



MINUTES OF MEETING OF THE BOSTON BOARD OF HEALTH

A meeting of the Boston Board of Health (Board) was held on Wednesday, November 18th, 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, Rebecca Gutman, Phillomin Laptiste

Also Present

PJ McCann, Britt Frederick, Jennifer Lo, Triniese Polk, Abeer Khatana, A Camacho, Anne McHugh, Bridget, Muckain, Caitlin McLaughlin, Carolyn Weng Yang, Christine Vu, Debra Paul, Devin Larkin, Grace Connolly, Chief James Hooley, Jennifer Tracey, Johnna Murphy, Kathleen Jeanty, Keena Banda, Leon Bethune, Margaret Reid, Mariana Serango Cancel, Mary Bovenzi, Natalie Swartz, Neelesh Batra, Neha Bazaj, Rita Nieves, Roy Wada, Carah Jimenez, Helen Ayanian, Shannon O'Malley, Steve Simmons, Stacey Kokaram, Sunday Taylor, Tierney Flaherty, Tim Harrington.

Proceedings

Chairperson's Comments

Chairperson Lopes: Hello and welcome everyone to the November 2020 Board of Health Meeting. Thank you everyone for joining especially our Board members. Before we start, I'll ask PJ McCann from the General Counsel's Office to share a few reminders.

Mr. McCann: Good Afternoon. A few quick reminders. Please note that this meeting is being conducted by remote participation as authorized by Governor Baker's Emergency Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law and is being recorded. As always, we welcome members of the public to observe the proceedings though we will disable Zoom's chat feature and keep all viewers on mute other than Board members, presenters, and others necessary in the Chair's discretion. Also, since we are deliberating remotely, any votes will be taken by a roll call of the members.

If anyone has any trouble with the link for any reason, please attempt to reconnect by clicking on the meeting link and please reach out to me at pmccann@bphc.org and we will try to assist.

Lopes: Thank you, PJ. I would like to ask Board of Health member Philly Laptiste who is overseeing the search committee for the BPHC Executive Director position if she could share an update on the search.

Ms. Laptiste: The committee has worked very diligently to identify, interviewing loud, anyone that did not meet the requirements including candidates across the country. The first round, and after the second round of interviews, we did identify two top candidates, one who actually withdrew before the final round. And then another finalist that we've selected withdrew because of personal circumstances. I think at this point, starting in January, we will be open application process to pursue some candidates. And this time around, we will be working with a search firm that will be identified in collaboration with the commission and Office of Health Services. Thank you to the team for leading us through these times. I'll be happy to answer any questions.

Lopes: Thank you, Philly. Any board members have any questions or comments? Hearing none, I'll hand it over to you today for an executive office update.

Executive Office Report
Rita Nieves, Interim Executive Director

Nieves: Thank you. Thank you, everybody, for joining us today. Starting with some updates from our Intergovernmental Relations and communications, folks. So first, I'll ask for a quick IGR update from Tierney Flaherty.

Flaherty: Good afternoon, everyone. As you know, on October 21st, the Boston City Council adopted the Housing Stability Notification Act, which that landlords and foreclosing banks notify tenants and homeowners of rights and resources before eviction.

The Ordinance builds on Mayor Walsh's previous efforts to ensure stable housing for the residents of Boston during the COVID-19 pandemic. The City's Rental Relief Fund, launched in April, is currently accepting new applications to support residents who lost their income due to COVID-19 and are unable to pay their rent. The fund has distributed almost \$4 million in assistance to over 1,100 households across the city.

Additionally, Mayor Walsh has secured the agreement of over 30 large landlords through a Housing Stability Pledge to avoid evictions, create payment plans with and for tenants and connect them with resources, and work with the relevant voucher administrator for tenants with housing vouchers.

The City has also contracted with Greater Boston Legal Services to add additional attorneys to assist tenants facing eviction. The Office of Housing Stability (OHS) has expanded the Housing Court Navigator Program that assists tenants who are in Housing Court and need financial, legal or other assistance.

The Ordinance, which I believe you have received, also includes language calling on the City of Boston to ask the Boston Public Health Commission and the Boston Board of Health to consider measures to “prevent or discourage eviction actions during the COVID-19 pandemic by preventing the coerced entry into a unit by a sheriff, constable or other party, forcible removal of tenants and their belongings, and other such actions that would incur or exacerbate public health risk.”

Staff are continuing to work with partners across City government to monitor data about the scope of evictions as well as the evolving policy and programmatic response at all levels of government. We will keep you all advised if Board action on this issue becomes necessary. That is all for the IGR update.

Ms. McLaughlin: Since we spoke, we issued guidance for Halloween. I think we all know that this is pretty special time of year where we have a lot of traditions to celebrate. However, this year is a little bit different. So today, we issued a press release with thanksgiving guidance. The safest way to celebrate which I think we all know, is as at home with the people we live with. If you if you're going to travel, or if you're going to choose to attend, or host a gathering, we are offering advice on the best way to do that harm reduction kind of approach and ow you can travel safely if you need to right now as well as how you can gather safely if you need to. That all went out today, we created five sets of different graphics to support the messaging, which went out to city wide. And we'll also be sharing it with our community partners later this week. In the meantime, We have taken a look at some of the themes that we're seeing to our case investigations. And created some graphics to support kind of what we're seeing about how COVID-19 is being spread in Boston.

Nieves: Thank you, Caitlin. I'm very excited about the new graphics to share with folks and hopefully that will help drive the message. You know, the safest places holidays is home talks we live with and you know, mitigate some of the potential transmission that could happen if everybody goes out in the streets, everybody this holiday season. Thank you.

I'm excited to announce that we have, we have filled two senior leadership positions here, the commission will start with Triniese Polk, who, who many of you know has been with the commission for 20 years. She's held roles with us in the Office of Community Engagement, partner under the Office of Health Equity, and she has directed the office since a year ago when we asked her to step in as interim director of the Office of Health Equity. She has now accepted officially, the permanent role of director and one of her first efforts was to lead up an internal and external process to change the name of the office, from the Office of Health Equity to the Office of Racial Equity and Community Engagement; aligned with the priorities and actions of the office.

I also want to announce Kathleen Jeanty, our new Director of Communications, Kathleen grew up in Boston, and she was working at the Haitian community liaison, and as the media liaison for the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Advancement. She was in that position when the 2010 earthquake hit Haiti and she took on the role of coordinating citywide effort in response and this work led her to Haiti and spend eight years supporting rebuilding and reconstruction efforts there. We're so glad to welcome her back to Boston and back to City government. So I want to say thank you to Caitlin, also for members of our communications team who have been holding up the fort in really fulfilling all kinds of work that needed to happen during the vacancy.

Lastly, I just want to say, thank you to our staff and our teams because they continue to, to be the hundred percent even though our plate gets fuller and fuller, and thank you to all the staff for their dedication to. That's it for the Executive Office report.

Lopes: Thank you, Rita. Next up is Triniese Polk. Triniese, congratulations on a well-deserved promotion, and thank you for everything you do. Just echo what Rita said, thank you to all Caitlin as well. The Communications team is really busy right now producing some great material. Thank you again, for your commitment to our City.

Racism as a Public Health Crisis Update and Discussion
Triniese Polk, Director of the Office of Racial Equity and Community Engagement
Margaret Reid, Interim Chief of Staff
Gerry Thomas, Interim Deputy Director
Jennifer Lo, Medical Director

Ms Polk, Ms. Reid, and Ms. Thomas delivered the posted presentation.

Chairperson Lopes: First, this is very helpful information. I have a couple of questions in terms of how do we share this information with different departments? I know where we're partnered with the Chief of Equity Dr. Karilyn Crockett's office and ensuring we that are getting this information out to other departments within the city will be critically important as well. The second was around access to health care or equity, particularly given the number of health centers that we have in the city that are placed in an areas where we see this need and wanted to get more information about that.

Ms. Reid: So we can look further in the detail. But again, we did eliminate some slides, but there was data specifically about transportation issues getting to health care and about physician bias. So we can definitely dive deeper on that. One thing I do want to say is, our City departments really helped us get these surveys out as well.

Ms. Gutman: I wanted to thank you for the report. I found the specific quotes really powerful. And they absolutely resonate. 1199 SEIU represents 50,000 home care workers across the state and with about 8000 or so in the city of Boston. And absolutely the issues that were raised very much parallel what we what we hear and what our members experienced. So thank you very much.

Ms. Laptiste: I echo what everyone else has already said, and thank you for the presentation. I was really surprised and happy to see that at 197 think respondents from community residents. Can you confirm which BPHC bureau the racial equity work that's being done fall under?

Ms. Reid: Our Office of Racial Equity and Community Engagement is what we call a Public Health Service Center, so it's a cross-cutting office because the racial equity work is the work of the Commission. I want to acknowledge the work of Christine Vu and Britt Frederick on this report.

Chair Lopes: Thank you for this important work. Hearing no questions, we will turn it over to Stacey for a COVID-19 Update.

COVID 19 Updates

Stacey Kokaram, Director of the Office of Public Health Preparedness

Ms. Kokaram presented the posted presentation.

Chair Lopes asked if we can track COVID cases on the ambulatory care side, thinking about folks who may choose not to go to ERs but come to health centers and other settings?

Ms. Kokaram said that with testing and other CHC work we've tracked that info, but may not have information about the number who are seeking COVID care in ambulatory settings but we can look into that.

Ms. Gutman asked about the metrics for determining whether BPS schools are able to reopen.

Ms. Nieves said that we have been in conversations with BPS, and we are looking at all of the metrics for the City as we have these conversations. We see our role as advising BPS, look at all the metrics, community transmission, but we allow them to make the decision based on a range of factors. We have been working with them on prevention and safety protocols to make sure that the protocols they have written are appropriate. Our

feedback and guidance to BPS is given in light of both the metrics and the protocols. For example, high needs students are in school now, in part in consideration of the number of students, the testing protocols, the PPE, and other mitigation measures in place. What happens with the metrics in the coming weeks will dictate the future direction.

Ms. Gutman said thank you; I would love to engage more on this in the future.

Mr. Lopes asked about modeling or plans for the holiday season and what is to come.

Ms. Kokaram said that we are trying to take a harm reduction approach and give the public guidance about how to reduce risks. We are preparing for an increase in cases and will be watching closely. We will also be focusing on testing in the weeks around the holidays to contain the spread.

Ms. Gutman and Ms. Laptiste said thank you for all the work, no questions.

Mr. Lopes said thank you for all the work and the visuals to summary. I know we are looking forward to more news about the vaccine and distribution and perhaps we can have an update at our next meeting. Thank you again to the staff for all your hard work and please stay safe and take the advice from the experts and staff here.

At approximately 5:30, the Board unanimously voted to adjourn.

/s/PJ McCann

Deputy General Counsel