

**CITY OF NORWALK
NORWALK BOARD OF HEALTH
REGULAR MEETING
FEBRUARY 27, 2024**

ATTENDANCE: Dr. Frank Ehrlich, MD, Janet Karpiak, MD, Ken Lalime, RPh, Joan McNeil, DNP, Terry Quell, PhD, MSN, RN., Norman Weinberger, MD

STAFF: Theresa Argondezzi, Assistant Director of Health, Community Health; Deanna D'Amore, Director of Health; Aniella Fignon, Project Coordinator; Dr. David Reed, Medical Director; Bill Mooney, Assistant Director of Health, Environmental Health; Brian Weeks, Program Director of Epidemiology and Informatics; Darleen Hoffler, Clinical Supervisor; Megan Faugno, Special Projects Manager; Karla Rodriguez–Alicia, Health Operations Manager

CALL TO ORDER

Ms. D'Amore called the meeting to order at 8:03 a.m. A quorum was present.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

• January 23, 2024, Meeting

**** DR. WEINBERGER MOVED THE MINUTES OF THE JANUARY 23, 2024 MEETING.**

The following correction was noted:

Page 1, under **ATTENDANCE** and forward, please change the spelling of “Erlich”
To “Ehrlich”

**** MS. QUELL SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE JANUARY 23, 2024 MINUTES AS CORRECTED PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH FILE SYSTEM POLICY

Ms. D'Amore said that the Department had been reviewing their policies in order to update them as needed.

Ms. Fignon greeted everyone and explained that there had been some difficulties in the past regarding staff finding physical files in the records room because frequently another staff member had the file at their desk. A system was developed using a quality improvement process

called, “Lean/5S”, to help locate files easier when they were out of the designated location. Now a colored card will be inserted in the file drawer showing who had signed the file out. Those files will be placed in a file holder on the employee’s desk so if another staff member needs to reference it, they will be able to locate it.

Mr. Mooney said that they had broken out some of the files such as Housing into a separate section. He said that they had reviewed the files and removed items such as past violations that were resolved and more than five years old.

Mr. Reed asked if the Department had considered scanning the files electronically. Dr. Ehrlich said that he could not find a reference about how long files had to be archived in the policy. Mr. Mooney said that there was only a few categories that had to be kept for good, such as septic. Most categories can be shredded after five years. He added that the shredded documents would be kept electronically.

Ms. Quell said that she thought it was a great policy, but she had a question about the equipment information that would be stored. Mr. Mooney said that often if a business closes, Planning and Zoning needs the floor plan and they include the equipment to help the Zoning Department.

Ms. Quell asked about the Lean tool and asked for clarification on what work had already been done in the records room. She suggests that the background of the file records room project, which is included in the policy, should be revised as it’s not required to remain on the policy. She also suggests clarifying the file record disposal process so future staff are aware of what needs to be done.

Ms. D’Amore thanked everyone for their input. She said that they would work on incorporating the suggestions and bring back the revised policy to the Board.

CAP COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Ms. Faugno then displayed a PowerPoint slide deck on screen. The program is geared towards increasing COVID immunization access and coverage through outreach, education and engagement of community members. The coverage area includes Brookfield, Danbury, New Canaan and other surrounding communities. The grant will end in June.

The next slide listed the various organization events that the Community Outreach team had attended for a total of 372 and they reached out to over 11,842 community residents. They were also able to assist 528 residents with locating a vaccine site through the Vaccine Assist Line.

The State has an immunization record database called CT WIZ. The Department was able to review 1853 records and refer some residents for additional immunization.

Ms. Faugno then displayed a map that was created by Mr. Weeks that shows the vaccine coverage for the key communities to indicate where the lowest vaccine rates were located. She

played a short video showing how they went from door to door and entered the information into the GIS system. This was done through stations located at food pantries, train stations, libraries, and health service sites and other areas that the Community Health Workers (CHW) had canvassed.

The next slide was focused on Community Education. A brief discussion followed about whether the information included the new vaccine. The material also includes information that was distributed in 2022 but have been updated. Many of the material has been translated into Spanish, Haitian Creole and also Portuguese for the Danbury area.

Ms. Faugno said that she reports to the State about the various activities that the Department has participated in. People can go on the State website and access their records if they wish to. Advisory Committee meetings have continued to be held twice a year and are well attended by the health providers.

There was additionally a partnership with the Autism Society of America, which is focused on providing tips to increase vaccine confidence and reducing stress for those who area neurodiverse patients. The slide included a link for training. The Department received 500 kits from the Autism Society for distribution.

16 ERT members and 17 NHD staff members received training and 185 kits have been delivered to providers to date. Ms. Faugno then reviewed the details of what the kits contained, including noise cancelling headphones, shot reducer, stress ball, figit toy and stickers.

The Department is following evidence-based approaches and the slide lists some of the resources for the staff and general public to provide reassurance about the vaccine. They are moving away from the mandates or rigid communications and focusing on building trust and transparent communication to allow the residents to make informed decisions.

Dr. Reed said that the presentation was terrific.

EPIDEMIOLOGY UPDATES

Mr. Week said that the recent information was positive. The new map for Fairfield has been green for the last three weeks and other counties have also experienced a down trend. Flu is actually competing with COVID and RSV is also declining.

He added that they were currently experiencing Norovirus, which will extend until May and June.

NEW PROPOSED VACCINE: HEPLISAV-B

Ms. Hoffler then presented the recent statistics for the HEPLISAV-B vaccine and said that there were some challenges in getting the patients to return for the second dose of the vaccine since they are given a month apart. One of the vaccines is a three-dose vaccine, but this particular vaccine is a two-dose vaccine.

Dr. Reed said that in the travel clinic there are patients who take two of the vaccines, go to their out of country location and often forget to get that third shot upon their return. He said that this makes this new vaccine an important improvement.

**** DR. WEINBERGER MOVED TO APPROVE THE ADDITION OF THE HEPLISAV-B VACCINE TO THE HEALTH DEPARTMENT VACCINE AVAILABILITY LIST.**

**** MS. QUELL SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

VACCINE FEES

Ms. Rodriguez –Alicia said that there had been a spreadsheet sent to the Board Members showing the cost for the various vaccines. She noted that there were some more costly vaccines where the Department was paying out more than the reimbursement rate. She explained that they were add in the cost of having the nurse administer the shot and how the fees were being increased by 8%.

Dr. Reed said that they had been doing in this for a long time and he felt that adjusting the price on the vaccines yearly was a good practice. He noted that there were some vaccines that had a price drop of \$5.00 and felt that they should not lower the price. Discussion followed.

Dr. Reed noted that at the travel clinic, there have been patients who have come from out of state because Norwalk offers the vaccines at a much more reasonable rate.

**** MS. QUELL MOVED TO ACCEPT THE PROPOSED VACCINE FEE SCHEDULE WITH THE CORRECTION OF THE FLU VACCINE TO \$50.00.**

**** DR. EHRLICH SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Ms. D'Amore said that there had been a retirement from the WIC program and the department recently hired a WIC Nutritionist to fill the position. The receptionist position has been reposted. Ms. Hoffler and others have been requesting that the examination rooms be renovated for the past several years. The project was successfully completed recently. Ms. D'Amore thanked all the staff involved in the project. Dr. Reed said that he had been by recently and the rooms were

very nice. Ms. Quell suggested that they do a small Grand Reopening and have the monthly meeting in person.

Ms. D'Amore said that they had submitted a budget for 2024-2025 and there had been 18 positions requested on the City side. Due to the costs, those new positions have not been recommended. She said she will be presenting on the health department's operating budget request to the BET. Ms. D'Amore will send a written document to the Board Members after the meeting that summarizes the budget request. The meeting with the BET is March 7th and the Public Hearing is scheduled on March 20, 2024.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no one present from the public.

ADJOURNMENT

Ms. D'Amore adjourned the meeting at 9:02 a.m.
Respectfully submitted,

S. L. Soltes
Telesco Secretarial Services