



## **MINUTES OF THE BOSTON BOARD OF HEALTH**

A meeting of the Boston Board of Health (“Board”) was held on Wednesday, September 16, 2020 by remote participation pursuant to Governor Charles D. Baker’s Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, s. 20.

### **Board Members Present**

Manny Lopes, Chair, Phillomin Laptiste, Jennifer Childs-Roshak, Rebecca Gutman, Kate Walsh, John Fernandez

### **Also Present**

PJ McCann, Christina Zazzara, Grace Connolly, Taylor Jolly, Merrily Evdokimoff, Steve Simmons, Evan Reese Taylor, Chief Marty Martinez, Eline Van Es, Mary Bovenzi, Brianna Thompson, Brad Cohen, Cynthia Hamwey, Timothy Harrington, Agathe Hoffer-Schaefer, Stacey Kokaram, Jennifer Lo, Mark Scott, Anne McHugh, Caitlin McLaughlin, Laura Segal, David Walton, Dan Dooley, Chief Karilyn Crockett, Sheila Lee, Johnna Murphy, Nestor Rijo-Figueroa, Felipe Ruiz, Gerry Thomas, Jen Tracey.

### **Chairperson’s Opening Remarks**

Shortly after 4 p.m., Chairperson Lopes welcomed Board members, staff, and members of the public and gave an overview of the agenda. He stated: Hello and welcome everyone to the September Board of Health Meeting. Please also note that this meeting is being recorded. As a reminder for our virtual meeting etiquette, please keep yourself on mute unless you are presenting. As usual, we have a packed agenda and want to be respectful of everyone’s time, we’ll be having Dr. Karilyn Crockett join us later in the meeting as well. I’ll go ahead and ask for a motion to accept the minutes from our previous meeting and then hand it over to Rita for her executive office update.

### **Acceptance and Approval of July 15th Meeting Minutes**

A motion was made, by Ms. Gutman seconded by Dr. Childs-Roshak, and taken unanimously to approve the minutes for the July 15<sup>th</sup> Board meeting.

### **Executive Office Report**

#### **Rita Nieves, Interim Executive Director**

Rita Nieves gave the following report:

Thank you, Manny, and thank you everyone for joining us today. I have a few updates that I want to share at the top of the meeting to make sure it doesn't get missed and my time will also include our Intergovernmental Relations and Communications updates from Tierney Flaherty and Caitlin McLaughlin.

First, I want to update the Board on the Bonus Pay that we were able to award staff who were working on site during the heat of the pandemic from March to May. We're excited to have extended roughly \$1,200 worth of bonus pay to staff who reported onsite to work during the start of the public health emergency. You can see briefly here some of the eligibility criteria that we were able to work out. I want to thank a lot of staff and leadership that made this possible: I want to recognize and express my gratitude to Mayor Marty Walsh for supporting this bonus pay idea, Chief Marty Martinez for his tireless and effective advocacy on behalf of BPHC staff, Grace Connolly and Phil Ehresman for all the work they had to do with the budget and payroll files, Dave Susich for negotiating all the agreements with the Unions and Velvet Butler, Rosa Andrade, Carrie Burton and Joseph Coat, our payroll team for all the behind the scenes work to get this into our staff's paychecks. Our staff went above and beyond during this difficult time and I am thrilled to show them some appreciation through this bonus pay. Many of our staff, working from home, have gone over and above as well in the past few months and we are planning ways to recognize the extraordinary efforts of all our staff.

Second, believe it or not, we're already in September which is Recovery Month. Every year, the City has a series of events to commemorate Recovery Month, and this year, these events are being adapted to current conditions with the ongoing coronavirus pandemic which you can see on this slide. I want to thank all Recovery Services staff who continue to work hard to assist our clients, especially during COVID-19. I had the honor of leading the Recovery Bureau for 14 years and work alongside this team of folks who do incredible work on behalf of some of the most vulnerable residents in our city. I also want to thank Devin Larkin, Jen Tracey, and their management team for leading our recovery efforts during the ongoing opioid epidemic.

The IGR update will be delivered at a later time.

Ms. McLaughlin gave a communications update, highlighting engagement numbers and new signage for our targeted outreach for COVID-19 in East Boston. Additionally, we are working with Revere, Chelsea, Everett, and Lynn on a collaborative media campaign to reach people in these hard-hit communities new ways.

Thank you, Caitlin, I'll speak more about our East Boston outreach during the COVID-19 Response and Recovery portion of the meeting, so that ends our executive office update.

Before I close, I want to say how pleased I am that Dr. Karilyn Crockett, Boston's new Equity Cabinet Chief is joining us today. I know how busy she is and in fact she is leaving a meeting to join us later. We have already been meeting with Chief Crockett on a regular basis to ensure integration and coordination of efforts and I am sure we will explore more opportunity today.

Thank you, Manny.

Chair Lopes said: Thank you, Rita. Next up is Margaret for a brief update on the Mayor's Declaration of Racism as a Public Health Crisis and efforts underway to get input from residents and community-based organizations.

**Racism as a Public Health Crisis Update with Discussion**  
**Margaret Reid, Interim Chief of Staff**

Ms. Reid delivered the Racism as a Public Health Crisis Update slide, focusing on engagement of historically-marginalized communities in our planning process for the activities related to the declaration and the Boston Health Equity Now.

Ms. Reid outlined the timeline for the issuance of a Request for Information and written online form. We are seeking both feedback, but input on work that community partners are doing. Documents will be available in the eight most spoken languages. Our goal is to reach Dorchester, East Boston, Roxbury, Mattapan, and Hyde Park. Our initial goal is Send to at least 750 community partners/residents; 60% of resident responses should be from the priority zip-codes; 85% of responses should be from Black residents, other People of Color, or Community Based Organizations that serve historically marginalized communities; Receive at least 200 responses.

Chair Lopes asked how many responses we expect to be from individuals vs. organizations. Chairperson Lopes encouraged high representation from individuals.

Ms. Gutman asked about the possibility of reaching out to BPS school parents.

Ms. Reid thanked the members and noted that improvements throughout the process are planned.

Ms. Laptiste encouraged to make sure that we are reaching individuals and making sure that we are not double counting.

Ms. Reid asked the Chair to outline current thinking for engagement.

We will have multiple ways of involving community in this process. As you remember, at our last Board of Health meeting we agreed to offer an opportunity for community residents and representatives to present to the Board of Health on their experiences and ideas to inform planning to address racism as the public health crisis it is in Boston. We are proposing A Virtual Public Health Assembly. A definition of an Assembly is "A coming together of a number of persons for a particular purpose" and we thought that was really in the spirit of what we are trying to accomplish. We would like to have as many Board members join as possible.

Ms. Walsh asked about concerns about doing work that is this important in a virtual format.

Ms. Reid said that we appreciate that concern, but at the same time we are feeling that we need to be ambitious about our timeline on this issue. We have been hearing anecdotally that virtual format has actually expanded access to civic engagement by removing logistical barriers.

Ms. Nieves said we would try to use best practices from City Council and other public hearings to ensure that we invite key participants and the public broadly, as well as facilitate the meeting to ensure equitable access to participation. We want to make sure the community engagement aspect of this is strong.

Chair Lopes said, we appreciate that feedback, and hope to move forward with as much participation as possible.

Chair Lopes said: Thank you for the update Margaret, this leads nicely into our introduction of Dr. Karilyn Crockett the Mayor's new Cabinet Chief leading the newly established Equity Cabinet. Chief Crockett thank you for joining us today.

**COVID-19 Response and Recovery**  
**Stacey Kokaram, Director of Public Health Preparedness**

Ms. Kokaram delivered the posted COVID-19 Response and Recovery Presentation.

Ms. Walsh asked about the definition of COVID-like illness, especially as flu season hits. Ms. Kokaram noted that we are working on ways to differentiate. Our team is looking at the definitions in syndromic surveillance system. Ms. Walsh noted that for this reason CLI might be a less-useful metric moving forward. Ms. Kokaram agreed that we will be looking into other metrics. Dr. Lo said that, as we get better at preventing hospitalizations, is CLI presenting in hospitals still a good measure of the total strain of COVID on the medical system.

Chair Lopes thanked the staff and said the efforts are a great example of what can happen when all sectors come together. It's great to know we have the playbook now, and that we're ready to use and share it in the future.

Ms. Nieves said: we're already working on strategies to implement in other neighborhoods, especially given the positivity rates in Roxbury and parts of Dorchester. The Health Inequities Task Force met this week, and we're actively planning on efforts to double down in these neighborhoods. Chair Lopes said thank you for the rapid response.

**City of Boston, Equity Cabinet**  
**Dr. Karilyn Crockett, Chief of Equity, City of Boston**

Dr. Crockett started by thanking the Commission and the City for the work that it has done. She said that her role is part of Mayor Walsh's announcement of racism as an emergency and public health crisis. The work involves routing out policies that undermine equity. It also involves taking this outside City Hall. Other cities are thinking about how to use a position like this, and how to operationalize equity.

Prior to accepting this role, I had recently been promoted at MIT to a professorship. When Mayor Walsh reached out, talking about what the murder of George Floyd meant for him, and what it meant for City government. Mayor Walsh is concerned about wealth, need for more public housing, employment. We talked about how to tether this work to addressing the racial wealth gap, as outlined by the Federal Reserve's 2015 Color of Money report.

Then, the conversation is what else does this mean for all City cabinets. I come to this as someone who has worked in City government, but also as someone who is a lifelong resident. Equity and employment cabinet includes other offices that have a focus on equity. It is a big job, but thrilling because the challenges are real, and because it is not just rhetoric. I appreciated Dr. Lo's point about the next normal, and the post-COVID reality, and what else about government needs to be remade so that we can knit together the torn places, rebuild the torn institutions, steady ourselves, and make sure we don't find ourselves in that place again. The task force is key to this reimagining work. I see myself as a part of this team. You have the expertise and the heart to get us to a better place.

The Racial Equity Fund is another tool we have to think about investments for the long term to bring the change that we need. Happy to work with Lee Pelton who serves as the chair, as well as Chief Marty Martinez as a key anchor and ally.

Chair Lopes said that we learned from Mayor Walsh that the invitation to the meeting is an invitation to the team and to the work. Thank you. Chair Lopes asked about the role of the Commission as a convener and aligning our resources to build equity.

Dr. Crockett said we're in an incredible moment of education, and we need to be in an education and advocacy space for philanthropists and investors. Because it's not going to be the same, and we need to think about what are we setting up, and what does the new look like? What did we learn about what we need to sustain and anchor ourselves? I'd love to have a discussion about what we see as transformational and deserving of resources. How can we be lead by experience and conviction right now?

Dr. Childs-Roshak said that I'm thrilled to have you here.

Ms. Walsh echoed that. Mr. Fernandes said welcome, and the sooner the better with the plan. Ms. Laptiste echoed those same sentiments.

Dr. Crockett said thank you, and I look forward to working with you all. I want to add that Rita and Margaret have been an enormous resource for me as we think through health equity work and health in all policies.

Ms. Nieves said we'll offer you an office at 1010 Mass. Ave; it was great speaking with you Dr. Crockett and I'm sure this won't be the last time that you'll be joining us for a Board of Health Meeting

Chair Lopes: Thank you everyone for these presentations. We're looking forward to hearing more about all of this work at the next meeting in November and to have a great assembly that the date will be set coming soon

**Motion to Adjourn**

Hearing no further discussion, at approximately 5:20pm, a motion to adjourn was made and approved unanimously.

Attest: \s\ PJ McCann  
PJ McCann  
Deputy General Counsel