

Winthrop Board Of Health Meeting Minutes
January 19, 2022 @6:30 pm
REMOTE PARTICIPATION BY ZOOM

Call to order: 6:37 pm.

Roll call: Bill Schmidt, Chair; Jeanne Holgersen, Member; Marianne Dalton, Member

Present: Meredith Hurley, Director of Public Health and Clinical Services; Karin Chavis; Winthrop Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Betsy Shane; Councilor Tracey Honan; Wendy Millar-Page, Solid Waste and Recycling Manager; Carol Walker, Mothers Out Front; Barbara Bishop; Kurt Millar; Al Legee, Commissioner of Inspectional Services.

Election of Chair and Vice Chair: Bill states that Massachusetts General Law requires the election of a chair to take place every year. The Board of Health has traditionally done this at its January meeting and also elected a vice-chair as well. Bill is nominated to be Chair; he accepts the nomination and is unanimously approved 3-0. Jeanne Holgersen, Member is nominated to be Vice Chair; she accepts the nomination and is unanimously approved 3-0.

Review of minutes—December 16, 2021: approved 3-0 unanimously.

Public comment: Karin Chavis lauds Meredith Hurley's presentation to the Town Council about mask wearing. Also Karin reports that Meredith has been selected to receive a Community Salute Award from University of Massachusetts for work done during the pandemic. Karin states that at the beginning of the pandemic Meredith really was a one-person department, and provided good leadership all during the pandemic.

Meredith announces completion of her Masters of Public Health in February. Bill requests Meredith to send the notification of the UMass award to the Board Of Health and he will see to it that it is publicized. No further public comment.

Past business:

Status—59 Cottage Avenue—Report from ISD: Al Legee, Commissioner of Inspectional Services reports the property has gone into receivership. One of the owners is reportedly being placed in a rest home. Al states he is busy with inspections. Two properties on Shirley Avenue, one on Siren Street, and one on Undine Avenue have been the source of many citations, as well as multiple police and fire calls over the last few years. Al states that negotiations with the landlord have not yielded any improvements in compliance. Interim Town Manager Terry Delehanty has requested that these properties go into receivership as well.

Director of Public Health and Clinical Services update: Meredith Hurley, Director of Public Health and Clinical Services reports on the status of COVID-19 cases and vaccinations in Winthrop. She reports last week that positivity rate reached 25%, but that this figure is likely higher because home testing is not being counted. The epidemiologist recently hired is working on ways to include the home tests in the positivity rates.

Between January 3-17, the MWRA wastewater testing showed a decrease in virus load. The largest number of single-day cases occurred on January 4, 138 positive cases; Meredith reports the numbers are now trending downward. She estimates the positivity rate may be as high as 50% if the unknown number of positive home tests is added to the data set.

School cases are stabilizing. Meredith highly commends the school nurses and school staff for contact tracing, which adds countless hours to the daily workload.

Vaccinations: take place on Tuesdays in Meredith's office.

Commonwealth Clinical Services are holding clinics as well. EBNHC is conducting pop-up clinics, benefiting the non-English-speaking population. Last Mile Health, a non-governmental entity, has partnered with EBNHC in vaccine and testing initiatives. Meredith applauds the volunteers in her department performing contact tracing as well as inquiring if residents have food access and providing COVID-related education.

Jeanne reports that commercial insurance covers eight tests per member per month. The federal government provides 4 free tests per household.

Testing: Meredith states test expire, so don't stockpile them. The people that are infected in the last 90 days are advised not to test due to natural immunity. Masking with N 95s is more effective than testing negative and going without a mask.

Masking: Meredith states beware if you've been in a mixed group and then you are visiting a high risk group; wear a mask. If you were going from a high risk area to another high-risk area you should wear a mask.

Meredith reports a project integrating public health practices into public safety response. Mental health, substance abuse, providing equitable access to health resources for the most vulnerable. She is adding five new positions to the health department. She is launching a data collection tool soon. Personnel are being brought on board. The goal: decrease interaction in the criminal justice system of non-criminal offenders that need help and support in other ways. Tools such as resource navigators, behavioral health and substance abuse providers will be integrated into the Health Department in the next few weeks.

Bill asked about the accuracy rate of home tests. Meredith replies from 72 to 94%.

Bill adds the recommendation Jeanne wrote for mask wearing for the holidays was well appreciated by the community.

The Parc at Harbor View: Al reports the kitchen has reopened. They are in compliance with protocols, health safety standards. Dining room

renovation is still ongoing; waiting for building materials. Emergency evacuation plan is now in place.

Commissioner of Inspectional Services update: Al brings up a grading system that is yet to be established in Winthrop for restaurants. He would like to implement this, grading cleanliness, number of health violations, whether the establishment follows protocol, etc. This system would allow patrons to see the grading, and it would also be an incentive for restaurants to be compliant. In addition it allows inspectional services to track violations. Lynn has a grading system in place; Al will send a copy of this to the Board to review.

Winthrop Chamber Of Commerce Executive Director Betsy Shane will review grading system material once sent to her and then she'll be able to comment on how it can help chamber members.

Concerning dumpsters: Al states that landlords owning private dumpsters should be paying for rat baiting. He would like the Board's opinion on this. Bill states he will research other towns' laws to see what other towns have done and adapt those regulations to Winthrop's needs.

Grease trap emptying: should occur monthly, according to Al, but he would like to follow more closely to ensure it is being done. He also mentions the issue of open dumpsters. They should be covered, to eliminate rats and over-full dumpsters. This is an issue with private dumpsters, landlords need to be brought into compliance.

Bill asks if fines are enough to curb dumpster issues. Al replies fines are per violation; if citation is issued on a Tuesday morning and issue is corrected on the afternoon of the same day, no further citation/fine can be levied. Maximum fines are \$300 at present. Al questions if it should be raised to \$500, to incentivize compliance. Fees start at \$40 right now. Al asks if increase could be discussed at Town Council. Bill asks if fines can be rolled back to a lower amount if compliance is met for a certain period of months. Al will consider this.

Al states that the dumpster for the 3 restaurants in Michael's Mall is not large enough and is not being emptied frequently enough. Landlord needs to be more attentive. All three restaurants are using the same dumpster. The landlord said he's getting a larger one and promises to empty more frequently. Baiting for rats was not occurring; but now all three restaurants have hired exterminator for baiting. Dunkin' Donuts on Revere St. needs to repair the bathroom. They will have a surprise inspection. They were not using the water closet for cleaning item storage, they were using the bathroom. 369 Shirley St: Violations corrected, person did not allow inspectional services access to return and inspect. Al states he will send a letter. Al reports all restaurant inspections done, they were largely OK with minor infractions that were quickly corrected.

Governor's Park Pool Safety: Al has not had a chance yet to investigate this issue. He will do so as soon as the nice weather approaches. He will ask his colleague in Chelsea what they've done with pools there and report back to the Board.

Rats at Hannaford Park: Al reports that rat activity at Hannaford Park is up.

MRC Update: Jeanne Maggio, Coordinator of Medical Reserve Corp (MRC) not present at meeting.

Epidermis—services: Jeanne sent email to Jillian on Friday to asking for the documentation previously requested but nothing yet received from Jillian. Bill states the Board Of Health has shown generosity and patience with Epidermis. The facts are Epidermis has no permit for body art. They cannot do Botox. Bill recommends to send a letter requesting receipt of all documentation by February 1, 2022 or the Board would state the need for them to cease operations, or face violations and fines. Bill provides history: when dealing with Epidermis in June 2021 communication with the Board started, but response to

requests for documentation have been very intermittent despite many deadlines that have passed. A final deadline is needed. Bill states that Epidermis' website still lists non-permitted services. The bottom line: Bill recommends sending a message to Epidermis asking what services they are performing versus what they are listing. If they aren't doing permanent makeup, then and the Board of Health is not involved. The letter should include the following: A request to disclose what procedures/services performed there that require an approved permit application for body art. A reminder that they are not able to do Botox. The deadline is nonnegotiable. Bill adds that a email was sent by Bill to Jillian informing her that the Board of Health will decide if we need to take any appropriate action.

Anti-idling campaign: Bill states praise for Marianne Dalton for the guest op-ed on anti-idling published in the Transcript. Bill sent a copy to Laurisa asking if it could be posted on the web and in the Town Manager's report. He reports on the email from Julia Wallerice to the Board of Health expressing gratitude for the article, and suggesting that perhaps Mothers Out Front might be willing to spearhead participation in anti-idling project, engaging with the school committee. Bill will forward info Julia sent to Barbara, who will then relay to Mothers Out Front.

Trash, recycling, and solid waste disposal regulation: Bill reports the legal ad was placed in the Transcript last week notifying the public of the trash, recycling and solid waste disposal regulation. Bill reports that Town Council President Jim Letterie called him with questions and comments on the regulations, including the issues of abatements, whether to include 4-family dwellings in the municipal collection, as well as questions about overflow bags and additional barrels. Bill reports stating to President Letterie that regulations were formulated that the DPW would have the capability to enforce, given the limitations of personnel, finances and budget. Town Council can discuss revision of regulations with Board of Health as questions arise.

Wendy Millar-Page, Solid Waste And Recycling Manager reports that starting in November 2022, textiles, mattresses and box springs will no longer be accepted in trash collection; the Board will need to amend the regulations when this occurs.

Black plastic—not recyclable: Bill sent a copy of the regulations to Betsy Shane for her review. Bill reports that a local retailer asked if the cost of black plastic vs other containers has been researched. Wendy confirms that the cost is virtually the same, from her study of costs from Restaurant Depot; however, aluminum containers are more expensive. Wendy emphasizes she does not want to penalize businesses who are having supply chain issues transitioning to non-black plastic containers. Bill requests that Wendy send her research on cost comparisons to the Board, to enable the Board to share with retailers asking about it. The study will also be useful if the matter needs to be brought before the Town Council.

Women's Health Forum: Barbara Bishop states that planning for the Women's Health Forum (WHF) is pending the swearing-in of our new state senator Lydia Edwards. Barbara has spoken to a friend who thinks Lydia will be on board with this initiative. Jeanne voices support for the WHF. She reviews that the Board Of Health members will not be able to lead the initiative d/t lack of human resources. Jeanne foresees Commonwealth Clinical Services partnering with Barbara to start up logistics and outreach. Jeanne states Barbara says program is ready to roll out. The timing is to be determined, whether summer or fall. Obtaining high-profile speakers will hopefully be Lydia's forte. Bill asks where will forum be held due to pandemic protocols at school venues. He recommends asking school superintendent Lisa Howard when would be the best time. As an aside, Bill brings up the benefits of zoom. It allows participation of more residents who otherwise may not be able to attend.

Chickens permit—keeping of animals: Bill provides background. Back in January 2016 members of the BOH Tracey Honan, Nick LoConte, and Bill were working on an ordinance in Winthrop concerning keeping of animals. At that time Tracey was updating the existing ordinance, due to an absence of reference to beekeeping. The town ordinance committee got the ordinance for amending but this was not completed.

Due to the age of the original ordinance (2011) we may need to revise and/or update the ordinance on animals. There have been recent inquiries about chickens and beekeeping from residents. The BOH may do a regulation instead of submitting an ordinance to the Town Council for its approval. Tracey states she will be able to help. Bill comment that the best way to build a new ordinance is to borrow from another similar community that already has ordinances in place. Bill and Tracey will collaborate on this project, using other towns' ordinances as a model, adapting to the needs of Winthrop. Bill points out the Massachusetts Association of Health Boards (MAHB) website may be a good resource.

MAPC—local air quality project: Bill reports the North Suffolk Public Health Collaborative got funds and staff from MAPC (Metropolitan Area Planning Council) to work on air quality issues. Peter Christopher, attorney-at-law, wrote a law review article asking if Winthrop could take action against Logan Airport concerning ill affects of noise pollution and air quality. Mitigation and feasibility yet to be determined. CHNA (Community Health Network Areas) funds and resources may be available to obtain possible mitigation for those communities surrounding Logan Airport.

Tobacco control compliance checks and inspections: Bonny Carroll, Director of the Six City Tobacco Initiative emailed the board reporting the status of inspections She reports good compliance, only a few minor infractions that were remedied quickly.

Radon action month: January has been designated Radon Action Month. The Mass Department of Public Works is offering free radon test kits. Bill will ask Laurisa to post on the Winthrop weekly on the town website.

DEP—Low Emissions Vehicle Program: Bill reports on an article in Commonwealth Magazine. Gail Miller who is active in the East Boston Airport Impact Relief group co-authored this article. There is a public hearing notice in the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to put in regulations. Bill will peruse this and bring any pertinent items to the next Board meeting.

Board of Health workplan for 2022: Bill has compiled a work plan for 2022. He asked fellow board members to review and think about revisions or additions. The purpose of a work plan is to allow guidance for the next year. Bill will revise the work plan according to the suggestions given by board members, will present at next board meeting.

Bill clarifies the work plan: some items are yearly and would stay on the list; others that are accomplished can be removed. It can consist of a wish list for those things wanting attention, listing who will spearhead them. Priorities range from high to medium to low.

Adjournment: 8:51 PM adjournment, approved unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Marianne Dalton, member