

BOARD OF HEALTH
On-Line Zoom Teleconference, City of Northampton
<https://zoom.us/j/547347182>
May 21, 2020 Minutes

BOH Members Present: Joanne Levin; Suzanne Smith; Cynthia Suopis; and Laurent Levy

BOH Members Absent: None

Staff: Merridith O’Leary, Director, Melissa Roberts-Cote, BOH Clerk; Kelly Constantine, Interim BOH Clerk

Staff Absent: None

Meeting opened May 21, 2020 at 6:05 pm by Joanne Levin

I. Public Comment Session: No Public Comments

II. Discussion: New State Orders and Permissions

Director O’Leary advised the Board of Health that the Baker administration’s phased reopening plan relies heavily on local boards of health for enforcement. Chief Kasper from the Northampton Police Department offered to assist the Board with compliance checks indicating that her lieutenants could assist with enforcement. The Health Department has received complaint calls about people not wearing face masks in the community even when unable to socially distance. The Health Department will continue its education mission and remind the public that there is a mask-wearing requirement in the downtown business area, on the bike path, and in recreational areas. While a fine of \$300 can be issued, the Police Department intends to simply remind people that masks are mandatory and offer masks for those who do not have one. The Health Department has also been getting calls from various business asking assistance with the phased reopening. Director O’Leary has been referring them to the state guidelines.

Farmers Market managers met with Director O’Leary regarding why the market was subjected to so many restrictions. The managers did not understand why they were not able to have certain vendors at the Market. Director O’Leary indicated that value-added food vending required a 20-point health inspection and, at this time, she did not have inspectors available.

The shelter at the Northampton High School will be closing on Saturday, May 23rd. The number of residents has been averaging 32 at night after housing 54 residents at its peak. The shelter staff has been working with ServiceNet to providing resources to residents and assisting them with their transition. The Cot Shelter and Grove Street Residence will house some of the residents after the closing and others will be going to locations in Greenfield. Manna Kitchen and Smith College will be working to continue providing food for these locations. The collaboration with ServiceNet has been helpful. All residents will leave with a care package as they are transition back to the community. A deep cleaning of the shelter and surrounding grounds will ensure the high school is returned in the condition that it was provided prior to the shelter opening. Conversations are being initiated at the county level to discuss lessons learned and address future accommodations for the houseless. The county approach has also received some attention at the state level and Hampshire Public Health Preparedness Coalition has been invited to join a state advisory group.

III. Discussion: Local Boards of Health

- There are currently 700 contact tracing cases handled by the Public Health Nurse collaborative. Eleven communities are participating in the collaborative with funding from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health. The funding is being used to pay the nurses for the contract tracing. Northampton Public Health Nurse, Jenny Meyer, RN is overseeing the collaborative.
- The Mask initiative is going well with 3,435 masks given to the community. The masks have been purchased by the Health Department, donated by people from the community, and washed by Cooley Dickinson Hospital prior to being given to the community.
- The City of Northampton has developed a committee to explore steps toward having staff returning to work. A survey of dining establishments is being undertaken to determine whether there is interest in providing expanded outside seating at the time they are allowed to reopen.
- There is a new National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) grant that is moving the work forward that Hampshire Hope has been undertaking for the past six years. Hampshire Hope also reports a recent increase in overdoses and people relapsing.
- Director O'Leary is writing an order prohibiting Tag Sales, Yard Sales, Garage Sales, and similar sales for this season after receiving some inquiries on the matter.
- Director O'Leary voiced that she is concerned about opening summer camps in Northampton; however, she would like the various county boards of health to work together on a coordinated response. Note that the state will not prohibit camps from opening but will issue some restrictions.
- Director O'Leary feels that child care should have been opened with businesses as people may not have childcare. It feels traumatic for the children going to emergency centers. Home daycare centers are not going to open up while other daycares will be allowed to open June 2th.
- Pools are slated to open during phase 2 which include indoor and outdoor pools.

Meeting Closed: Motion to Close Meeting: Motion made to close the Board of Health meeting by Suzanne Smith, seconded by Cynthia Suopis, all in favor (4-0)

Meeting closed at 7:02 PM.

The next scheduled Board of Health Meeting: June 18, 2020

Melissa Roberts-Cote, BOH Clerk
