

Health Commission Minutes 06/11/2020

This was a Zoom teleconference meeting.

Present: Patricia Parry, Margaret Cobb, Barbara Decker, Thomas Getreuer, Dr. Calder

Absent: Roslyn Robertson

The meeting was called to order at 9:04AM

Correspondence: There was none

Director of Health Report: Dr. Calder reports - Contact tracing, being organized and run by the state, is not yet underway due to a multitude of software issues, lack of training and a lack of process to move forward. Modeling data predicts a second wave of COVID cases in August – September but the recent protests may throw that off considerably. The Westhill testing site has closed due to a lack of clients. First responder testing continues. A Yale sero-prevalence study is being planned for Stamford to further define infection rates and to geographically identify pockets of infection of COVID. Michael Pollard has been tasked with doing a marketing campaign to encourage more mask use and more social distancing by more people. Ms. Parry asked who is paying for the program. Dr. Calder does not know.

Dr. Calder expressed her opinion that there is a general failure in communication with the State agencies regarding COVID response as well as a chronic lack of funding.

Aside from COVID we have one new presumptive TB case that came from outside of Stamford so this is not local spread. There are 9-10 cases in Stamford.

STD Grant: The Stamford DOH will keep the Grant for this fiscal year but will give it up next year as the STD program can be better handled outside of the Department of Health.

BP Screening: We have a part time RN on board helping to do the BP Screening program. A Block Grant from the State for BP screening was never activated due to the COVID situation.

Inspections: Most of the inspectors are back at work as the City decides how to safely reopen City buildings. Public schools task force will decide how to open the schools. (Dr. Calder feels the nursing offices are too small by design to achieve social distancing if/when children come to see the nurse. Options are being explored. Dr. Calder also feels that the dental hygienists cannot work on patients with the current setup in the schools.

Hurricane season: Hurricane preparedness is affected by the COVID need for space between people in shelters. It is estimated that 10 shelters with 50 people in each will be needed if we are still functioning with social distancing. Previously, we had designated only one shelter for hurricane planning.

Cooling Centers: All are closed due to COVID except for the lobby of the Government center. The rest of the gov't center is closed to the public.

Larvicide use: Currently treating a much larger area to cover mosquitos responsible for Eastern Equine Encephalitis and West Nile Virus.

PPE: There are adequate supplies at this time. A MRC volunteer distributes them weekly from the gov't center. The state sent 8,100 thermometers to the BOE to be distributed to students. There is an ability to have data transmitted to the state if a parent downloads the app. The thermometers are a gift from Kinsa, the thermometer manufacturer. Reports go to the State Dept. of Health. Clergy can obtain IR thermometers from the State at no charge.

Open positions: The Health Department is currently recruiting for the 3 positions after recent resignations.

Racial Injustice: Violence and racial injustice are a Public Health issue. Dr. Calder suggested the Health Commission might consider involvement in this area.

UConn residence: Use of this facility for housing persons in need of quarantine who could not do this themselves has been closed due to lack of need. The State has taken over sheltering the homeless and residents of the homeless shelters.

Testing: There are not enough COVID testing sites for a variety of reasons not the least of which is the administrative headaches, billing, and personnel issues. A 2 million dollar budget would need to be in place just to hire the personnel needed to test and do contact tracing and that money is not available. CARES and FEMA can reimburse the Health Dept. for some expenses, then the State will kick in as final source. The City Emergency Preparedness Plan does not cover any of this. Job descriptions and union issues would have to be revamped in order for a public health emergency declaration to require Health Department employees to work during an emergency.

Director of Public Safety, Health, and Welfare Report: No Report

Old Business: A letter was sent to AG Tong for an opinion as to whether Stamford might be able to add to the State recommendations for vaccinations. No reply has been received yet. Pat Parry expressed a strong objection to the use of the word (override) state laws in regards to school vaccination in the Agenda for today's meeting. Ms. Parry asked last month, and again explained, that what she is suggesting is not an override of the state policy. She recommends that a parents' statement citing a religious exemption to vaccinations require a yearly attestation. Dr. Getreuer said he was not sure he understood what the suggestion is and asked Ms. Parry to prepare a write up regarding her suggestion. Dr Cobb felt that Ms. Parry's recommendation held great merit. Ms. Parry will present her recommendation to the Health Commission in July.

New Business: Dr. Peggy (Margaret) Cobb is leaving the Health Commission today. We all thank her for her many years of wisdom and sage advice. She will be missed by all!

Adjournment: 10:15AM

Respectfully submitted by

Thomas Getreuer, DDS,MAGD

Chair, Stamford Health Commission