



BOSTON PUBLIC HEALTH COMMISSION

BOARD MEETING

MAY 7, 2009

1010 MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE

HAYES CONFERENCE ROOM

MINUTES

**Board Members Present:**

Paula Johnson, MD, MPH  
Ruth Ellen Fitch, JD, Celia Wcislo  
Harold Cox

**Board Members Absent:**

Hortensia Amaro, Ph.D., Vice Chair  
Elaine Ullian, Jack Cradock

**Administration & Staff Present:**

Barbara Ferrer, Ph.D., MPH, M.Ed,  
Nancy Norman, MD, MPH  
John Townsend, Maia BrodyField,  
Nakisha Skinner, Jon Sherman, Mark  
Campbell, Naida Faria, Rafael Genao, Jr.,  
Rich Serino, Natalie Grant, Kate Sullivan,  
Dianne Cavalier, Ryan Cunningham, Beth  
Grand L'Hereux, David Thomas, Sharyn  
Imonti, Anne McHugh, Gerry Byrne,  
Lourdes Orbinola, Anita Barry, Pam Jones,  
Dolores Carey, Aliza Wasserman, Julie  
Webster, Chuck Gagnon

Dr. Johnson, MD, MPH, Chair, called the meeting to order at 4:10 PM on Thursday, May 7, 2009.

**Chairman's Comments – Paula Johnson**

Dr. Johnson began by thanking the Commission for all of their efforts and hard work in regards to the swine flu crisis. Dr. Johnson said that she is proud to be affiliated with the organization and congratulated the Commission for an outstanding job. Dr. Johnson stated that it takes a whole team when there is a crisis to keep other work moving forward.

**Executive Director's Report – Barbara Ferrer**

Barbara Ferrer, Executive Director, also spoke regarding the swine flu crisis and stated that everyone at the Commission has been outstanding. Dr. Ferrer said that employees worked night and day and she is grateful that the Commission has so many talented people. Dr. Ferrer said the work done in the City of Boston will have national implications.

Dr. Ferrer reported on the strategic alliance grant for CDC and stated that the grant will be funded. The grant will be fully funded in September for activities. Dr. Ferrer briefly spoke on the budget and the upcoming meeting with the city council. The meeting is scheduled to take place on Wednesday, May 27<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 AM. The final budget is to be submitted to the Mayor in June.

**Swine Flu Update – Anita Barry**

Anita Barry, Director, Infectious Disease Bureau, gave a presentation on H1N1 Novel Influenza A. Dr. Barry said that this is a new virus commonly found in birds and humans and is capable of causing illness in humans. The virus can be transmitted from person to person.

Dr. Barry reported that there were early reports of widespread illness and deaths in Mexico. Dr. Barry also said that cases quickly appeared in multiple regions of the United States and many of the early cases had a travel connection. Dr. Barry said that as of May 6, 2009 the case reports were as follows:

- **Boston** (6 confirmed Boston residents, 1 probable Boston resident, 1 confirmed Boston workplace)
- **Massachusetts** (45 confirmed cases, none hospitalized, age range 2 to 57)
- **New England States** (51 confirmed cases)
- **United States** (642 confirmed cases)

Dr. Barry stated that the Commission monitors all Boston emergency department (ED) visits for indications of unusual seasonal trends and any unusual illnesses must be reported to the Commission. The Commission participated in the "DISTRIBUTE" network of local and state health departments who monitor acute settings for influenza-like illness.

Dr. Barry reported that on 04/30/09 the Commission was notified of a probable case regarding a Boston University dental student. The school was visited by the Commission's team. A total of 9 suspect cases were identified. The school was advised to close for 7 days.

Board member Cox asked was the dental school as well as the medical school closed. Dr. Barry replied, yes. Board member Cox also asked how was the decision made to close the schools and just one clinic. Ms. Barry answered that the layout suggested there were a lot of people in the schools and the amount of illness and physical outcome is how the decision was made.

Dr. Barry spoke regarding the clinical protocols and stated that there is a limited supply of medication and supplies as well as a long time turn around for lab testing. Dr. Barry stated that moving forward the Commission will continue close monitoring of the clinical and epidemiologic picture of H1N1 and will

move to a model more similar to control of seasonal influenza. Seasonal influenza is responsible for approximately 36,000 deaths annually in the United States.

Board member Cox inquired as to Dr. Barry's guess of what will happen with seasonal influenza. Dr. Barry replied that the CDC is working on identifying seed virus and the hope is to make a separate vaccine for H1N1 but no decision has been made as of yet.

Board member Wcislo asked does the Commission receive regular data. Dr. Barry replied, yes.

### ***Swine Flu Update – Natalie Grant***

Natalie Grant, Director, Public Health Preparedness, also gave a presentation on the swine flu. Ms. Grant stated that on April 27, 2009 a decision was made to convene the Commission's emergency management group. The group consists of executive staff, metro medical response system, communications, CDC, environmental hazards and public health preparedness.

Ms. Grant said that there was an initial planning meeting to discuss the situation and current status of the virus. After discussion and determination of incident objectives a decision was made to activate the Commission's emergency operations plan. Ms. Grant said that the meeting was held at the Lawlor Medical Intelligence Center which is located at 35 Northampton Street on the 6<sup>th</sup> floor. The Center was designed to facilitate support functions and to better facilitate a response. There are over 64 work stations and operators provide overall incident management and documentation.

Ms. Grant spoke on the ongoing activities which are the following:

- Maintain communications networks with partner agencies and healthcare providers;
- Communicate updated information clinical guidance and recommendations.

### ***Swine Flu Update – Nancy Norman***

Nancy Norman, Chief Medical Officer, spoke regarding the Commission's communication strategies. Dr. Norman stated that communications strategies external had varied venues and were proactive in nature. External strategies consisted of press conferences, scheduled interviews, press reports, facebook, you tube, twitter, facts sheets, information cards, letters/guidance, informational sessions and website.

Internal strategies were the website/intranet, informational sessions and coordination with city departments. Dr. Norman stated that communication strategies help to direct how people hear the stories.

### ***Legislative Update – Pam Jones/Aliza Wasserman***

Pam Jones, Director, Policy and Planning, began by introducing Aliza Wasserman. Ms. Jones said that Ms. Wasserman has stepped into the role of Policy Analyst and that she is doing a great job.

Aliza Wasserman, Policy Analyst, gave an overview of the FY 2010 state budget process. Ms. Wasserman reported that the House budget was passed last week and the Senate budget will be passed next week. The House budget proposal was released April 15<sup>th</sup> with a budget of \$27 billion. Ms. Wasserman said that there have been overall cuts of \$1.8 billion, local aid cut of \$76 million to the City of Boston and substantial cuts in many of the Commission's main budget priority areas.

Ms. Wasserman stated that the Governor is revising his entire budget proposal based on new, lower budget estimates as of late April. There were several revenue options proposed by the Governor:

- Local options taxes, including meals and hotel;
- Telecommunications tax;
- Gas tax;

- Remove exemption on alcohol tax; and
- Candy/sweetened beverage tax.

Ms. Wasserman announced that the Commission is supporting the alcohol tax through the Mayor's Office and the Campaign for Addiction Prevention, Treatment and Recovery. Ms. Wasserman also said that the House budget included a 25% increase in the state sales tax to 6.25% which will raise \$900 million.

Ms. Wasserman spoke regarding the next steps for the FY 2010 budget process. The Senate Ways and Means budget has an opportunity to restore funding to areas that were cut most disproportionately. The Senate budget will be amended, passed, reconciled with House budget and signed by Governor Patrick.

### **Legislative Priorities – Pam Jones**

Ms. Jones spoke regarding the legislative priorities and stated that the top priority is the Conflict Resolution Curriculum. Under this priority the Department of Education is to develop a curriculum to teach students to avoid conflicts, thus lessening violence. Other priorities include:

- Diversion to Treatment: mandate 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> time low-time offenders to go into treatment;
- Food Policy Council: link agricultural factors with communities;
- CORI Reform: focusing on reducing time for sealing records;
- Alcohol Tax

Ms. Jones said the next steps are to

- Meet with Legislative Champions and Committee Chairs;
- Gather endorsers/partners;
- Prepare for committee hearings; and
- Work with coalitions/partners and City Hall on Advocacy Strategy.

### **Acceptance and Approval of Minutes**

Dr. Johnson, MD, MPH, Chair, invited a motion to accept the April minutes. The motion was made, seconded and approved.

Dr. Johnson adjourned the meeting at 6:00 PM.