

**CITY OF NORWALK
BOARD OF HEALTH
REGULAR MEETING
NOVEMBER 22, 2022**

ATTENDANCE: Janet Karpiak, M.D.; Theresa Quell, Ph.D., R.N.; Ken Lalime, R.Ph.; Norman Weinberger, M.D.; Joan McNiel, D.N.P.

OTHERS: Deanna D'Amore, Director of Health; Megan Faugno, Special Projects Manager; Brian Weeks, Program Director of Epidemiology & Informatics; Aniella Fignon, Project Coordinator

This meeting was held via teleconference.

CALL TO ORDER

Ms. D'Amore called the meeting to order at 8:06 a.m. A quorum was present.

APPROVAL OF THE OCTOBER 25, 2022 MEETING MINUTES

**** DR. WEINBERGER MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE OCTOBER 25, 2022 MEETING.**

**** MS. QUELL SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Ms. D'Amore welcomed Ms. McNiel as the newest member of the Board of Health.

Ms. D'Amore then updated the Board on recent department activities. November 21st was National Public Health Workers Day and the health department was honored by the Connecticut Department of Public Health and received a special proclamation from the Commissioner and signed by the Governor, which will be displayed in the health department. Ms. Quell congratulated the staff.

She updated the Board on efforts to bolster the public health workforce pipeline through partnerships with colleges and universities to engage students at the health department.

SURVEILLANCE UPDATES

Mr. Weeks then presented his PowerPoint report on communicable diseases, which will be available on the City of Norwalk website. Norwalk is holding steady at "medium" community COVID-19 levels. He suggested that if people are going to a gathering for the upcoming Thanksgiving holiday, they should test themselves beforehand. Hartford County is now testing as the highest county, followed by Fairfield County. He also reviewed vaccination rates for the City, which are currently at

84%. Norwalk is still one of the best performing cities in Connecticut for vaccination rates. Wastewater monitoring continues and has displayed a slight increase.

On a national level, the northeast is still experiencing a higher level of cases. Mr. Weeks displayed a bar graph showing the COVID variants and sub variants on a national level.

Mr. Weeks then reviewed the State's Weekly Influenza Update with the Board Members. The number of flu cases has been increasing in Connecticut, as has the national level. The Southeast and Southwest have been heavily impacted by the flu.

Mr. Weeks also reported that RSV is occurring at higher levels compared to the past two years. For the State of Connecticut, there has been a steep increase. There are a number of hospitals that are overwhelmed with these cases. He noted that there were also other respiratory illnesses moving through the communities and encouraged people to be mindful and wear masks accordingly to prevent transmission.

Lastly, Mr. Weeks explained that Monkeypox is registering as a downtrend within Fairfield County and Connecticut.

IMMUNIZATION UPDATES

Ms. Faugno presented a PowerPoint about community outreach. She explained that there are three community health workers who are available to the community daily. She then reviewed the vaccination rate and outreach opportunity metrics for July through September. This includes working with bodegas, laundromats, early childhood centers, daycare centers, train stations, and other businesses that are interested in hosting vaccination locations. Educational literature on COVID-19 boosters and vaccinations has also been distributed at many of these locations. Ms. Faugno displayed a number of photos of the various clinics, staff, and participants.

2023 MEETING SCHEDULE

Ms. D'Amore said that the schedule for the 2023 meetings had been requested. She explained that in 2022 evening meetings had been scheduled to allow for public participation and 2023 meetings would be revisited to accommodate Board Member availability. Ms. D'Amore said that she would send out the proposed schedule to the Board Members.

STRATEGIC PLANNING UPDATES

Ms. D'Amore then narrated a PowerPoint slide deck regarding strategic planning, which included an updated vision statement and value statements. Ms. Quell said that she was pleased to see the vision statement updated because it looked much better than the previous one.

Ms. Faugno displayed and spoke about a “word cloud” that was developed for health department materials that includes vision- and value-centric words centered around “Healthy Norwalkers.”

Ms. D’Amore then spoke about the goal statements that staff had developed for the strategic priorities: Workforce Development, Public Awareness and Trust, Evaluation of Programs and Services, Foundational Infrastructure Improvements, and Technology. She said that they hoped to have all the workplan details fleshed out by the next Board meeting.

Ms. D’Amore thanked the Board Members for their input and said these will be sent out for the Board’s consideration.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Ms. Diane Lauricella welcomed Ms. McNiel to the Board of Health. She said that she enjoyed listening to the Staff presentations, particularly Ms. Faugno’s, and that she had seen a display table at the Senior Center when she went for her flu shot.

However, Ms. Lauricella has longtime concerns about rethinking public outreach regarding COVID, the flu, and RSV. While the data is important, when she is at Shoprite and other supermarkets, she has noticed that there is an emphasis on vaccination, but she believes it is important to cover other aspects of protection, such as ventilation and masking. There are opportunities to educate the public on proper masking techniques that could have been emphasized at the Senior Center and the various supermarkets to stop the spread. At various events, she has chosen to wear a mask. She suggested that the health department provide free N95 masks with the funds from the Federal Government.

Ms. Lauricella then said that at the recent election, she did not see any indications of preventative measures being taken by the election volunteers and workers. She said that she will be speaking with Mr. Wells, one of the Registrars of Voters, about this. The new variants are more contagious. A poster says a thousand words. Graphics will help people use other means, such as ventilation. This would be an excellent topic for an evening meeting. She said that she also does a lot of environmental equity work and has done a fair amount of work in Norwalk.

ADJOURNMENT

Ms. D’Amore adjourned the meeting at 8:57 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

S. L. Soltes
Telesco Secretarial Service