discussed at Thursday's meeting when the COA and EMS are both present.

Ms. Levison asked whether the Town has more audio speakers available for meetings to be phoned in. Mr. Bragan noted that Open Meeting Law requires a majority of the members to be physically present for the meeting. Chief Denmark confirmed that the Public Safety Building has the capability, and that meetings in Command Center during an incident are not governed by Open Meeting Law.

The members and participants discussed a draft instruction sheet for isolation and quarantine prepared by Mr. Philippou. Mr. Philippou indicated he has called DPH to request sample orders.

Mr. Grossman indicated that it is thought that a person can carry the virus for up to fourteen days from contact. He also advised that mandatory reporting goes to the state from the physician and then to the LBOH. Mr. Bragan indicated that the community does not have a right to know who is a suspected or confirmed positive, and that we can only release identifying information with the individual's consent.

Dr. Dwight asked whether the BOH would be collecting or tracking the travel of residents; Mr. Grossman indicated that the BOH does not have this authority. Dr. Dwight stated that the Schools have asked families to voluntarily provide this information. Mr. Bragan advised that the Schools can require this information of employees. Mr. Grossman noted that it is not necessary to release the identity of the positive resident to formulate advice on protective measures.

The BOH stated that a "presumptive" positive case is one which was tested by the State, and a "confirmed" is a case checked by the CDC. Mr. Bragan indicated he believes the State labs are taking 1-2 days to provide results, and the CDC is taking up to 7 days to confirm.

Ms. McCarthy volunteered to prepare the FAQ for the Public Meeting; Ms. Flynn will assist by sending the questions considered at this meeting. Mr. Grossman indicated that it is important that the information conveyed at the Public Meeting is consistent with the guidance of the DPH and CDC.

b. Clerk and Health Agent Update

- Mr. Grossman advised that another NABH community contacted him with concerns about a student's possible COVID-19 exposure. He referred the school to call the DPH epidemiologist for advice. He stated he is also working with another community's Human Resource Department to develop a plan for the employees.
- Ms. Flynn indicated she would present her clerk update at the evening meeting.

OLD BUSINESS- Old Business was not discussed.

ITEMS FOR NEXT AGENDA- Items for the next agenda briefly discussed, including the reasoning why discussions concerning the application for a septic expansion at 325 Ayer Road and the SafeWell lab choice were included.

ADJOURNMENT- Ms. Levison made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 3:27 p.m.; Ms. McCarthy seconded. All were in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Alison Flynn
Clerk

Referenced Documents:

- Agenda
- Draft Isolation/Quarantine Instruction Sheet