

**Meeting Notes from the Regular Meeting of the Peabody Board of Health,  
December 17, 2020**

In Attendance: Chairperson Thomas J. Durkin III, Board Member Dr. Leigh Ann Mansberger, Board Member Anthony Carli, Health Department Director Sharon Cameron, and Recording Secretary Lisa Greene.

The meeting was held at 4:30 p.m. in the Lower Level Conference Room,  
Peabody City Hall, 24 Lowell Street, Peabody.

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**Subject:** Meeting to be called to order; discussion/approval of minutes from November 2020 meeting.

**Discussion:** Mr. Durkin called meeting to order at 4:30 p.m. He requested the deferment of the approval of the November meeting minutes until next month, and all agreed.

**Subject:** Update on COVID-19 response actions- Data update

**Discussion:** Ms. Cameron reported on the latest Covid statistics. She told Peabody is continuing to be hard hit and continuing to be in the red zone. She told that so far in Peabody there have been 217 deaths due to Covid, that last week 9% of those tested for Covid tested positive for the virus. She added that many more younger people are contracting Covid than in the earlier months, and said they are tracking these changes. She told that 86% of new cases are now not associated with congregate living setting, and that a significant number of new cases have been seen in the schools, but that they are not seeing transmission at the schools, but are tracking it to outside sources, so that shows that the protocols that are in place at the schools are working and the people who test positive are actually being exposed elsewhere.

**Subject:** Update on COVID-19 response actions- Revisions to state directives

**Discussion:** Ms. Cameron reported that, due to the increase numbers of cases in Peabody, we were required by the state to roll back to Phase III step 1 protocols, but shortly after the Governor rolled back the entire state to step 1 of phase III. Stores were reduced from 50% to 40% occupancy, smaller groups allowed in restaurants, etc. She added that some Boards of Health have had discussions about doing more than required by the state requirements, and added that this is always a possibility here should the board decide to do so, but added that she does not believe that is necessary at this time. Mr. Durkin asked about the impact of these changes on businesses, specifically, how fast can these businesses pivot. Ms. Cameron replied that the turnaround is very fast, as the new requirements come out and are expected to be in effect just a few days later, which is a challenge for the Health Department as well as for businesses.

**Subject:** Update on COVID-19 response actions- Policy recommendations

**Discussion:** Ms. Cameron reported that she was asked to speak before the School Committee regarding winter sports. She told that it is a difficult situation, because while sports have a beneficial impact for the students who participate, the fact is that during the fall sports season, when sports were played outdoors, there were a lot of kids that had to quarantine due to exposure to others who tested positive for Covid, and in one case, two entire teams were forced to quarantine. She added that winter sports are even more problematic because they are played indoors and are also sports with high contact, which presents an even higher risk. She explained that she and the superintendent of schools both made the case that moving forward and allowing winter sports may jeopardize the ability of the schools to go forward with increased in-person learning. Despite this, the school committee voted to allow winter sports to take place. Subsequently, however, members of the basketball team tested positive and others were quarantined so basketball was paused. Mr. Carli told that in his town, the BOH has to sign off to allow sports, and he was surprised that this is not the system in Peabody. Ms. Cameron replied that she is asked to review protocols, but there is not a formal sign off, but she said that she could, if the Board wanted, push the School Committee to reconsider. Dr. Mansberger asked Ms. Cameron if she would like the Board to write a letter to the School Committee on this issue. Ms. Cameron said that if the members of the Board felt strongly about this it was an option they could consider. She added that the School Committee is in a difficult position because there is a large

advocacy for the continuation of sports but no advocacy group speaking on behalf of discontinuing it. The Board decided to continue to monitor data.

**Subject:** Update on COVID-19 response actions- Contact Tracing

**Discussion:** Ms. Cameron reminded the Board that, in the early days of the Pandemic, the Health Department activated its school nurses to support the Public Health Nurses to conduct contact tracing in house. This system has been very effective, but during the second surge, the numbers of new cases soon overwhelmed our capacity, so they have had to rely on the state contact tracing system. She added that they are keeping many cases in house, those of children, city employees, and first responders. She reported that every community is experiencing a surge in cases, so the state system is operating under surge protocols, so unfortunately there may be cases where some people might not be contacted, but added that the CTC is ramping up with additional new staff, but is performing slower than envisioned, with first contact in the first four days. Ms. Cameron added that by shifting to using the state tracking system it will allow for us to continue to focus on prioritized cases during the holiday period. Dr. Mansberger noted that MRC is asking for volunteers to help with contact tracing and asked if that might be a resource we could turn to. Ms. Cameron replied that she has utilized MRC in the past, and for one flu clinic there were 6 MRC volunteers who didn't show up, which had a big impact. She added that contact tracing also has a much higher level of training associated with it, so she wouldn't want to use volunteers.

**Subject:** Update on COVID-19 response actions- Business guidance

**Discussion:** Ms. Cameron told that each day 20-30 businesses have been contacting the Health Department for guidance. Since that level of individual guidance is not sustainable, they have developed a guide for businesses, with information on contact tracing and safety protocols. She explained that they are acting under surge protocol right now but will go back to normal when things slow down. She added that the state has a cluster tracking system in place for identified large clusters of outbreaks and will assign an epidemiologist to oversee those clusters. Dr. Mansberger suggested after reviewing it that in the business guidance document that they include details on what symptoms to look for. Ms. Cameron explained that we attach to this document a checklist for employees of those businesses to be used everyday which lists all possible symptoms, and which stresses that they should set a low threshold for staying home if symptomatic, and management should enforce it.

**Subject:** Update on COVID-19 response actions- Testing Opportunities

**Discussion:** Ms. Cameron explained that the funding made available to the City for Covid testing must be used up by the end of the year and does not renew. She told that we have held two large drive-through Covid testing events and have two more testing events scheduled before the end of the year.

## **BUSINESS**

**Subject:** Introduction of new City Physician Dr. Alain Chaoui

**Discussion:** Ms. Cameron introduced the new City Physician, Dr. Alain Chaoui, explained that he was appointed last week to be the physician to the city and the school, that he is extremely qualified and has served in leadership roles at the Mass Medical Society, and added that the City is privileged that he is willing to do this and the Board is thankful that he could give us the time tonight to join us. The Members of the Board welcomed Dr. Chaoui and thanked him for his participation. Dr. Chaoui expressed his pleasure at attending, told that he loves to serve in his community and said that he is looking forward to working with the Board in the future. Mr. Durkin pointed out to Dr. Chaoui that this month's meeting was an unusually quiet one with no hearings scheduled but warned that they are usually longer and have more going on with the public attending for hearings.

**Subject:** Update on COVID-19 response actions- Covid Vaccine Status

**Discussion:** Ms. Cameron reported that the Covid vaccine is on the horizon. She explained that the state had originally told Boards of Health that we will not be holding vaccination events and the state will coordinate them,

but then she was contacted yesterday by the state and told that they would like health depts to vaccinate their community first responders. She said that this made things difficult since there is little time for planning, but as usual they will pivot and start doing these vaccinations. She told that the shelter community is also part of phase I of the state vaccination plan, and other health care providers not affiliated with hospitals were also told to reach out to their local health department. We have been told we will have vaccines available as early as January 4 and will need to be up and running to vaccinate first responders.

**Subject:** Update on COVID-19 response actions- Pandemic Public Information Specialist

**Discussion:** Ms. Cameron reported that she has gotten permission from the Mayor to bring on a person who is a trained EMT to serve as a Pandemic Response Public Information Specialist to advise callers on more detailed questions around clinical matters and vaccination. This person is for questions beyond the basic questions like where residents can find a site for testing that their clerical staff give. Dr. Mansberger told that she has learned that there is now an over the counter Covid antigen test that was approved and predicted that the Health Department would be getting calls in regard to that option as well. Chief Carli said that he has three members of his department out with Covid, adding that earlier cases seemed to have mild or no symptoms, but these later cases have had more severe symptoms which seem to linger longer. Mr. Durkin asked if Peabody Police force has also been impacted. Ms. Cameron told that there have been a few cases, but it has not spread to other officers in the workplace. Chief Carli have told that 70 new cases were identified today in his community, and that he oversees contact tracing there and they are seeing that people are not contracting Covid in public at restaurants but rather are contracting it from family members and from family gatherings. Mr. Durkin said that he wonders if Thanksgiving had an impact. Ms. Cameron said that we believe a lot of the surge is associated with Thanksgiving gatherings, and we expect to see the same thing in the weeks after Christmas because of people gathering for the holidays. Dr. Mansberger told that a survey showed that 70% of people said that they will stay home for the holidays, but pointed out that this means that 30% are still planning on traveling and gathering with people outside of their homes which is unfortunate.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL UPDATES**

**Subject:** Rousselot & Rodent Complaints

**Discussion:** Reviewed. SC reported that we have received a few Rousselot complaints, so that is still a work in progress. She added that there have been a few newspaper reports over past few months of workers there being injured from falls of great heights. She added that she is concerned and wonders if there might be an issue in management. Mr. Carli agreed, was very concerned seeing those reports. Review of citywide rodent complaints.

**Subject:** Code Enforcement

**Discussion:** Covid enforcement continues, Giovanni's and Forever Flawless refuse to comply with recent enforcement orders. Mark Whiting of the Northshore Mall has issued a notice that Forever Flawless is in violation of their lease agreement. SC stated we will continue to issue tickets and see if the state Dept of Labor will take any action.

**Subject:** Permitting

**Discussion:** List of permitting reviewed. SC told that it is the end of the year and at this time we renew permits for tobacco permits and Bill Pasquale is working on rooming house and hotel/motel inspections. Mr. Durkin asked if there have been more burial permits issued this year than in the past. Ms. Cameron said she has not checked that.

## **PUBLIC HEALTH NURSING UPDATES**

**Subject:** November 2020 Surveillance Reports

**Discussion:** Reviewed.

**Subject:** Update on the Flu Season

**Discussion:** SC told that they have now stopped doing any additional flu immunization clinics this year. They held two large drive through clinics in Oct and Nov, but got some calls about people who could not access them without transportation, so we have made an arrangement with North Shore Community Health Center on Foster Street and they have agreed to accept people who are not their patients for flu clinics. Mr. Durkin asked if any businesses have done COVID testing for their employees. Ms. Cameron was not aware of any. Mr. Carli said that he is not aware of any. He is not doing testing for city employees in Everett, feels that the safety protocols are better. Ms. Cameron said that she is aware that all long term care facilities are testing staff on a regular basis.

**CORRESPONDENCE**

**Subject:** Correspondence

**Discussion:** Reviewed

**Subject: Next Meeting** January 28<sup>th</sup>, 2021 @ 4:30 **Meeting Adjourned: 5:27 p.m.**