

HAMILTON BOARD OF HEALTH

MINUTES OF MEETING

August 6, 2020

Virtual Meeting via Zoom
Meeting ID 826 7372 5329
Password 091987

Members Present: Giselle Perez PhD, Christopher Small, and David Smith (Chair).

Others Present: Darcy Dale (Selectmen), Joe Domelowicz (Town Manager), and Christine Lee (Public Health Nurse)

This meeting was called to order at 2:00 pm by David Smith. All were in attendance via Zoom.

Review and approve meeting minutes of 6//26/20, 7/2/20, and 7/16/20.

Motion made by Christopher Small to approve the minutes of 6/2/20, 7/2/20, and 7/26/20.

Dr. Perez seconded.

Roll Call Vote: Dr. Perez – aye, Christopher Small – aye, and David Smith – aye. Unanimous in favor.

Report from Public Health Nurse, Christine Lee.

Christine Lee announced that there had been 37 confirmed cases, seven deaths and two people in isolation. A member of Myopia, who lived in Boston, had tested positive and called everyone he had been in contact with without speaking to the public health nurse to learn of guidelines.

Those whom he called all ran for testing. According to Ms. Lee, those who were tested without symptoms were creating a backlog for community testing sites. Ms. Lee noted the 90 car wait in Peabody, three to four day wait at AFC, and two day wait at Lahey. Ms. Lee cautioned that if one had not had contact with a positive person and been told by a physician, public health nurse, or tracer, they should not be tested as those who had symptoms were having to wait for seven days for results. Ms. Lee thought the Myopia member should have contacted his physician to determine protocol.

Christine Lee noted that there had not been an increase in cases due to the high school graduation or Town Meeting. Ms. Lee discussed issues related to determining where cases lived as cases had been recorded that did not live in the state but were permanent residents of Hamilton. Ms. Lee said the numbers were getting lumped together but she was able to research the cases carefully.

Summary of recent DPH/HWRSD conference calls by Christine Lee and David Smith

David Smith recalled the hour-long phone conversation with Superintendent Banios and Facility Manager, Tom Geary. All school nurses and public health nurses were working together. The Superintendent was asked to develop thresholds or triggers which would prompt more restrictive

conditions on school operations. The State had not provided guidance regarding a roll back or escalation on quarantine conditions. Ms. Lee was trying to convince the schools to have more activities out of doors.

Christine Lee said she was working with Jana Holiday (Director of Students at Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary) to decide on a contact tracing workflow model. David Smith had worked with Tim Johnson (Head of Pingree School) to bring students back to the campus in a hybrid approach. Two hundred of the 400 students would be on campus each day. Ms. Lee was coordinating with the Pingree School nurse, Allison Larson to continuously determine thresholds.

Possible drive through Flu clinics were discussed. Travel questions had been answered to those calling the Health Department. Residents had complained about Crosby's customers not wearing a mask. David Smith spoke with Alan Shepherd (Crosby's Manager) to discuss the exemptions to the mask order. The Department of Public Health had issued exemptions for health conditions and other criteria, but prohibited the store manager from demanding the customer tell what his health condition or exemption was. Mr. Shepherd reportedly said that he would contact the police if the situation became an issue between his customers and his employees. Other complaints had been filed with the Attorney General, which Bobby Cody handled by informing the owner of the business and completing the first stage of the educational program.

Town employees returning from vacation from outside of New England would schedule a test and quarantine until test results were presented. Personal time could be used while awaiting results. Some employees could also work remotely.

A zoom meeting with Wenham and the Schools would be scheduled. The Board would anticipate questions from students or parents. Marybeth Ting (Wenham Board of Health) was reportedly working on an explicit document with details regarding what would happen in several situations for parents to use.

The current Board organization and the rationale and options for future Board organization taking into account the new demands of the post-Covid 19 world by Town Manager, Joe Domelowicz.

Joe Domelowicz hoped to have a department that delivered health services to the community in a forward thinking manner rather than one that responded to a public health crisis. Mr. Domelowicz hoped to have his reorganization plan approved at Town Meeting on November 14, 2020. Michelle Lee Carrol (Human Resources) would develop one or two models for consideration in two to three weeks. Mr. Domelowicz expected different positions to be created to ensure a response in the scale required for a situation such as Covid 19 as the current structure did not call for it. Mr. Domelowicz had spoken with surrounding towns and MAPC regarding Health Department regionalization.

Joe Domelowicz said requirements had been issued from the State without financial assistance to provide for them. Mr. Domelowicz recalled that in Winthrop, one Regional Health Director covered three towns. Dr. Perez noted that when the pandemic hit, everyone was working in silos for health promotion messages. Mr. Domelowicz would develop a Mission Statement including focus and goals to encourage residents to approve of the change. The change would allow the department to focus on public health and identify grants. Hamilton had a needs assessment completed in the past but change did not occur. Christine Lee recalled the regional preventative post-natal care provided by five towns, which had been abandoned due to the virus. The grant funding had been diverted to Covid 19.

Dr. Perez and Joe Domelowicz agreed on the need for the well-being of children especially if remote learning was used. Christine Lee's position might need to become full time in the fall, paid for through the CARES Act. If not funded through the Act, Town Meeting would be asked to fund the position. The increase would be presented as a way to promote individuals' well-being. Mr. Domelowicz said all cities and towns were waiting for guidance from the State. Michigan, Georgia, and Texas were being considered as possible models to consider.

Update on Covid-19 matters from Board members.

Christopher Small and David Smith would remind residents what they should be doing to keep Covid 19 under control if numbers rose. The Board had been silent for a month. Christine Lee noted the importance of keeping up an exercise routine and asked that residents be encouraged to go outside more frequently.

David Smith said the Department of Public Health weekly dashboard had an incorrect number of cases listed for Hamilton. Christine Lee described scenarios when numbers were skewed for those not living in their permanent residences. The total confirmed cases were 37 (not 39) and two (not four). Ms. Lee noted that domestic violence, overdoses, and addictions had been on the rise and hoped people would be brought back out to intermingle.

Christopher Small said MA Teachers' Association voted not to go back to school and wondered how that would affect decision making. David Smith said the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education required individual districts to develop their own plan. Mr. Smith supported the concept of having a Town Forum with the Superintendent of Schools using a narrow agenda. Ms. Lee described the potential hybrid science program and using hot spots at the school for outdoor learning. Members wondered if the MA Teachers' Association voted for remote learning, could the schools open. Darcy Dale said the Superintendent was reportedly in favor of using tents outside. Hamilton hoped to keep training part of the curriculum rather than pay privately for a learning tool that the Schools had no power over. Ms. Dale noted the importance of accreditation.

Schedule and topics for next meetings.

The next Hamilton Board of Health meeting would be Thursday, August 20, 2020 at 2:00. John Koch (Hamilton Wenham Teachers' Union) would be invited. Darcy Dale thought the safest process would be to start with remote learning and slowly work back to in person classes.

New business.

Documents submitted.

Minutes dated 6/26/20, 7/2/20, and 7/16/20.

Adjournment

Motion made by Christopher Small to adjourn at 3:25 pm.

Second by David Smith.

Roll call vote: David Smith – aye, and Christopher Small – aye. Unanimous in favor.

Prepared by:

Marcie Ricker