



**CITY OF WORCESTER, MASSACHUSETTS**  
Department of Health & Human Services  
Division of Public Health



**Public Health**  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Matilde Castiel, MD  
Health & Human Services  
Commissioner

Karyn E. Clark  
Public Health  
Director

**DATE:** September 9, 2019  
**RE:** WORCESTER BOARD OF HEALTH MEETING MINUTES  
**START TIME:** 6:30 PM  
**LOCATION:** WORCESTER DIVISION OF PUBLIC HEALTH  
25 MEADE STREET, CONFERENCE ROOM 109  
WORCESTER, MA 01610

**Welcome & Introductions:**

Meeting was called to order at 6:35pm.

Members present: Edith Claros, PhD, Chair, Jerry Gurwitz, MD, Vice Chair, David Fort, and Chareese Allen  
WDPH Staff: Karyn Clark, Director of DPH, Michael Hirsh, MD, Medical Director of DPH

**Approval of the June 24, 2019 Minutes:**

Motion to approve the WBOH meeting minutes of June 24, 2019 made by Jerry Gurwitz, MD, Vice Chair Second - David Fort - Approved

**Review and act on discussion relative to BOH vacancy update:**

Karyn Clark, Director of DPH: Spoke with the City Manager who explained that the Community Action Committee the city has, is meeting on September 26<sup>th</sup> to discuss any board or commission openings city wide and any applications that came in expressing interest in sitting on the BOH. After the meeting, they will recommend some of the applicants to the City Manager. I or Colleen Bolen, Deputy Director of DPH will sit in on the interviews with some members of the City Manager's office and Human Resources. Hopefully at the next meeting we will have more information regarding interviews or if we have selected someone.

**Review and act on discussion relative to communicable disease update:**

Karyn Clark, Director of DPH: Worcester has not had any cases of Hepatitis A reported since July. We are continuing our vaccination efforts so that those at risk may obtain a first dose or complete the series by obtaining their second dose. To date, 527 doses of vaccine have been administered at 100 clinics. Worcester has not had any cases of measles or meningitis. No cases of West Nile Virus have been reported in Worcester as of 9/9/19. Worcester's risk level remains at moderate since mosquito samples have tested positive. There are no cases of EEE reported in Worcester. There have been no positive mosquito samples in Worcester for EEE.



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Edith Claros, PhD, Chair: Are they spraying in Worcester?

Karyn Clark, Director of DPH: Two years ago, it was recommended that the City Council vote to join the Central MA Mosquito Control Project to provide additional education and preventative measures to mitigate mosquitos. They use the most effective methods, techniques, equipment and products to control the mosquito population. We have had multiple phone calls with MDPH and the impacted communities that due to surveillance and proximity to where the positive human and positive mosquito samples were, the State Department of Public Health and Department of Agriculture Resources coordinated aerial spraying that took place a couple of weeks ago in specific areas of southeast Worcester County, including portions of Worcester that are at risk for EEE virus.

Michael Hirsh, MD, Medical Director DPH: City Manager, Mayor and Superintendent have agreed to proactively suspend activities after 4:30pm in the City of Worcester. Recommended cancellation times (approximate time of sunset) for outdoor activities in areas of high risk for EEE (distributed). They are educating the five D's of prevention: Avoid being outdoors during **Dawn** and **Dusk**, when mosquitoes are most active; **Dress** in long sleeved clothing; use insect repellent with **DEET**; and **Drain** any standing water from around your home.

**Review and act on continued discussion regarding CHIP cross walk:**

Casey Burns, Director, Healthy Greater Worcester: Crosswalk distributed. This is an opportunity to look through the different priority areas and strategies. We have been able to move forward on a couple of strategies. Every year the Coalition has an annual meeting which also serves as the CHIP Report Out, will be held on December 5, 2019 from 8:30am – 10:30am at the Boys & Girls Club of Worcester (65 Tainter Street, Worcester MA 01610). We will be reporting on the first two years of implementation of the current CHIP plan; what's in progress vs what's completed and show what our reportable impacts were. As part of that initiative we have done a Health Equity Award. There's a nomination form, we look for both individuals and organizations to be nominated who are doing the work of Health Equity. Another important aspect of the annual meeting is that we are going to use it also as a report out for the REACH initiative; which is a major new initiative that the Coalition is partnering with the City of Worcester, Division of Public Health, as well as some other partners around the City (UMass Memorial, Family Health Center and EMK), in order to specifically look at health disparities and challenges faced by the Latino community.

Jerry Gurwitz, MD, Vice Chair: Would it be possible for the BOH to get a preview of what is going to be presented at the annual meeting on December 5<sup>th</sup>? It would be interesting to the BOH to have a heads up about what the key findings are.

Casey Burns, Director, Healthy Greater Worcester: Yes.

Edith Claros, PhD, Chair: Looking at the CHIP crosswalk, one of the things that I see as far as the priority areas is that not a lot of providers speak Spanish or other different languages.

Casey Burns, Director, Healthy Greater Worcester: There is an initiative that the mental health working group of the CHIP has been very activate in over the past year to specifically better understand and create a pipeline for a more reflective provider field, particularly in terms of looking at cultural responsiveness and racial diversity.

Karyn Clark, Director, DPH: In creating the next CHIP, we can work collaboratively to see what input and actions the BOH can take.

**Review and act on continued discussion regarding youth vaping data:**

Karyn Clark, Director, DPH: Reviewed with the Board their discussion at the last BOH meeting on June 24<sup>th</sup> regarding the youth vaping data. There was discussion on the accuracy on the data because it seemed low. Since that meeting I have spoken with our Epidemiologist, Nikki Nixon, and had her rerun the numbers and they are accurate. The raw numbers do not seem that low but when put into perspective with total number of students it does appear lower than expected.

Michael Hirsh, MD, Medical Director DPH: The CDC has come out with a recommendation not to vape because they don't know what is causing the horrible pulmonary diseases to pop up increasingly across the country in vapors. The State of Michigan is the first to have banned all vaping products. I think that the public messaging should be that vaping does not seem to be an alternative to smoking while illnesses remain uncertain.

Jerry Gurwitz, MD, Vice Chair: Should there be some public service announcements in schools or in the T&G?

Karyn Clark, Director, DPH: MDPH came out with a vaping campaign. Joshan will be working with all the seven schools in our Public Health Region. Will send out a link for the BOH to view. Dr. Castiel has had conversations with the Superintendent of schools and the Mayor about the concerns on youth vaping. We can work with our local government channel and others to get the message out there.

Jerry Gurwitz, MD, Vice Chair: This is an urgent Public Health concern. We should consider whether these products should be sold in Worcester.

John Shaer, Director, New England Convenience Stores: Out of 53 patients interviewed, 80% said they used some sort of cannabis vape product in the last 90 days before they started having symptoms like chest pains, nausea and trouble breathing. Read a quote from a former Director stating "It is probably associated with illegal products or something new that was introduced to the market by an illegal manufacturer". It appears that it is from black market vapes, when you buy black market products. As you are deciding how to issue guidance to the Community about vaping, I would like to reiterate that PUP laws might help with the use of vapes. Also schools have been using Fly Sense (looks like a smoke detector) which is capable of detecting indoor vaping.

Motion to adjourn; Chareese Allen, second by David Fort

**Adjourn:** 7:58pm

**Next Meeting -- October 7, 2019 at 6:30pm**

**Potential Future Meeting Topics:**

Review and act on presentation with David Crispin relative to a proposal for expansion of Notre Dame Cemetery (vote)

Review continued discussion on youth vaping

Update relative to EEE

Update relative to opioids

Review discussion on window safety

