



**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: November 4, 2021  
To: Board of Health  
From: Karyn E. Clark, Director of Public Health  
Re: **Board of Health/ WebEx Meeting Minutes October 18, 2021**

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### Welcome & Introductions

Board members present: Fran Anthes, Chareese Allen, David Fort, Jerry Gurwitz, MD, Vice Chair

WDPH staff present: Mike Hirsh, MD, Medical Director, Karyn Clark, Director

Invited Guests: Jenna Hoagland, MPH student from UMass Amherst, Gary Berte, Professor from Springfield College

### Approval of minutes from September 27, 2021 Board of Health Meeting

Motion to approve (Fran Anthes), second (Chareese Allen). Approved

### Review and Discuss COVID-19 updates

- **Data & Trends** – as of October 10, 72 cases per day for 10 consecutive weeks. Appreciate the BOH ratifying the emergency orders to reflect the data trends. Worcester County is defined as a “red” high spread region. Trending better in terms of new cases. Hospitals are doing well and elective procedures continue. ED numbers are up due to St. Vincent’s strike / down 100 inpatient beds. This is clogging UMass and area hospital EDs.
- **Schools** – imminent approval for 5-11 year olds for Pfizer. WDPH will serve as a vaccine depot for the region’s primary care doctors and pediatricians. Dr. Castiel and HHS team will coordinate with Worcester Public Schools flu and COVID-19 vaccinations, hopefully will be completed by Thanksgiving. This vaccine will also be available at pharmacies.
- **Vaccinations** – Pfizer, Moderna and Johnson & Johnson boosters will be available by November 1<sup>st</sup>. Available to 65 and older, High risk for exposure worker or living in long term care facility, 18 and older and immunocompromised. As of today, 63% of the population is totally vaccinated, 72% have had 1 dose. Age 15-40 vaccination rate is only 46%. Monitoring Delta and Delta Plus variant which is prevalent in England. By getting vaccinated, it reduces a person’s chance of needing to go into the hospital by 11 x. Believes mandated



vaccination requirements are helping. Would like to see Worcester and surrounding Alliance towns consider lifting the mask order at this time, would like to see the data two weeks out after Thanksgiving gatherings.

Fran Anthes – expressed concern for the kids relative to Pfizer and logistics (will parents be on site during the vaccine clinics at the schools?).

Dr. Hirsh – we know some of the kids will be scared of the needles. The clinics will go slower, could be a challenge for the vaccine corps volunteers. May consider offering evening or weekend clinics to accommodate working parents.

David Fort – noted that many police are not wearing masks – all public officials should set an example and wear a mask.

Chareese Allen – mentioned some UMass nurses do not wish to be vaccinated.

Dr. Hirsh – described City of Worcester's municipal employee mandate process.

Chareese Allen – perhaps some pediatricians could be available to add some support to the school clinics.

Dr. Gurwitz – do other towns have mask mandate?

Dr. Hirsh – yes, West Boylston and Shrewsbury, Grafton considering.

### **Review and Discuss 2021 CHIP Launch Event**

Karyn Clark and Dr. Hirsh – invited Board of Health and community to the 2021-2026 Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) kick-off event on November 9<sup>th</sup> at the Worcester Pop Up, followed by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Culture of Health Prize Celebration. Worcester is one of 10 communities in the country selected to be honored for its collective work on racial and health equity.

### **Review and Discuss Civilian Review Board**

David Fort – cannot be the healthiest city if we cannot talk about racism. Police conduct and racism against people affects public health. Would like to see swifter action on these issues and discuss the importance of a Civilian Review Board.

Jenna Hoagland - presented a detailed power point on this topic (see slide deck).

Gary Berte, PhD. – provided testimony on his role in the Springfield Civilian Review Board. In 2016 was asked by Springfield City Council Public Safety Sub-Committee to provide insight on CRB (has 40 years of experience of research and consulting).

Member of Community Policing Board. No one expert in CRB, Worcester would be their own experts. No one size that fits all. Described two models: independent (NYC) freestanding agency with attorneys. Umbudsman system (Boston) – review police investigations. Worcester could consider a hybrid model. 1-2% of officers have 90% of the complaints (study from California).

Fran Anthes – perhaps Worcester could look at a hybrid model; structure a group that could be called together to make a recommendation to the City Manager. With an emphasis on the group—not just the Board of Health, but a broader group is needed to be working on this.

Chareese Allen – the makeup of such a group should be comprised of diverse individuals.

Dr. Gurwitz – what has worked / not worked?

Gary Berte – communication is key but open meeting laws prevent the board from being able to discuss and meet.

David Fort – would like to see movement from the City Manager and City Council, has not heard what steps are being taken around dismantling racism and discrimination as it relates to the Police Department. Sees a complete need for this. Reviewed previous Board of Health meetings relative to the police department and racism. Would like to

have a larger discussion about a Civilian Review Board, send a letter to the City Manager to advocate for this to be installed.

Dr. Gurwitz – hopeful we can align BOH priorities with the new 2021 CHIP coming on line.

**Next Meeting / Topics**

November 8, 2021 at 6:30 PM

COVID-19 updates, 2021-2026 Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP), Civilian Review Board

**Adjourn**