



**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:** October 2, 2017  
**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 6:54pm.

Members present: David Fort, Chair, Edith Claros, PhD, Vice Chair, Jerry Gurwitz, MD, Joanne Calista and Abigail Averbach. WDPH Staff: Michael Hirsh, MD, Medical Director, Karyn Clark, Director of Public Health, and Michele Williams, Principal Clerk.

**Approval of the September 11, 2017 Minutes:**

Motion to approve the WBOH meeting minutes of September 11, 2017 made by Edith Claros, PhD, Vice Chair, Second – Jerry Gurwitz, MD. Approved.

**Review and act on discussion to prioritize BOH priority policy items:**

Karyn Clark, Director of PH: Would like to continue our discussion on the Board's top 3 priorities to focus on and then have appropriate staff come and brief the BOH on where things stand, not only in the Department but city wide on those particular issues. I would also like to have the Board let me know what kind of information you would need during the month for review, such as data or reports related to those topics.

David Fort, Chair: Let's go over our top 3 priorities and figure the next step on how to structure these meetings.

Edith Claros, PhD, Vice Chair: The top 3 priorities I would like to focus on are: 1.) Mental Health, 2.) Substance Abuse and 3.) Access to Care. Specifically on mental health because individuals that are trying to get services are waiting months for an appointment.

David Fort, Chair: The top priorities I would like to discuss are: 1.) Substance Abuse, 2.) Access to Care, 3.) Racism and discrimination, 4.) Mental Health. We want to be able to say that we are addressing the disparities and demonstrate a purpose behind what we do and show what has been done.



Jerry Gurwitz, MD: The top priorities I would like to discuss are: 1.) Substance Abuse, 2.) Tobacco / Marijuana 3.) Gun Violence, 4.) Injury Prevention, 5.) Nutrition, 6.) Oral Health. Suggest a grid is created with topics and categorize each of them. This would help inform the BOH if it's just educating ourselves, if its existing ordinance, a regulation to be considered or endorsing something.

Abigail Averbach: There are three things that the Board of Health does. 1.) We educate ourselves, by learning about an issue during a presentation. 2.) Start to make decisions about where we are going. 3.) Action, which could be policy.

Joanne Calista: The top 3 priorities I would like to discuss are: 1.) Mental Health, 2.) Substance Use (particularly opioids) 3.) Violence (particularly sexual violence/trafficking)

Karyn Clark, Director, PH: Many of the priority areas that you have identified align with Dr. Castiel's focus areas around, homelessness, substance abuse and mental health. We could consider having Dr. Castiel attend a meeting to further discuss and think through reporting out on the work that is happening.

Abigail Averbach: We're in that category of elevating visibility through advocacy and having it be part of our agenda that the BOH wants to know how is that issue being addressed and resolved.

David Fort, Chair: I want us to educate ourselves in a timely manner.

Joanne Calista: Knowing what's going on and having a greater impact collected strategically to close the circle. Being aware of what the other entities are doing is very important.

Michael Hirsh, MD, Medical Director: This is a great discussion and this kind of "unpacking" of the tasks is a great project for us over the next couple of meetings to see where the BOH would like to go. I also want to point out that there are "low hanging fruit" (i.e window guards) amongst all these projects. Tackling racism and homelessness are huge issues. We have to build a little bit on success along the way. We have to aim high.

Karyn Clark, Director, PH: There have been a number of presentations that have been heard at the BOH meetings that the Board could also consider. Sounds like the Board wants to work on things like injury prevention and access to care. Some of these pieces that we are talking about support that. Regarding window guards, this would be a good time to start coming up with ideas, think about whom else has done it, what was the outcome in the communities that have passed it and talk to the Worcester Landlord Association and others. There are steps to take. This would be a great example of what to include in a work plan.

David Fort, Chair: Is there any way to identify those "low hanging fruits" and work on those while working on other projects? I want to be as active as possible.

Abigail Averbach: My top priorities are: 1.) racism and discrimination, 2.) physical activity among children, 3.) marijuana and tobacco access to children, 4.) mental health services access. We have had some education on these priorities.

David Fort, Chair: I would like to get the word out that the BOH is working on things to help the residents of Worcester whether it is through the T&G or media.

Karyn Clark, Director, PH: There are already a lot of things happening on the topics you have identified through the CHIP. Relative to mental health, there is training for the community on mental health first aid. The Police Department has their Critical Incident Team, they have officers that are trained to deescalate and get individuals help. Coming up with a plan that the BOH wants to work on over the next one to three years, with goals and objectives, will help us get the resources that we need to make it happen. Please review the CHIP / BOH crosswalk as there are policies and / or position statements already identified that support some of the priorities the BOH has identified.

Motion to adjourn meeting made by Edith Claros, PhD, Vice Chair – Second by Jerry Gurwitz, MD.

**Adjourn:** 8:28pm

**Next Meeting**

**November 6, 2017 at 6:30pm**