



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

Matilde Castiel, MD  
Health & Human Services  
Commissioner

Karyn E. Clark  
Public Health  
Director

**DATE:** March 5, 2018  
**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 6:49pm.

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

**Approval of the February 5, 2018 Minutes:**

Motion to approve the WBOH meeting minutes of February 5, 2018 made by Jerry Gurwitz, MD  
Second – Abigail Averbach Approved

**Review and act on presentation by Nicolas John, Northeast Region Manager, R Street Institute:**

Nicolas John, Northeast Region Manager: Tobacco harm reduction seems to reduce the incidents of cigarette use and smoking related diseases by encouraging smokers to use less harmful alternatives such as e-cigarettes, vapor products and certain smokeless tobacco products. Historically, American Tobacco Control Policy states that all tobacco products are hazardous. However, e-cigarettes are a significantly safer alternative to cigarettes which continue to be the most harmful and widely use of tobacco products on the market today. Vapor products and e-cigarettes do not contain the carcinogenic components that result from burning tobacco. The City's main concern appears to be that flavored products attract the teens to smoke. However, a study found that adolescents had low interest in e-cigarettes and flavors compared to adult smokers. Greater flavor options provide smokers with more paths away from the most harmful and widely used tobacco products; i.e. cigarettes. In addition to discouraging adolescents from nicotine use than cigarette use, a significant goal of this legislation should be to encourage adult smokers to switch to safer alternatives. Taking steps to make e-cigarettes less assessable to current and future smokers will ensure that future rates of smoking related diseases, which collectively kill 480,000 people in the United States each year will remain steady. I encourage the members of the Board to consider the positive potential of tobacco harm reduction as a public health strategy.



**Review and act on presentation by Dennis Lane, Executive Director, Coalition for Responsible Retailing:**

Dennis Lane, Executive Director: The Coalition for Responsible Retailers are on the front line of tobacco control and seek to partner with communities, especially when it comes to protecting youth. Demonstrate why the rationale that is used to justify prohibiting the sale of flavored tobacco and setting a minimum price for cigars is misleading. Banning adults from purchasing these products does not resolve in additional protection for youth and equally important it does not align with modern public health's strategies. Making this kind of mistake will also have a significant negative impact on Worcester retailers. It is critical that you weigh the context and effectiveness of any proposed regulations against any archeological bases. We often hear that the BOH wants to expand restrictions to curb youth access. We fully support the idea but prohibition on sales to adults is a proven failure in other communities. Example; Andover, Marshfield and Reading have all acknowledged that vaping in high schools continues to be a serious issue despite the fact that they have adopted flavor restrictions. 4 out of 5 minors are not getting these products from retailers. That is a fact from the FDA. Please treat all Worcester retailers with parity. Worcester's community health standards have always allowed responsible retailers to sell legal age restricted flavored products to adults at fair market price. Flavors should not dictate a product to be banned.

**Review and act on discussion with Stephen Jones relative to fracked gas infrastructure:**

T. Stephen Jones, MD: I have been working with the Sierra Club regarding health effects of fracked gas, which contains benzene, formaldehyde and small particulate matter. We have been working with BOH's around the state and asking them to consider signing onto this letter (copy distributed) to Governor Charles Baker. The letter states that there are health problems associated with natural gas and we would like the Governor to set a standard that there should be comprehensive independent health impact assessment before pipelines, compressors and other infrastructures that supports transmission of natural gas in Massachusetts are approved. Secondly, the Massachusetts Medical Society adopted recommendations. The MMS recognizes the potential impact on human health associated with natural gas infrastructure. The MMS advocate to appropriate agencies and the Massachusetts state legislature to require ongoing independent Comprehensive Health Impact Assessments to assess the human health risks of all existing and proposed new or expanded natural gas infrastructure in Massachusetts. So far more than 53 communities have either signed on to the letter or have written their own letters. 27% of the state population is already represented. This effort is ongoing.

Abigail Averbach: Is there a sense of urgency in terms of a timeline of a policy change?

T. Stephen Jones: There are new proposals for pipelines every day but no urgency.

**Review and act on discussion of tobacco regulations:**

Karyn Clark, Director of PH: Regulations concerning; Reducing Youth Access and Reducing Environmental Tobacco Smoke. These are 2 separate regulations. The BOH did go through those particular regulations and had a public hearing. The BOH has raised the minimum sales age to 21 and also banned smoking rooms in nursing homes and substance abuse treatment facilities. Distributed were regulations that were adopted by the BOH and what has been adopted by the Worcester City Council. There is also policy that has not been adopted by either the BOH of City Council. I am proposing, if you move forward with a public hearing and looking at these regulations, is that the BOH adopt the City Council ordinance so that we will have all in one regulation.

David Fort, Chair: How many smoking bars do we have?

Karyn Clark, Director of PH: We have 12. 51% of their revenue comes from the sale of tobacco.

Jerry Gurwitz, MD: Can you point us in the direction of the draft language related to "include minimum cigar package size price and restrict flavored tobacco products".

Karyn Clark, Director, PH: Regulation of the city/town BOH restricting the sale of tobacco products. Page 9, F1: Cigar Sales Regulated. No person shall sell or distribute or cause to be sold or distributed a single cigar. Page 10, #2: No person shall sell or distribute or cause to be sold or distributed any original factory wrap package of 2 or more cigars unless each package is priced at retail sale of \$5.00 or more. Karyn briefed the BOH on the color coded regulation checklist. We have about 340 retail permits.

Motion to adjourn; Jerry Gurwitz, MD, Second by Abigail Averbach  
**Adjourn:** 7:46pm

**Next Meeting**  
**April 23, 2018 at 6:30pm**