

**CITY OF NORWALK
BOARD OF HEALTH
REGULAR MEETING
JANUARY 24, 2023**

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

OTHERS: Deanna D'Amore, Director of Health; Aniella Fignon, Program Coordinator; Karla Rodriguez-Alicea, Health Operations Manager; Brian Weeks, Program Director of Epidemiology; Bill Mooney, Assistant Director of Health, Environmental Health; Darleen Hoffler, Supervisor of Clinical Services

This meeting was held via teleconference.

CALL TO ORDER

Ms. D'Amore called the meeting to order at 8:02 a.m. A quorum was present.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

• November 22, 2022 Meeting

**** MS. QUELL MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE NOVEMBER 22, 2022 MEETING**

**** DR. WEINBERGER SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE NOVEMBER 22, 2022 MEETING AS SUBMITTED PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Ms. D'Amore announced that a former staff member who was previously employed with the Health Department as a Public Health Nurse will be returning to the Department along with three other recent hires. The Strategic Plan will be available shortly for review. The Department is also working on updating the Board member biographies for the website.

Ms. Quell said that it is wonderful that staff members are able to move up the department ladder. Ms. D'Amore said that the health department has a history of working on succession planning. Mr. Lalime said that it was important to retain employees because of the amount of training involved.

Surveillance Updates

Mr. Weeks then presented his report on COVID-19. This information will be available on the City of Norwalk website.

Fairfield County is holding steady at “medium” COVID-19 levels. There is a list showing the recommendations for those who may be immune compromised or sick.

The State of Connecticut is tracking of COVID-19 cases and identified a peak around January 7th and that since then, cases have been declining statewide. However, Fairfield County is currently third in terms of number of cases after New Haven and Hartford Counties. Mr. Weeks said that he believes that the mild winter has been a factor along with high vaccination rates and immunity. Wastewater analysis also demonstrates a decline in COVID-19 community levels compared to a year ago. He then reviewed a chart of current variants with the Board Members.

Mr. Weeks then presented an influenza chart showing a peak in November 2022 that has been steadily decreasing. He noted that there was a correlation between weather and the flu. The mild winter may have impacted the number of cases. While most of the influenza deaths have been in the elderly population, there has been one pediatric death. He also reviewed RSV data and cautioned that the weather could become much colder and impact rates of RSV.

Mr. Weeks encouraged those who may think they have COVID-19 to test and follow recommended protocols. The USPS will deliver free COVID-19 tests from the FDA to your address that can be ordered online. Mr. Weeks also encouraged everyone to receive boosters and displayed options for protection ranking face masks from no mask to the N-95 face mask, stating that the N-95 mask is the best choice.

LIGHTHOUSE AWARDS

Ms. D’Amore stated that the Lighthouse Awards Program had been paused during the pandemic and is now again active.

Mr. Mooney presented an overview of the program, which started in 2008 to incentivize and recognize good handling food practices, and he noted that people do check the Lighthouse rankings before going out to a restaurant. The restaurants work hard to maintain their awards.

Of the 480 candidate restaurants, 271 were eligible for a Class 2, 3, or 4 Lighthouse Award and four establishments were recommended by Environmental Health staff members to conduct honorary ceremonies to reinvigorate public awareness. A Class 3 Lighthouse Award goes to establishments that has scored 90 or above with four or less risk violations. The Class 2

Lighthouse Award would be an establishment that scores 90 or above but may have more than four risk violations. A Class 1 Lighthouse would indicate an establishment that has score 80 or above with at least one critical food violation. Mr. Mooney stated that the four recommended restaurants for a ceremony included Notre Dame Convalescent Home, Taco Tequila, Panera Bread, and BlackStones Steakhouse.

A brief discussion followed. Mr. Lalime commended the Department for selecting a range of candidate restaurants for a ceremony. Ms. D'Amore said she encouraged any Board recommendations for the program and that she had spoken to the Mayor's Office and Communications Director and that they will be issuing a press release and publicizing the awards through social media.

IMMUNIZATION FEES

Ms. D'Amore explained that in the past, the Department had worked with the Board of Health to set immunization fees.

Ms. Hoffler spoke about travel vaccines and stated that the Department currently offers them at a significantly lower price than other clinics and are available to the general public twice a month through the Travel & Adult Immunization Clinic. More people are now traveling for vacation and travel vaccine services are increasing, so the associated fees have been updated to ensure appropriate and competitive pricing.

Ms. D'Amore said that this is a part of a comprehensive review of current services and that the Department will be analyzing fees that nearby communities are charging for relevant services.

Ms. Rodriguez-Alicea explained that the Department has been working on calculating the cost of vaccines, which increase yearly, supplies, and the staff time involved to develop appropriate fees. Mr. Lalime expressed interest in knowing which immunizations primarily drive the program and its costs and the volume of types of immunizations. Ms. Hoffler responded that Hepatitis A and Typhoid are the two most requested vaccines, along with Gardasil and sometimes Japanese Encephalitis.

**** MR. LALIME MOVED TO APPROVE THE NEW VACCINE FEE SCHEDULE AS PRESENTED.**

**** DR. WEINBERGER SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no one present from the public that wished to comment at this time.

ADJOURNMENT

Ms. D'Amore adjourned the meeting at 8:41 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

S. L. Soltes
Telesco Secretarial Service