



**CITY OF WORCESTER, MASSACHUSETTS**  
Division of Public Health



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Medical Director

**SUBJECT:** BOARD OF HEALTH MEETING MINUTES  
**DATE:** OCTOBER 5, 2015  
**START TIME:** 6:30PM  
**LOCATION:** 25 MEADE STREET, ROOM 109  
WORCESTER, MA 01610

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**IN ATTENDANCE:**

*Board of Health members:* David Fort, Joanne Calista, Abigail Averbach

*City of Worcester staff:* Karyn Clark, Zach Dyer, Dr. Michael Hirsh, Dr. Matilde Castiel

*Members of the public:* Samantha Arsenault, Hosana Mamata, Jeffrey Brady

**Meeting called to order at 6:38 PM**

**1. Welcome and Introductions**

- a. Abigail Averbach, Chair, opened the meeting. Dr. Matilde “Mattie” Castiel, newly appointed Commissioner for Health & Human Services briefly discussed what the work she has been doing since she became appointed. Dr. Castiel shared that she has been meeting with the City Manager’s Quality of Life Task Force, going out in the field and talking to individuals who are homeless or drug addicted living in some of the city parks. Also present were UMass Medical students.

**2. Approval of the Minutes**

- a. Minutes of the 8-31-15 meeting are unanimously approved with a correction of spelling of Ms. Averbach’s name and the date following a motion to the chair.

**3. Update from the Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB) Site Visit**

- a. Karyn informed the Board that the PHAB site visit went very well. The team spent two intensive days at WDPH, asked questions about the documents uploaded in February and were impressed with the amount of work the



small staff is able to accomplish in seven communities. They were very impressed with the level of community engagement the Division has with a myriad of partners. They were also a bit confused by our structure given that Massachusetts has 351 individual BOHs and that we have regionalized our services. WDPH expects to learn by March of 2016 if we have become accredited and / or if there will be an action plan to become accredited.

#### **4. Discussion of issues and policy opportunities related to opioid epidemic**

- a. Discussion of the complexities of treatment, release, lack of housing, shelters,
- b. Discussion of considering the needle exchange proposals that have been presented in the past. Given the crisis, proposal to review previously proposed plan.
- c. Discussion of impact of closing of triage center on currently using populations. Programs that do not allow substance use have proven very restrictive for populations who need shelter.
- d. Proposal to get direct feedback from individuals who have been through the system, have used in the past, to get a better understanding of the challenges and intricacies.
- e. Karyn Clark discusses the report on recommendations from the Opioid Working Group released by Governor Baker's administration.
- f. Discussion of policies that can be employed to stem the tide of supply. Dr. Castiel recommends increasing treatment options while prosecuting distributors.
- g. Zach Dyer discusses the apparent spike in Hepatitis C Virus (HCV) incidence in the first half of 2015.
- h. Dr. Castiel asks if there was an associated spike in HIV, Mr. Dyer has not seen a spike but will request more recent data.
- i. What are the policy opportunities at a local level? Board/Dr. Castiel requests evidence of safe havens/ needle exchange impact on health.
- j. Dr. Castiel discusses other concerns and policy opportunities, specifically around drug paraphernalia.
- k. Ms. Clark asks about the degree of information that the Board is interested in hearing. Ms. Averbach asks for a comprehensive report of data around use, overdoses, demographics, best practices, etc. Agreement that through WDPH's academic partnerships, significant data analysis and research can be accomplished.

#### **5. Discussion of vice-chair role and selection of vice-chair**

- a. Tabled until next meeting.

#### **6. Next Meeting**

- a. Next meeting will be scheduled at a later date in October.
- b. Board requests presentations about overdose crisis.

#### **7. Adjourn**

- a. Meeting is adjourned at 8:05 following a motion of the chair.

