

MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF HEALTH MEETING FOR THE NEWTOWN DISTRICT DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 9, 2018, NEWTOWN MUNICIPAL CENTER, LAND USE CONFERENCE ROOM, 3 PRIMROSE STREET, NEWTOWN, CT 06470

PRESENT: Board members: Dr. Robert Grossman – Chairman, Dr. William Begg, Herb Rosenthal, Curtis Read, Bernie Meehan, Jocelyne Taweh. Staff: Dr. Draper – Medical Advisor and Donna M. Culbert – Director of Health.

Public Participation: No public participation.

Acceptance of Minutes of Previous Meeting

A motion was made by Herb Rosenthal to accept the minutes from the BOH meeting on June 26, 2018. Seconded by Bernie Meehan. Motion approved.

New Member to the Board of Health

Ms. Jocelyne Taweh was introduced as a new member of the Newtown District Department of Health Board of Health and she is now the Borough representative.

Reports of Officers and Director of Health -Update on District Activities

ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVITY

Water Quality Issues

Ms. Culbert explained to the BOH members that she has been working on private water supply quality issues in the Cedar Hill Road and Megan Circle areas in Newtown, CT. Ms. Culbert explained that the original concern was for elevated levels of arsenic in that area, but while investigating the occurrence of arsenic, it was also brought to the District's attention that one well in that area has been impacted by chlorides and sodium from road salt.

Ms. Culbert informed the BOH members that in the Spring of 2018, there was an accident involving a town truck carrying a load of road salt in the area. Ms. Culbert explained the well test result for chlorides was at 1,300 mg per liter and that the acceptable level of chloride in a private water supply well is 250 mg per liter.

Mr. Read asked what the risks were. Ms. Culbert replied health concerns for people with high sodium intake issues and potential plumbing problems. Ms. Culbert stated that she has been working with a local well driller to evaluate an existing abandoned well on that property for water quality and yield information to see if it can be reused. Ms. Culbert was unsure why it was originally abandoned and offered that she did not know if this would be a short-term or long-term solution.

Ms. Culbert reviewed the incidence of high arsenic in the area and explained that the State DPH has recommended that local DOH use their discretion regarding arsenic and uranium testing for new wells. NHD has always recommended it, but will now make it a requirement. Ms. Culbert noted that arsenic is typically naturally occurring and that only in recent years has it been more actively looked into.

Joshua Heights

Ms. Culbert stated that the Bridgewater Planning and Zoning Commission has denied the application but believes the applicant will reapply. Ms. Culbert informed the Board members that the applicant wrote a negative letter regarding her professional conduct during the public hearing process. Ms. Culbert decided not to address it at that time to avoid any perceived conflict and/or its effect on decision making. Mr. Read stated that the applicant had written to the Water Supply section for the State of CT who then referred him to the BOH and Dr. Grossman.

Adoption of the FDA Food Code

Ms. Culbert stated that the adoption of the FDA Food Code for the State of CT has been delayed to January 2019. District staff have finished their on-line training modules. Ms. Culbert informed the Board that there will be big changes in the FSE inspection process.

Dr. Draper asked if there were any current violations of code that were not easily remedied in the restaurants(s). Ms. Culbert replied no, nothing extraordinary. Ms. Culbert added that for new FSE's often there is much effort towards the front-end of the restaurant and not as much for the back-end.

Ms. Culbert shared with the Board that one of the biggest changes will be that food service inspections will no longer be numerically scored. Violations will be categorized as Priority, Priority Foundation and Core. Ms. Culbert stated that depending on the nature of the violation, it will be corrected immediately or within 21 days. This new procedure will be a significant change for our inspectors and FSE's.

Temporary Events

Mr. Read asked if there was a decrease in the number of Temporary Food Events in the District for 2018. Ms. Culbert explained that the number of events listed on the handout to BOH members was from July 1, 2018 through the current date and that there are more temporary events to come.

Bernie Meehan noted that he has seen an increase in Food Truck participation at temporary events and has seen Ms. Leblanc inspecting at a few of them. Dr. Begg stated that the Danbury BOH has implemented an initial check at the beginning of a temporary event, as well as inspections during the event, and this has proved to drop the number of foodborne illness cases reported. Ms. Culbert noted that Ms. LeBlanc does a lot of work before the event to lower potential risk and that food safety remains front and center.

COMMUNITY HEALTH ACTIVITY

Substance Abuse and Opioids

Ms. Culbert explained that her priority involvement has been with the Newtown Prevention Council and Housatonic Valley Coalition Against Substance Abuse board. The State has asked

the regional action councils to consolidate, in particular regional action councils and regional mental health boards.

Dr. Begg shared that EMS (Emergency Medical Services) continues to play a huge role in the emerging substance abuse and opioid addiction crisis. Dr. Begg stated that at Danbury Hospital when a doctor is out of prescribing range they are called to task by a peer review board. Physicians at the hospital are now getting briefs quarterly from the State PMP (Prescription Monitoring Program) where they can see what their prescribing habits are in relation to their peer group. It also highlights deviations from standard recommendations. Dr. Begg was of the opinion that this will be helpful in aiding future patients from becoming addicted.

Dr. Begg reviewed the CCAR (CT Community for Addiction Recovery) team approach being used throughout the State. The CCAR team will meet a patient in the ER (Emergency Room) and personally deliver them to a rehab facility that day. Dr. Begg stated that the compliance rate is upwards of 70 percent. Ms. Culbert asked if this program was available through grant money. Dr. Begg stated he believes it is. Ms. Culbert asked if it was available in all hospitals. Dr. Begg stated no, but that Danbury Hospital applied and was granted the opportunity to participate.

Board members discussed the abuse of Fentanyl. Dr. Begg explained that Fentanyl is a narcotic more powerful than morphine. Dr. Begg stated that it has clinical uses for people in pain and cancer patients. Dr. Begg further shared the experience of Fentanyl exposure to EMS personnel. He stated that Fentanyl is so powerful that if someone has overdosed on it, EMS providers may be overcome from excess dose.

Board members shared some discussion about the use of Narcan. Dr. Begg stated that the level of grams of Narcan administered to overdose patients has increased to ten times the amount that was used in the past, and that sometimes this measure is not enough.

Dr. Draper inquired about the medical marijuana dispensary application in Newtown. Ms. Culbert stated that the medical marijuana dispensary has received local zoning approval and that the applicants must now apply for State approval. Mr. Rosenthal added that the Planning and Zoning Commission approved it over the objection of the NHD, the First Selectman and the Police Chief.

Mr. Rosenthal asked Dr. Begg his opinion of medical marijuana. Dr. Begg replied that under ideal circumstance folks in chronic pain, patients with cancer and the like, medical marijuana use is extremely valuable. Dr. Begg added that the problem is that the criteria for someone to get a medical marijuana card is so wide that anyone can get their own card. The folks that want it for recreational purposes are ruining it for the people who are in pain.

Chronic Disease Prevention

Ms. Culbert reminded the Board of her involvement as a member of the Chronic Disease Prevention subcommittee associated with Danbury Hospital's Health Needs Assessment; the subcommittee has been working on diabetes and hypertension for the past few years, and is also focusing on fall prevention. Maureen Farrell is the Chair for this committee and Blair

Balmforth from WCHN is an active member. Locally, the District has been working at our Senior Centers in each of our District towns. Ms. Culbert noted Bridgewater has an electronic newsletter that goes out quarterly and that she has included an article regarding falls and fall prevention.

Staff Update

Ms. Culbert stated that Mike Carey, Senior Sanitarian, has retired and moved out of the area. Ed Knapik has been promoted to Senior Sanitarian and Suzette LeBlanc will go from part-time to full-time employment. Ms. Culbert explained that the FDA food code will likely be adopted January 1, 2019 and Suzette will assist with the NHD internal compliance. With this change Ms. Leblanc's job description will change and she will assume the role of Food Inspector Training Officer. Ms. Culbert stated that every health department/district will be required to have one - they standardize any new employees who are not certified already, as well as evaluate existing ones. Presently the District is increasing Ms. LeBlanc's hours, but in the future may change her job description somewhat for the food protection program.

Mr. Rosenthal asked about the status of the open Sanitarian position. Ms. Culbert explained that Keith Vaughn has returned from his surgery and his office hours at both Bridgewater and Roxbury have been modified. Keith has more hours at the Newtown office. Ms. Culbert stated in the new year, she would like to hire a Sanitarian who has background in health education.

Regionalization

Ms. Culbert explained that the current Commissioner of Health, Dr. Raul Pino, has talked about the regionalization of public health. Ms. Culbert is not sure if this agenda will be pursued, since the current administration will be outgoing. There was discussion among the Board members regarding the pros and cons of regionalization.

NHDEA Contract

Ms. Culbert stated that the NHDEA contract was up for renewal this year. Dr. Begg, who was involved with the negotiations with District staff, for the first time, along with Herb Rosenthal, stated that there was a level of professionalism on both sides of the contract negotiations.

Dr. Begg and Mr. Rosenthal shared with the Board that the wage settlement was very similar to other town departments and agreed to a rate of 2.25 for the first year, 2.5 the second year and 2.25 for the third year. Dr. Begg explained that both he and Mr. Rosenthal helped define the paradigm shift for the pension plan going to a 401a plan. Anyone hired after this contract would only be eligible for a 401a plan and not the current pension plan.

Dr. Begg added that effective January 1, 2019 the health insurance premium payment for District employees would go up annually 13, 14 and 15 percent. Mr. Rosenthal noted that an opportunity for a signed memorandum concerning flexible hours was also given to District employees for consideration. It was not made part of the contract, as the District wants to try it out for a year and see how it works.

Mr. Rosenthal stated that part-time employees, based on years of service, would receive an increase in paid time off. He also stated the wage increase would be retroactive to July 1, 2018 and the health insurance premium would become effective January 1 of each contract year.

Dr. Begg made a motion to approve the NHDEA contract. Seconded by Herb Rosenthal. Motion approved.

Fee Schedule

Ms. Culbert explained to the BOH members that a revised Fee Schedule is not ready. Ms. Culbert is waiting to gather fees schedules from various local health districts/departments before preparing and presenting the revised fee schedule to the Board for approval.

Budget

Ms. Culbert distributed the proposed Budget for 2019-2020. Ms. Culbert explained that the highlighted budget is the proposed; the black and white copy is the current budget.

Ms. Culbert noted that the Operating and Programs line items were cut minimally; there are changes in the Salary and Payroll line items reflecting contractual increases and a decrease in the Health Insurance line item, this info is provided by Bob Tait, Newtown Finance Director.

Ms. Culbert started that per the Board's previous suggestion, a proposed salary increase, reflected as the same % increase for District staff was included in the DOH salary line item. Mr. Meehan proposed keeping the DOH salary increase separate from the DOH line item. Herb Rosenthal suggested that some monies be put in the Contingency line item for her future salary increase. Dr. Begg asked the Board how to address the DOH's salary to ensure that she receives a yearly increase. Mr. Rosenthal replied that it should be done at her yearly evaluation and salary increase determined at that time. Bernie Meehan asked that an agenda item regarding the DOH evaluation and salary increase be included in the next BOH meeting.

Ms. Culbert stated she would change the DOH Salary Line Item to the existing amount and include an increase to the Contingency line item before it is presented to the Town of Newtown for review. Ms. Culbert noted that the Town of Newtown is in the Budget preparation process now and looking for the District's proposed budget.

There was some discussion among Board members about the overall four percent increase and agreed that it was due to contractual and staffing increases

Dr. Begg made a motion to approve the proposed budget for 2018-2019 with DOH's potential salary increase moved to Contingency. Mr. Meehan seconded. Motion approved.

Health District Activity

Ms. Culbert stated that the District has been very busy the last few months. Activities included The Newtown Health and Safety Fair, Bridgewater Fair, Food Truck Festival, Newtown Day.

Flu Season

Ms. Culbert explained that the State Public Health Commissioner has asked local health departments/district to offer flu shot clinics on December 1 and 8th. Dr. Begg stated that the State flu conference was encouraging people to be vaccinated before Thanksgiving.

Infantile paralysis disease

Mr. Rosenthal inquired about the recent cases of Infantile Paralysis Disease. Dr. Begg offered that the exact etiology is not known and is of great concern. Dr. Begg noted that locally there have been no identified cases.

Having no further business, Dr. Grossman made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Bernie Meehan. Meeting adjourned.

Submitted by:

Maureen C. Schaedler
Administrative Assistant