



EMERGENCY BOARD of HEALTH MEETING

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.*

March 17, 2020, 4:30 to 5:00 p.m.

Transcript of Proceedings

Tim Harrington: Good afternoon, I’m General Counsel Tim Harrington and I’m joined by Deputy General Counsel PJ McCann. On the call is Chair Manny Lopes, Dr. Jennifer Childs-Roshak, Rebecca Gutman, and Phillomin Laptiste [all confirm]. I’ll turn it over to Rita with some background on the Public Health Emergency Declaration.

Rita Nieves: Hello everybody; thank you for joining us on such short notice. Thank you all for taking time to speak with me individually as I needed to connect with you to alert you about the need for the declaration. The declaration was triggered by a cumulative number of things, including the closure of the Boston Public Schools, all of which elevated the public health situation to the highest seriousness. The declaration will facilitate the coordination of the response across BPHC’s bureaus and programs as well as across City government. I will be able to activate all of BPHC’s resources and personnel necessary to meet the needs of the moment. Also, it will assist us with seeking additional resources from the state and federal government and increase coordination and cooperation with Boston’s hospital and healthcare provider partners. We also want to acknowledge that there is a heightened likelihood of community transmission in Boston. As you know, testing is not yet widely available in Boston although things are picking up. As of Saturday, we had 33 cases, of which most were related to the Biogen cluster. Information about positive tests is going to start moving fast and coming from different places. We are beginning the practice of reporting the new cases every day at 4pm. It involves public health investigation to confirm cases and clean the numbers. Right now we have 42 cases reported in Boston, and anticipate that those numbers will increase. On Friday we activated our Medical Intelligence Center, starting at 12-hours per day from 8am-8pm. If you haven’t been, this is a good time to visit the space, in the Miranda Creamer Building. It serves as our incident command site with representatives to facilitate information sharing and coordination. We hold daily briefings every morning and troubleshoot requests and issues. We also anticipate the City’s Emergency Operations Center will be stood up shortly, and a representative from BPHC will be on site. This will be critical in coordinating non-public health services for the citizens of Boston. An update on staffing is that we’ve been preparing teleworking policies and procedures and we are prepared to issue letters to staff who will be able to work from home. So you have an idea, we have 1,123 employees and of that, 830 individuals who are in the category who preform critical work and cannot work from home. As you can imagine, this includes EMS, Recovery, Homeless. As you can imagine, we have a good number of staff, who we will continue to rely on to come to work. Then we have 238 or so that can work from home, that will get a letter explaining teleworking protocols. That group can be reassigned if necessary, and includes nurses in other programs who may be called upon to support our infectious disease nurses. We

DRAFT – PENDING BOARD APPROVAL

may also need to assign staff to respond to calls and support the activation. We continue to work to address the needs of all of our staff during this time, including childcare. I'll stop there and welcome questions.

Mr. Lopes : First, to Rita and the entire team, I can thank you enough for what you're doing. I know you've always been a 24-7 operation, but given the situation we're in, I know you are now working so hard around the clock, and on behalf of the Board I want to say just a huge thank you for your efforts and all the work that's happening. Please remember to take care of yourselves and your family.

Ms. Gutman: Thank you so much for your leadership during this time. I don't have questions. I will share that we're in touch with a lot of the health care workers who are at the front line of dealing with this pandemic, and as you know, are going to work without personal protective equipment and also without knowing whether the person they're caring for is infected, and whether they will get paid if they are unable to care for someone. We're doing our best at SEUI1199 to work to protect frontline workers. We welcome any thoughts you have on protective equipment or other issues.

Dr. Childs-Roshak: I'd like to echo the thanks. Also, I'd like to better understand how the relaxation in national policies affect people who are working at BPHC and our organizations. To the extent that BPHC can take a leadership role in translating some of these things, and think about how health care providers can recoup losses for their workers, I think that would be really helpful down the line.

Gerry Thomas: We were informed that the state bill provides an initial \$5m to local public health departments help mitigate some of the costs we're incurring. That is excellent advice and we will keep tabs on things.

Ms. Laptiste: I just want to echo what others have said about your efforts. Thank you, Rita, for your leadership. We are rooting for you. It's a hard time for all of us and we can't thank you enough.

Ms. Nieves: Regarding PPE, we have been advocating for getting supplies for our frontline staff. We have put requests through DPH to get more PPE from the federal government. We're also working on increased training for our staff. We're hoping that supplies start to flow.

Mr. Harrington: Hearing no other comments, I'll prepare for the vote. To be clear, the order mirrors the school closures order timeline, so it runs through April 27th. What we're doing here, is first, a vote to approve the Declaration of a Public Health Emergency, second, we're asking the Board to give the Executive Director the authority to extend the time period of the emergency if circumstances warrant.

A roll call vote was taken by Mr. Harrington as follows:

-Chair Lopes: Yea

-Ms. Gutman: Yea

-Dr. Childs-Roshak: Yea

-Ms. Laptiste: Yea

Mr. Harrington: That concludes the vote, I think Rita has a few more words.

Ms. Nieves: I also want to share that Mayor Walsh will be speaking on TV tonight at 7:30 pm to connect with residents and continue to reinforce prevention messages. Thank you again.

Attest: /s/ PJ McCann

Deputy General Counsel