



**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: AUGUST 2, 2021

RE: WORCESTER BOARD OF HEALTH MEETING START TIME: 6:30 PM

LOCATION: WEBEX MEETING

Welcome & Introductions: Meeting was called to order at 6:34pm.

BOH Members: Jerry Gurwitz, MD, Vice Chair, Frances Anthes, Chareese Allen and David Fort  
WPDH Staff: Karyn Clark, Director of DPH, Michael Hirsh, MD, Medical Director of DPH, and Patricia Bruchmann, RN, Chief Public Health Nurse, Matilde “Mattie” Castiel, MD, Commissioner of Health & Human Services

Guests: Matthew Masiello, MD, MPH, Climate Change Adaptation Practitioner, John Odell, Director of Asset Management and Energy, City of Worcester

Approval of the July 19, 2021 Meeting Minutes: Motion to approve the WBOH meeting minutes made by David Fort, seconded by Frances Anthes — Approved

#### COVID-19 Updates

- Dr. Mattie Castiel: presented a slide deck to the Board with various data points to include that 60% of Worcester residents have received their first dose of vaccine and 53% have been fully vaccinated.
- Fran Anthes: attended a pop up clinic, not many in attendance but commented on the professionalism of the staff. Inquired about outreach to youth.
- Dr. Castiel: Have worked with youth influencers to talk to the youth about the importance of getting vaccinated. Focus groups were conducted, have had several giveaways including a bike to get buy in. Trying to get families to get vaccinated at the same time. Have done clinics at WEPA nights at Polar Park – ticket giveaways. Working closely with the schools to motivate the students and their families to get vaccinated.
- Fran Anthes: Are their plans to do clinics before school starts?
- Dr. Castiel: Yes, working to do clinics at each school.
- David Fort: Any changes in numbers? Incentives are a good approach, but need to keep trying, do what we can and continue to reimagine how to engage all the populations to get vaccinated. People continued to be misinformed. Concerned about the breakthrough cases; need to continue to remind people to wash their hands, social distance and wear a mask.



- Dr. Gurwitz: Looks like 1/3 of the 12-19 year olds are fully vaccinated.
- Dr. Castiel: Percentage point moves about every 1-2 weeks.
- Dr. Hirsh: Virus has mutated into the Delta variant. Dr. Ellison from UMass specializes COVID tests and according to him, MDPH and the CDC, 80 % of the COVID-19 cases in Massachusetts are the Delta variant. This is just as transmissible as Chicken Pox. Uptick in breakthrough cases of individuals who were vaccinated. Mentioned the July 4 Providence Town, MA outbreak; 950 positive cases and 840 of those were fully vaccinated. 80 % of those in the hospital with COVID are unvaccinated and dying. If a person gets COVID, they have less severe symptoms if they have been vaccinated. Hospitalizations – seeing younger individuals who didn't get sick during the 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> wave. Low incidence of Flu because of wearing masks. CDC – due to the Delta variant, we now know that you can be a spreader even if you are vaccinated; no or mild symptoms.
- Dr. Gurwitz: Asked Dr. Hirsh about the DESE guidelines vs. American Academy of Pediatrics.
- Dr. Hirsh: DESE guidance indicates that all children age 5 – 11 years old go back to school masked. But age 12 and older if vaccinated don't need to wear masks. AAP doesn't discriminate who or who isn't vaccinated so everyone should mask up until vaccination rates go up.
- David Fort: completely agrees with AAP guidelines.
- Fran Anthes: appreciates how Dr. Hirsh framed the difference especially as things evolve. From a management perspective, it would be challenging under the DESE guidelines. All students and staff should wear masks.
- Dr. Hirsh: updated Board on an ultra-cold freezer that WDPH obtained from Worcester State University. It will be utilized as a repository for local primary care doctors and pediatricians, will cut out the middle man. We know that these doctors are the most trusted messengers by their patients.
- Dr. Gurwitz: would like to endorse the AAP guidelines and recommend this guidance to the Worcester Public School Committee.
- David Fort: likes the AAP recommendations, they came out before the CDC. Protects kids that are under 12 who are not vaccinated. In favor of an endorsement.
- Fran Anthes: Supports universal masking for all students and staff. Concerned about social, mental impacts with being out of school. We can keep kids in school by wearing masks. Made a motion to empower the Worcester Division of Public Health staff to talk to the Worcester Public School Committee to adopt AAP mask recommendations. Seconded by David Fort. Approved.

### Climate Change

- Matthew Masiello, MD, MPH, Climate Change Adaptation Practitioner; presented slide deck on climate change and its impact on health. Specific suggestions on what local health departments can do (using a health equity framework)
  - Climate Change 101 – get educated
  - Health Equity and Climate Change
  - Health Impacts of Climate Change
  - Extreme, Drought, Wildfires. Air Quality, Allergens, Sea Level Rise, Storms and Flooding, Nutrition and Food Security
  - Health Benefits of Climate Change
  - Infrastructure, Infrastructure and Infrastructure
  - Public Health Programs and Climate Change
  - Individual and family health, Infectious Disease, Chronic Disease, Emergency Preparedness

- Public Health Functions
- Assessment and Surveillance, Community Engagement, Greening of LHDs.
- The Board thanked Dr. Masiello for his presentation and would like to invite him back for a deeper discussion at a future meeting.
- David Fort: appreciates the work Dr. Masiello is doing, need to continue to discuss how climate change impacts healthcare and public health. Need to think about how we get more allies.
- Fran Anthes: suggested a larger discussion on this topic with Worcester Green Corps, Worcester Community Action Council, City of Worcester, United Way and Chamber of Commerce. Inquired about climate change being included in the new Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP).

#### Civilian Review Board

- David Fort: there were scheduling issues but had wanted to bring together experts and researchers to educate the Board of Health and the community on police accountability and transparency in doing their jobs as they are supposed to. Would like to hold another BOH meeting this month either on the 16<sup>th</sup> or 23<sup>rd</sup>.

#### Next Meeting / Topics

- September 27, 2021 at 6:30 PM
- COVID-19 updates