



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: May 7, 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 6:33pm.

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

Approval of the March 5, 2018 Minutes:

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

Approval of the April 23, 2018 Public Hearing Minutes:

Motion to approve the WBOH Public Hearing minutes of April 23, 2018 made by Edith Claros, PhD, Vice Chair, Second – Abigail Averbach – Approved

Review and act on discussion with Etel Haxhiaj, Gaylen Moore, Nicole Belanger, representing Mothers Out Front Worcester, relative to signing a letter to Governor Baker regarding fracked gas infrastructure:

Gaylen Moore: We are asking the BOH to sign on to a letter to Governor Baker requesting independent and comprehensive health impact assessments before approving any new natural gas infrastructure in our Commonwealth. Methane gas is 86 times as powerful as greenhouse gas and carbon dioxide. Beyond the effects on our climate, the environmental risks of natural gas contamination are deeply concerning to me. These contaminants include benzene and other volatile organics, heavy metals, formaldehyde, and small particulate matter, all of which find a way into our air and drinking water through leaks, equipment failure and deliberate venting at compressor stations. Explosions are also a risk. These are risks that our Governor should be doing everything in his power to mitigate or eliminate. Since your March BOH meeting, eight more cities



and towns have signed on asking the Governor to commit to comprehensive health impact assessments and we hope that the City of Worcester will join them.

Erica Saunders: In the City of Worcester there is 879 unrepaired gas leaks. In terms of a public health impact, it's causing an asthma increase and we are suffering from a climate change. What we are asking is for the BOH to be mindful of the impact not just at the fracking sites, but also the results of those pipeline infrastructures. They are old and need to be repaired and causing a huge problem in our cities and towns through the transportation pipes. There are a total of 63 cities and towns who have signed on. We are asking for a complete and total public health impact assessment for any new infrastructure project that is presented in the Commonwealth.

Abigail Averbach: Can you please explain the difference between the fracked gas and gas leaks and how they tie together? What is the main issue?

Erica Saunders: The majority of our gas comes from Tennessee and Pennsylvania where fracking is allowed. The extraction there causes those communities to suffer from contaminated water and airways. They have a danger of explosion at the extraction site. The 879 gas leaks are part of the transportation and energy usage that we have here. These pipes are very old. Anyone in that transportation pipeline are all being affected by these leaking and failing infrastructure.

Abigail Averbach: What agency is responsible for these pipes?

Erica Saunders: The energy companies in the area where you live.

David Fort, Chair: How is fracking specifically affecting public health of those who are in the areas?

Erica Saunders: Fracked gas is causing a climate change. We are seeing more ticks and mosquitos, trees are dying and this is affecting our drinking water due to gas leaks. Allergies and asthma are getting worse.

David Fort, Chair: Do we currently have an assessment for these pipes?

Erica Saunders: We have had several natural gas new infrastructures projects that have been proposed in the Commonwealth that have been put on pause. A lot of that is due to citizens asking them to wait until we get an assessment. There is an assessment being proposed in Weymouth for the issues when it comes to noise pollution with compressor stations.

Jerry Gurwitz, MD: Would anything that you're proposing change the approach to repairing a gas leak?

Erica Saunders: Aside from this letter, there is legislation that we are working on would encourage the cost of a gas leak to not fall on the consumer but on the energy companies. Before the next project comes out, let's make sure every assessment has been done. You can go on heetma.org to see a map of all the gas leaks in Worcester, MA.

Review and act on presentation with Laurie Ross, PhD and Casey Burns relative to the overview of the CHIP and Coalition:

Casey Burns, Director, Coalition for Healthy Greater Worcester: I attended the Public Hearing on April 23, 2018 and was able to speak about the Flavored Tobacco Restriction, which is one of the strategies in the CHIP. Now that it passed, I wanted to move to the next stage and revisit other strategies in the CHIP. See what other opportunities there are to move other strategies forward. (CHIP Alignment was distributed) Casey briefed the BOH about the CHIP alignment priority areas and what the approach, key outcome and potential BOH action items mean. (Coalition's structure distributed) The CHIP serves not only as the road map for the Division of Public Health's Community Health Initiatives but also for UMass Memorial and Fallon Health. It makes sense to have an implementing body and structure for decision making around how we strategize and how we get things done, sit in the community. We meet with priority area working groups around each priority area ie, substance use, mental health, physical activity, access to healthy food, etc. There are working groups around these areas that meet frequently. It's diverse set of stakeholders, who are invested in the work, who represent community partners, to research partners, are focusing on the areas that were community driven strategies that were chosen to be the most important ones that are going to effect the health and comparing it to the data of the community health assessment and seeing how we can make this happen. One of the ways is through collaboration, bringing together new partners, new skills and talents and also through sub-committees. The policy group will form an agenda and create an appropriate strategy to try and move that forward. The overall Steering Committee represents representatives and leaders from the priority working groups as well as some of our major partners. We're looking at how we can support organizations and institutions that already do this work and how can we bring people together in ways to remove obstacles to address the things that aren't already moving.

David Fort, Chair: How can the BOH help?

Casey Burns, Director, Coalition for Healthy Greater Worcester: There is potential to make a case for intersection of health and equal opportunity and it may be with position statements.

Karyn Clark, Director of Public Health: We need to revisit and update the status of some of the strategies of the CHIP. There are policies and programs that have been completed. Let's see what other strategies there are and move forward.

Motion to adjourn; Edith Claros, PhD. Vice Chair, Second by Abigail Averbach

Adjourn: 8:45pm

Next Meeting

June 4, 2018 at 6:30pm