



OBSERVER CORPS REPORT

BOARD OF HEALTH - 8-13-24

Hybrid Meeting- Recorded

LWVM Observer: Tom Krueger

Members in Attendance: Andrew Petty, Tom McMahon, Tom Massaro, Helaine Hazlett

Community Health Update - Communication - Mental Health Task Force Update

At the last meeting Dr. Massaro was elected as vice chair for community health. He presented his ideas about how public health should be in the future. Why? First, from the recent past and during the pandemic the US public health system had failed. There was a disconnect between the CDC and local public health departments. This prompted the need for change at the CDC and a more robust role for local public health departments. Secondly, the community needed to be treated as local experts. With this idea he said he would like to have the community work as much as possible with the BOH. This trend had been starting in 2017 "Public Health 3.0" but was paused because of the pandemic. The strategy is to improve the health of the community and how the HD and BOH can do this. This is a long-term strategy. Dr. Massaro noted that local public health departments need to build trust with the community, trust that had been lost during the pandemic.

Dr. Massaro went on to say the subcommittee of the BOH, the Mental Health Task Force, is a perfect example of how community and health departments can work together. In that regard, the MHTF met last week and had two requests of the BOH. One was how to address membership of the MHTF as some have left; second, how involved with substance abuse work should the MHTF be. Dr. Massaro talked about the chair of the MHTF, Mark Libon, who is a psychologist, on the faculty of Salem State University, and practices with families and children who are in trouble. He had made "inroads" with the school system and would like to meet more. There is the idea of having student members on the MHTF. Dr. Libon understands the pulse of the youth in the community.

Returning to his first question, he asked if there could be a more "generic" title of a member of the MHTF, instead of the "police chief." In the past the BOH had decided to have 10 members on the MHTF and 6 would be a quorum. Dr. Massaro requested applications for the MHTF.

On a separate issue but related issue, he talked about the agreement that the MHTF has with the Marblehead Current to publish an article submitted by the MHTF every other month. Dr. Massaro said he had written an article - a short guide to understanding substance abuse disorders with definitions and examples. He feels that

this is the type of communication that would serve the community. (Another article might be on H5N1.) At this point Ms. Hazlett questioned providing the same to other local news sources. Furthermore, as it is from the BOH she would like to see the articles before publication.

Since it is the mission to improve the health status of the community, it is necessary to understand the current health status today. Dr. Massaro noted that U Mass Boston, who had previously helped the MHTF about the mental health needs of the community, could return to conduct a study of the health needs across the lifespan in MHD, which would then aid in how to allocate resources. (Salem had U Mass Boston do such a survey.) If the BOH thinks this is a good idea, the question comes of funding: the cost is \$35,000. He asked the board's approval to find some funding which was given.

Wellness Day Update

This was a brief update. The locale would be at the Community Center, pending their approval. The date would be a Saturday or Sunday in January. Hopefully, the gym would be used and would feature tables around the periphery showcasing what MHD has to offer in regards to both physical and mental health. Mr. Petty will talk with Lisa Hooper about these arrangements.

Substance Abuse Program Updates

The main program envisioned would hopefully occur this fall (November or early December) at the high school auditorium. This program would have individual speakers talk to the audience about their experiences with substance abuse. Once the arrangements are finalized the individuals can be contacted and asked how long they would speak.

A second type of program could be one involving a theater group of young people addressing drug issues. Ms. Hazlett has made some initial contacts with the group.

Bills

There was further discussion about how the board members wished to sign off on bills from the health department. There were varying degrees of comfort signing the bills and some wanted to physically go to the HD to sign them. Mr. McMahon offered to provide a five-minute summary of the signed bills to be presented at the meetings, in the spirit of transparency.

Transfer Station Update

Mr. Petty discussed that he is still working the architect, engineer, and value engineer. Two major areas of saving are likely with the transaction hut and the swap shed. (The transaction hut would be located as the residential users come into the transfer station. This would make it easy to pay for stickers, etc. and in the future be used for license plate reading cameras instead of stickers.) The quoted cost of the hut was \$150K, so alternatives are being sought. A repurposed shipping container with heat, a/c, etc. could be built off site and cost \$30-40K. In regards to the swap shed, the quoted costs were very high, prompting further thought. As a first step, the basic slab for the swap shed could be built and the building done later, perhaps with one of the technical schools. The board approved both proposals.

Other issues that were discussed included the laying of fiber optics for the LPR cameras, feasibility study for the handling of construction and demolition materials, and the response to the fire at the transfer station on 7/21-22.

Mr. Petty updated the board about the list of potential contractors and the wait as to have some DECAM certified for this type of work. The plan is to rebid the TS renovation this fall.

Health Department Update

1. The budget work for FY26 is already starting and is due 9/6.
2. The board will soon be voting on tobacco regulations as well as tattoo regulations. The latter will require a public hearing before a vote. MHD currently has no tattoo businesses (Salem is almost a "tattoo capital."). Micropigmentation is done in MHD but is under a doctor's license.
3. Bathing beach testing - the last tests will be 9/10-16. Only Grace Oliver has been high at times, but when resampled able to open. Mr. Petty cautioned all bathers to use facilities for elimination otherwise the bacteria will go into the water and could contaminate it.
4. Mosquitoes - still in the season; EEE has been identified in some areas of Massachusetts. As always he cautioned against standing water, dusk, and early morning for more mosquito activity.
5. COVID - is on the rise. The HD recently got 1000 test kits.
6. Public Health Inspector - is retiring at the end of the month and the department is looking for a new one.

The next meeting is scheduled for 9/10/24