



Franklin Regional Council of Governments

CPHS Oversight Board Online Meeting Minutes May 28, 2020, 5 - 7:00 PM

Members: Brian Keir/Bernardston, Marti Taft-Ferguson (Chair)/Buckland, Doug Telling/Charlemont, Mike Friedlander/Colrain, Marie Iken/Conway, Cass Nawrocki/Hawley, Betsy Kovacs/Heath, Beth Kuzdeba/Leyden, Maggie Rice/Rowe, Ron Kelter and Jody Stetson/Shelburne

Guests: John Hillman/Leverett (being covered for COVID by nursing program)

Absent: Deerfield, Erving, Monroe, Gill, Northfield (joining nursing program on July 1)

Staff: Phoebe Walker, Lisa Danek Burke, Randy Crochier, Lisa White, Melanie Zamojski, Liz Jacobson-Carroll

Past Meeting Minutes:

Taft-Ferguson moved to approve the minutes of the February, March and April, 2020 CPHS Oversight Board meetings, Keir seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously with three abstentions (Nawrocki, Iken, Friedlander).

1. Public Health Nursing report: Lisa White

o **COVID-19 Update:**

- CPHS district has had 51 probable cases, and 3 fatalities. Currently only 1 case is in active isolation. We have had approximately 100 contacts in quarantine thus far. This week has been quiet, White said, but in the near recent past, a number of healthcare workers with mild or no symptoms and some grocery store and farm workers have been diagnosed, though none of these reside in our area.
- White reviewed her understanding of DPH requirements and protocols regarding screening and testing for antibodies (indicating a mounting response or a past infection) and the active virus. A PCR (polymerase chain reaction) test is the preferable diagnostic tool, she indicated, as the screening nasal swab/serology is of limited utility because we do not yet know if past illness confers immunity.
- Walker suggested that those with a positive serology result should contact their PCP to get the PCR, and to isolate themselves, even if asymptomatic; further, their close contacts should undergo PCR testing also. All insurance companies operating in Massachusetts are required to cover COVID-19 testing. The Community Health Center in Orange will not charge those without insurance, and individuals can request their own PCR test appointments.
- If a practitioner identifies a COVID-19 indicator, DPH requires BOHs to consider them as case requiring investigation. White will send a link to a DPH site with more information.
- While we've kept up with the number of cases thus far, and we're now in a low period due to successful social and physical distancing, White expects the re-opening of the economy, and the increasing availability of testing, to prompt a rise in cases beyond that which the current staff can manage.

- o **Community Tracing Collaborative Update:** The CTC, run by Partners In Health, is helping our Boards of Health with contact tracing, follow-up to encourage isolation/quarantine, and to otherwise help the district meet the needs of residents diagnosed with COVID-19. While the initial 3 cases assigned to CTC were handled poorly, White is confident that their methods will improve, and that CPHS will need their help if cases increase during flu season. They explained and remedied several issues of concern, have been very receptive to feedback, and have a well-informed and skilled team, she said. CPHS members will have contact with CTC supervisors, and CPHS nurses will have weekly meetings with CTC. She requested permission to release additional cases to CTC in order to improve the process before local cases surge exponentially. CPHS nurses will retain oversight of complex cases, such as those in congregate settings and schools, and of healthcare workers associated with a facility. The majority of attending members indicated, through live electronic polling, that they are in favor of White releasing limited additional cases to CTC, with CPHS evaluation of their work to follow.

- **Thinking Ahead to Flu Season:** White explained that the pandemic will prevent CPHS from conducting flu clinics in the manner to which it has become accustomed, and that she is working with the Hawlemont EDS and Frontier EDS to plan for smaller, drive through clinics. These will serve as practice for potential COVID-19 vaccine clinics. Walker and White indicated that while the Pioneer EDS has been inactive in recent years, Northfield will join the CPHS on July 1, and its senior center and COA have been active, so with Bernardston recently on board and Leyden a long-time member, there may be a chance for the Emergency Dispensing Site planning for that region to resume.

2. **Health Agent Reports** -- Lisa Danek Burke and Randy Crochier

- Field work continues to pick up; staff have witnessed 11 Title 5 inspections, 5 soil evaluation/perc tests, and 3 final inspections this month, and anticipate that these will double in the coming month.
- Having recently toured properties with representatives of the Buckland and Gill BOHs, Danek Burke reported that the abandoned housing inventories of those towns are near complete. (Walker reported that we will soon meet on-line with the Attorney General's office to learn about how an AGO program might facilitate their work on abandoned housing, and to vote on whether or not to join the program. These meetings will need to be posted meetings of the BOH, and attended by a quorum of members)
- After an earlier CPHS vote of postponement due to the pandemic, staff will send a letter regarding the July 1 implementation of the new fee schedule to all permit holders in the coming days.
- Staff is spending significant time researching and completing previously unfinished Title 5 and septic inspection paperwork in the online record system, so towns can easily find it in the future.
- A severe housing case is nearing closure, another is in court.
- Phase I of the re-opening has prompted fewer calls from residents than Crochier anticipated. He has received complaints regarding a prematurely open barroom, and about people walking around without masks (and will put up a few more signs in Shelburne Falls). He has received multiple calls from businesses, however, and expects to be inundated with issues in restaurants and retail stores in Phase II. Staff is hopeful that the State will begin providing health departments/BOHs with information in advance of releasing it to businesses and the public.
- White and Crochier talked to the medical directors of Deerfield Academy and Northfield Mount Hermon, and anticipate good partnerships for COVID management in the fall.

- New tobacco laws banning flavors go into effect June 1st; staff and BOH to spot-check retailers.

Walker will soon send a survey to gauge members' interest in various modalities for training, with an eye toward developing an annual certification process to strengthen CPHS, and for which it has already received funding from DPH. They have also allowed some spending on COVID-19 response.

3. **FRCOG Report:** Phoebe Walker

- The state subsidy for all tick testing ended mid-May, so the participating towns will now be billed for the cost. Buckland, Monroe, Bernardston and Colrain are not in the program, but are welcome to join. (If a town agrees to pay \$15/test, individuals receive \$35 off per test.)
- CPHS Budget (Finance reports are on the website):
 - Many budgets are stressed by staff members' inability to take time off, and overtime work. With some adjustments, the district should end the year in the black.
 - State emergency funds can be rolled over into next year. The shared services grant and FDA grant cannot.
 - Walker will reach out to all district town administrators in the next day or so about potential needs for health district staffing for re-opening and a fall surge, to see if these are eligible for CARES Act funding. She believes that related town meeting, election, and task force expenses may also qualify.

4. **Town Updates**

- **Bernardston:** Keir reported that the EOC remains open, Pioneer feeds 150 students daily, the senior center provides 35-45 meals daily, and the senior center/food bank recently distributed 3000 lbs of food to 80 seniors. The Pioneer high school graduation will be held on an evening at the Northfield drive-in movie theater. The Town election will be held inside town hall on June 29 for those who haven't returned absentee ballots. There are no plans yet for town meeting, so they may utilize the Governor's 1/12 budget option.
- **Buckland:** Taft-Ferguson reported that things have been relatively quiet: the hotline has received only a few calls from people misunderstanding the face-covering requirement; the BOH is

encouraging compliance among Phase I businesses, including a salon not enforcing the the requirement. Only one church has re-opened thus far, but has questions about HVAC systems. The senior center, MTRSD and the Fire Department are coordinating food distribution. The BOH has approved MTRSD's plan to hold a staggered, all-day, outdoor graduation; and the track is back open for exercisers. The library has been distributing free books. The Town summer camp has been cancelled for 2020. The election will be held late in June, in the MTRSD parking lot, with attendees remaining in their cars. The BOH may seek formal affiliation with the Town task force, which is meeting weekly and has asked for their input.

- **Charlemont:** Telling indicated that the BOH is working with The Academy at Charlemont to make plans for an in-person graduation; putting up signs around town; and addressing some issues with businesses. A date for an outdoor Town meeting in the pavilion at the fairgrounds has not yet been determined, but an election will take place on June 30th.
- **Colrain:** Friedlander said that voting by mail is underway, and that an outdoor town meeting is under consideration.
- **Conway:** Iken indicated that things have been quiet; the Town currently has no COVID cases, and a single contact. The BOH has been helping to develop guidelines for opening the freshwater pool. The transfer station is now accepting on-line payment for stickers, but not yet achieving compliance with face coverings or physical distancing. The Town Administrator and BOS are aiming for an end of June town meeting.
- **Hawley:** Nawrocki reported that two women are sewing and donating throughout town, that the June 1 election will be held outside, weather permitting, presumably with said masks donned and chairs separated appropriately. Many absentee ballots have already been received. A short June 8 town meeting will be held outside, perhaps with tent, and likely few attendees.
- **Heath:** Kovacs said that the BOH is evaluating its role, relative to that of the moderator and BOS, in setting dates and mitigating viral spread during town meeting and election. They may rent chairs to keep staff and volunteers from touching them during set-up and clean-up (and may request reimbursement for the expense). The BOS has agreed to delay scheduling the election until data from the Phase I re-opening can be evaluated; in the meantime, they are promoting absentee balloting. The library is considering curbside lending. While there is some need for greater compliance at Mohawk Estates, there have been few cases in town.
- **Leyden:** Kuzdeba indicated that the BOS is awaiting state guidance on conducting town meeting; Walker will follow-up with state-issued moderator protocols. The Police Chief/EMD has distributed PPE, and the COA is distributing meals.
- **Rowe:** Rice reported weekly task force meetings followed by town-wide automated call messaging. The Rowe Camp & Conference Center is closed for the season. The sole park employee is following national protocols to keep the property open. The Grasshopper Program, where 14-18 year olds are paid for roadside cleanup, has been cancelled. Transfer station stickers to go out by mail. The elementary school has requested BOH permission for an outdoor graduation mid June. The Library is providing curbside service. Town meeting and the election are being planned for late June. The Town nurse, whose pandemic-related work has been highly valued, is retiring as of June 30th; Kovacs requested help in spreading the word about the 24 hour/week position.
- **Shelburne:** Stetson reported a steady caseload, and weekly town-wide messaging. The task force is assisting with town meeting planning, and anticipates the use of a tent while following Phase I guidelines for houses of worship. To discourage loud-talkers and viral spread, they will provide microphones and individual yes/no signs for voting. Election procedures have been established as well; the library is planning its re-opening; and the BOH is beginning to consider protocols for children's play groups.
- Leverett Hillman said that the BOS and emergency management team is planning an outdoor town meeting for June 20 in Leverett. The library is operating curbside, The BOH has ample PPE and is in contact with organizations in town as they open up.

Taft-Ferguson initiated discussion regarding the onerous burden presented by Phase I guidelines on farm stands and CSAs -- especially in comparison with those of grocery and big box stores selling produce -- and indicated that Buckland may issue variances to the regulations. The discussion expanded to include other small retail operations, with consensus that these are able to mitigate risk successfully.