



MINUTES OF MEETING OF THE BOSTON BOARD OF HEALTH

A meeting of the Boston Board of Health (Board) was held on Wednesday, January 20, 2021 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, Rebecca Gutman, Phillomin Laptiste, Kate Walsh, Guale Valdez, Dr. Jennifer Childs-Roshak

Also Present

Taylor Jolly, PJ McCann, Margaret Reid, Triniese Polk, Kathleen Jeanty, Jennifer Lo, Nestor Rijo-Figueroa, Debra Paul, Derrick Chu, Gerry Thomas, Sarah Dudley, Sheila Lee, Tierney Flaherty, Stacey Kokaram, Grace Connolly, Jim Imprescia, Steve Simmons, Tim Chang, Abeer Khatana, Mary Tabatneck, Jannet Sanchez, Tim Harrington, Chetan Rakieten, Jannet Sanchez, Sarimer Sanchez, Britt Frederick, Christopher Gavin, John Steis.

Proceedings

Chairperson's Comments

Chairperson Lopes: Hello and welcome, everyone, to the January Board of Health Meeting. Thank you everyone for joining especially our Board members.

A motion was made by Ms. Gutman and seconded by Dr. Childs-Roshak and approved unanimously by roll call to approve the January 20, 2021 meeting minutes.

Lopes: This meeting is being conducted by remote participation as authorized by Governor Baker's Emergency Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law. In keeping with our usual practice, members of the public and BPHC staff will be allowed to observe the proceedings and we will use the moderating features on the Zoom application to keep all on mute other than Board members and BPHC presenters. We will have the ability to unmute if needed to allow others to answer questions or provide comment, in the Chair's discretion. Since we are deliberating remotely, any votes will be taken by a roll call of the members.

I am pleased to welcome Guale Valdez to the Board of Health. Guale was appointed to serve by Mayor Walsh and confirmed unanimously by the City Council last month. I know many of you already know Guale well. He currently serves as the President and CEO of Mattapan Community Health Center and is an advocate with significant background in both private and public accounting as well as experience in various types of health care environments.

He also supports the broader community as a member of several boards, including the Massachusetts League of Community Health Centers, Boston Accountable Care Organization, Boston HealthNet Community Health Centers, Operation ABLE and the Center for Community Health Education Research and Service.

I am confident that he will provide invaluable service, expertise, and guidance to the Board and Commission in this new role as we continue to work to address generational inequities and build toward an equitable recovery. Welcome, Guale.

I'd be remiss not to mention the major changes occurring at the local level and also acknowledge the chaos and violence that has happened in our nation's capital recently. Today we also witnessed the power of our democracy with the inauguration of our 46th President, Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris as the first women and person of color in that position.

I want to also thank BPHC for their continued efforts on responding to the dual pandemics of COVID-19 and Racism as a Public Health Crisis during these challenging times.

Executive Office Report
Rita Nieves, Interim Executive Director

Ms. Nieves: Thank you, Manny. It has certainly been a busy few weeks and it is a historic day with the inauguration of the 46th President of the United States. I want to start by acknowledging that the events in D.C. have been really challenging for folks. We have offered our staff support during this time, including the Employee Assistance Program, which offers support to City employees for concerns that impact their health, well-being, social functioning, and productivity. We also held a Racial Justice and Health Equity Café yesterday, offering staff the time to process the events in D.C. We remain committed to the work of anti-racism and to the Declaration work, which you will hear an update on today.

I also wanted to say that it has been a pleasure to work with Mayor Marty Walsh during his tenure as Mayor. He has been a steady partner in the work of anti-racism in Boston and throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. We are excited to collaborate with incoming Acting Mayor Kim Janey, President of City Council, to continue our important work and were pleased to meet with her earlier today for a transition briefing. We all accomplished so much together despite the challenges of 2020.

Now for the Executive Office Report. Since this is the first BPHC Board of Health Meeting for 2021, I wanted to reflect on all the amazing work undertaken in 2020. In response to COVID-19 we've distributed 2.4 million pieces of PPE to our community. Recovery Services placed nearly 3,900 individuals into treatment. Our Homeless Services Bureau provided emergency shelter to over 4,000 people. Boston EMS has served over 3,500 COVID-19 Patients.

The Neighborhood Trauma Team Network conducted 200 community support activities in response to incidents of violence. The Community Initiatives Bureau completed 209 investigations of COVID-19 related business complaints. We have committed over 10 million dollars to support COVID-19 Testing. The Mayor Declared Racism as a Public Health Crisis and our team has reconvened the Boston Health Equity Measures Set Advisory Committee with Boston hospitals and community health centers. We've renamed our Office of Health Equity as the Office of Racial Equity and Community Engagement.

I want to turn it over to Intergovernmental Relations Director, Tierney Flaherty, for a brief update.

Flaherty: On the 13th “An Act to reduce racial inequities in maternal health” was signed into law. This bill will establish a commission to reduce racial inequities in maternal morbidity. We are very excited about this bill that will certainly help us to improve the health outcomes of parents and families.

Thank you, Tierney, that concludes our Executive Office report. I’ll turn it back over to you Chairman Lopes.

Lopes: Thank you for that update and the good work on this bill. I’ll turn it to Grace for a budget update.

FY22 Budget Update
Grace Connolly, Director of Administration and Finance

Ms. Connolly thanked the Administration and Finance team for their work and delivered the posted presentation.

Chair Lopes asked about the eight positions in the Infectious Disease Bureau.

Ms. Connolly deferred to Dr. Lo who said that the bureau has long had to manage outbreaks and that there is always a need to make investments in enhanced infrastructure. Part of the request is for epidemiologists as well. This would allow us to have them embedded in the program moving forward.

Hearing no further questions, the Chair introduced Ms. Kokaram for a COVID-19 update.

COVID 19 Metrics Update
Stacey Kokaram, Director of the Office of Public Health Preparedness

Ms. Kokaram presented the posted presentation.

Chair Lopes asked about the demographic profile of the cases.

Ms. Kokaram: 20-29 and 30-39 is where we are seeing the highest percentages.

Dr. Lo: We have been monitoring the 70+ population.

Ms. Gutman: are you monitoring the percentage that are symptomatic?

Dr. Lo: Many testing sites do not specifically capture that data, but we can look into that.

Ms. Gutman: Also, is there tracking by occupation?

Lo: We are following this, but the data it is not easy to pull out. We can look at what people do share with us. The MAVEN system has a cluster report feature, which allows us to look at particular industries.

Ms. Gutman: I’d be interested in looking at that data.

Lopes: Thank you, we will plan to look at that.

Dr. Childs-Roshak: Are we seeing the variants in Boston?

Dr. Lo: We did confirm one Boston resident tested positive for the UK variant. The person transitioned through Logan Airport but did not spend time in Boston otherwise, and remains out of the state.

Mr. Valdez: Is there a distinction being made between types of testing.

Lo: Antigen testing is captured as probable in its own bucket. Other, i.e. antigen is captured at the state level and we can look at that.

Lopes: Hearing no other questions, thank you, and I will turn it over to Dr. Lo to kick off a presentation about vaccinations.

COVID-19 Vaccine Update
Dr. Jennifer Lo, Medical Director
Triniese Polk, Director, Office of Racial Equity and Community Engagement
Kathleen Jeanty, Director of Communications
Caitlin McLaughlin, Director of Media Relations

Dr. Lo, Ms. Polk, Ms. Jeanty, and Ms. McLaughlin presented the posted presentation.

Dr. Childs-Roshak asked what we have been able to learn from other communities about communications as well as structure.

Ms. McLaughlin said that we have been learning about language and how words matter and thinking about what words we should highlight and which to avoid.

Ms. Laptiste asked about the Vaccine Speakers Bureau.

Ms. Reid said that we have Dr. Lo and IDB Director Dr. Sanchez, Rita, and Gerry Thomas, as well as Chief Martinez, so we all have standard speaking points and FAQs. Because we have subject matter experts who can present in English and Spanish, we are able to offer that, and are looking into other capacity. We are also looking at community leaders, including those who may be licensed clinicians in their country of origins. The Boston Resilience Fund has an RFP out where community communications will be part of the responsibility.

Mr. Valdez: Within Boston, have mass vaccinations sites been identified, recognizing transportations access issues.

Dr. Lo: Fenway has been identified, and we know that we need another site and have been working to identify one. We also recognize that reaching our population will require a variety of vaccination options.

Ms. Laptiste: The slide mentioned underlying health issues as a reason respondents did not intend to get vaccinated, do you have any sense of whether that was referring to preexisting health conditions? Ms. Polk answered yes.

Racism as a Public Health Crisis Request for
Information Update and Discussion
Margaret Reid, Interim Chief of Staff

Margaret Reid thanked Triniese Polk, Taylor Jolly, Britt Frederick, and Christine Vu for their work on this project and presented the posted slides.

Chair Lopes said thank you Margaret and the rest of the team. Hearing no further questions, I would accept a motion to adjourn.

At approximately 5:30, the Board unanimously voted to adjourn by roll call, moved by Ms. Walsh, seconded by Dr. Childs-Roshak.

/s/PJ McCann
Deputy General Counsel