



CPHS Oversight Board Online Meeting Minutes

December 16, 2021

Public Health

Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Cooperative Public Health Service

Franklin Regional Council of Governments

Member Attendance:

Ashfield	Caroline White	Gill-	Jeffrey Blomstedt
Bernardston-	Jean Page	Hawley-	absent
Buckland-	Peggy Hart	Heath-	Barbara Gordon
Charlemont-	Doug Telling	Leyden-	Beth Kuzdeba
Colrain-	absent	Monroe-	absent
Conway-	absent	Northfield-	absent
Deerfield-	absent	Rowe-	Maggie Rice
Erving-	Jeffrey McAndrews	Shelburne-	Fritz Vohr

Staff Attendance: Randy Crochier, Lisa Danek Burke, Liz Jacobson-Carroll, Maureen O'Reilly, Meg Ryan, Kurt Schellenberg, Phoebe Walker, Lisa White

Introductions & Town Updates

- Ashfield /White: the BOH did not sign off on a proposed cell phone tower, and continues to research the potential health effects on nearby residents.
- Bernardston/Page: the BOH re-instated the mask mandate on Monday, and witnessed a few septic inspections.
- Buckland/Hart: the BOH has kept its mask mandate, despite pressure resulting from some neighboring towns lifting theirs. BOH and Walker are advocating for state to account for mis-alignment of zip codes and municipalities in the reporting of COVID cases and vaccine rates, with support from Senator Hinds (a Buckland native!).
- Charlemont/Telling: the BOH (and residents) are grateful for the in-home services being provided by the CPHS nurses, and for the health agents work on the extensive septic plan for Berkshire East. They are anticipating the arrival of the vax bus next week.
- Erving/McAndrews: He is advocating for the adoption of a mask mandate through the holidays; Crochier will send him examples. The BOH is following the rehabilitation of a few buildings after the summer flooding. The group welcomed him as the new Erving representative!
- Gill/Blomsted: The mask mandate remains in force with good compliance at the three town businesses, including the high-volume business on Route 2.
- Heath/Gordon: With the mask mandate remaining in place, the BOH is focused on building a coalition, based on that in Rowe, with town stakeholders and FRCOG staff. They are anticipating arrival of self-testing kits from the state, via FRCOG, and are planning how to distribute them.

- Leyden – The mask mandate for town offices stands, emergency services remain in disarray, the BOH is seeking an animal control officer, planning a pop-up food pantry, and considering green burials.
- Shelburne/Vohr: the BOH will consider re-instating the mask mandate at its meeting Monday.

Walker reported on speaking that morning at a State House hearing regarding the pandemic in Western MA: there she discussed local efforts to test and vaccinate, the continued need for the vax bus, the poor timing of the closing of the Community Tracing Collaborative (CTC), the strain on school nurses, and shortcomings in the distribution of the rapid-test kits. The transcript of her testimony will be on the FRCOG website meeting announcement (along with other documents of interest from the hearing.)

Approve Meeting Minutes

With a motion from Vohr, seconded by Telling, the minutes of the November 18, 2021 meeting were approved unanimously, with minor amendments.

Review Draft Budget for FY23

Crochier put off presenting the full budget until the January meeting, but provided an overview of how it is put together. He reviewed revenue sources, town vs. grant funding of particular projects, staff assignments and hours/week, and the role of the CPHS Oversight Board. FY23 changes may include significant salary increases (a 6% COLA increase for all, and a longevity boost for those here over 10 years – Lisa White), and the loss of Deerfield revenue as it leaves the district. He noted that the \$12,000 software was purchased with grant funds, and that the health district is able to accomplish far more for its towns than towns would be able to do on their own, in part because of its enhanced ability to secure and leverage grants. He will share the workplans for the large Public Health Excellence grant funding in January or February, and thanked board members for their approval of last year’s budget increase -- which made the PHE grant possible, and enabled a reduction of town assessments. The Council will meet on January 27, after the next board meeting, to vote on the budget, he said, and encouraged members to start talking about the budget with members of their select boards and finance committees, and town administrators. Rice pointed out that even with the proposed salary increases, the total budget will still be less than was approved by towns last year.

Crochier complemented White, Ryan and O’Reilly for their extraordinary efforts of late, Ryan for her work on healthy aging, O’Reilly for providing scripts for staff to use in contact tracing, and Paul Lemelin (whose p/t hours maybe cut from the budget) for his excellent customer service. He thanked the temporary/pandemic CPHS staff “emeritus”: Meg Burch, Jeannette Voas, Barbara Wroblewski, and Melanie Zamojski. There was some discussion regarding Deerfield’s possible reasons for leaving the district.

Public Health Nursing Report

O’Reilly gave an overview of how CPHS staff manages new cases daily, and how case counts are calculated weekly. She described pitfalls in the daily case count, noting that while the weekly count has a 1-2 week lag, the numbers are more accurate. There were 112 cases last week, and 92 this week. She pointed to the new website with contact tracing and patient guidance for various scenarios. In developing the site, she has standardized and focused the various messages that staff and BOH members may convey, thus providing more consistency and better service within the district. Discussion topics included: the likely undercounting of cases due to the increased availability of rapid tests for home use; data posted weekly on the Public Health Institute of Western MA website; the availability of MAVEN training for BOH members; and communicating with select board and finance committee members.

Ryan described ongoing wellness clinics that she and White are conducting, with vaccines, in several towns. She described progress in age-friendly planning: several more towns have signed-on; the needs assessment

survey is ready to be rolled out after the holidays; and she has developed a presentation on re-framing aging and changing attitudes through language.

White summarized recent COVID vaccination efforts. She, Ryan, and volunteer Jackie Choate began administering shots in homes and at pop-up clinics in August, and started offering boosters in September. They help people navigate the on-line sign up for pharmacy appointments, and give jabs at homes when that is not achievable. They must administer the 20 doses in each vial within 12 hours of opening it, and welcome BOH member calls to White's FRCOG office line (413-774-3167 x156) regarding specific residents in need.

Health Agents Report

Danek Burke began by reminding attendees that her report does not pertain to the nursing-only towns of CPHS (Ashfield, Deerfield, Erving and Northfield), nor do references to oversight of septic and wells pertain to Conway or Bernardston. For the health inspection towns, since the November meeting, they have received 99 new permit applications, and have conducted 29 Title V inspections, perc tests, and final inspections. With Crochier instructing, she and Schellenberg assisted BOH members and others enrolled in the recent 3-in-1 Food Safety Training class held in person at the Conway Grammar School, she said.

Schellenberg indicated that his second month of on-the-job training has involved database work, especially as it pertains to identifying and tracking the permitting of short-term rentals. He is comparing data from the Dept. of Revenue with that in FRCOG's permitting software and contacts database, and is writing to owners to permit and re-permit their establishments. He will share data with town assessors in the new year. Crochier said that he expects another 100 food-serving establishments to request renewals of their permits for 2022.

Slides of CPHS staff members' presentations are available on the FRCOG website meeting announcement.

Vax Bus update

Walker reported that while vax bus visits continue to be successful – 83% of eligible Franklin County residents over 5 y.o. have received at least one shot -- there have been obstacles to overcome, and significant effort has been required of FRCOG staff (problem solving), MRC volunteers (staffing) and school nurses, the last of which are tired. While we may invite the vax bus to the region again, we will plan for hosting at sites other than elementary schools. In response to a question, Walker explained why emergency dispensing sites were not identified as the main method of vaccine distribution in MA, and that the focus of the CPHS and its BOHs is to look out for the vulnerable.

Rapid Antigen Test Distribution for Qualifying Towns

Speaking to representatives of the ten CPHS towns who qualified for state-provided test based on their family poverty rates, Walker explained that distribution of the 180-900 tests per town (depending on population size) from the state will be available at FRCOG tomorrow morning -- once staff has affixed labels with instructions for those testing positive. She emphasized the importance of individual BOHs determining how to distribute these to disenfranchised members of their communities quickly and efficiently. Organizations that may be able to partner in that identification and distribution include: LifePath, Meals on Wheels, senior centers, food pantries, schools, churches, and first-responders. Populations to target include individuals and families benefitting from enrollment in SNAP, heating assistance programs, MassHealth, and free/reduced-cost school lunch programs, among others. Members should email Walker or Crochier to determine means for pick-up or drop-off of cases of kits.

The meeting adjourned at 7:12 PM.