



**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:** March 4, 2019  
**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 6:30pm.

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

**Approval of the February 4, 2019 Minutes:**

Motion to approve the WBOH meeting minutes of February 4, 2019 made by Edith Claros, PhD, Vice Chair Second - Abigail Averbach – Approved

**Review and act on BOH Chair and Vice Chair selection:**

Karyn Clark, Director of DPH: Speaking with the City Manager, he supports the decision that the Board members decide and vote for the next BOH Chair and Vice Chair.

**David Fort, Chair, made a motion to rotate Chair responsibilities. As of May 2019, Edith Claros, PhD, will be Chair and Jerry Gurwitz, MD will be Vice Chair. No discussion. All in favor. The motion was passed unanimously.**

**Review and act on draft position statement for Access to Care:**

Agenda item has been moved to the April BOH meeting.

**Review and act on medical marijuana dispensary license for Mission Massachusetts:**

Cory Ravelson, GM of Mission Massachusetts: We originally filed for an application to have a medical marijuana facility in Worcester, 640 Lincoln Street, back in 2015. We are now at the point where we have received a temporary certificate of occupancy for both our cultivation and dispensary facilities. We have had our final inspection with our Compliance Officer with the Cannabis Control Commission (CCC). They have approved us and we are here seeking to obtain a BOH approval to open our dispensary.



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David Fort, Chair: When is your anticipated date?

Cory Ravelson, GM of MM: We are looking to open for April 1<sup>st</sup>.

Karyn Clark, Director of DPH: We have received the required documentation from Cory Ravelson. We are waiting on one more document. Recommend the BOH grant them a license, on the condition that we receive the one missing document. Once we receive that, we can issue a license to operate the dispensary.

Cory Ravelson, GM of MM: We are on the CCC's agenda for Thursday. We are hoping to receive our final certificate of operation.

David Fort, Chair: Is there a security plan in place?

Cory Ravelson, GM of MM: Briefed the BOH about the security plans in place for Mission Massachusetts. Only patients with a medical marijuana card are allowed to enter.

Abigail Averbach: Is this your only facility?

Cory Ravelson, GM of MM: We have three locations. Cambridge (dispensary only), Georgetown (dispensary and cultivation processing facility) and here in Worcester (dispensary and cultivation).

**David Fort made a motion to issue a license to operate a medical marijuana dispensary for Mission Massachusetts. All in favor. The motion was passed unanimously.**

**Review and act on discussion of unclaimed bodies:**

Karyn Clark, Director of DPH: UMass has informed us that they have a number of unclaimed bodies in their morgues. They want to make the BOH aware and get some local steps in place now that a bill, that was signed into law last year, allows for cremation of unclaimed bodies. Up until that bill had passed, it was only allowed for unclaimed bodies to be buried. The funeral home, Graham Putnam, has been very kind and generous for a number of years taking that on. The larger issue is that if Graham Putnam decides not to do this, there are no other funeral homes that are mandated to take unclaimed bodies. We can take a vote tonight that would authorize WDPH to allow funeral homes to cremate unclaimed bodies. This would be the first step. The next step would be to have appropriate documentation, that are created by the City's Law Department, that would allow a funeral home to do the cremation.

David Fort, Chair: What happens if a family wants to do a DNA ancestry look up in the future?

Karyn Clark, Director of DPH: Conversations that I have had with UMass, Director of Decedent Affairs, indicates they have an exhaustive process that they go through to try to identify the individual. In some instances, they do identify the body but the families are not claiming them. We believe it is due to the high cost of burials. It would be beneficial to have the Director of Decedent Affairs come in and speak with you, that way the Board can have a better understanding and could ask questions.

Michael Hirsh, MD, Medical Director of DPH: In our discussion with Decedent Affairs, another concern that was brought up was can they get help from the City by enforcing a rotation of funeral homes to take the bodies.

David Fort, Chair: Vote will be tabled to the next BOH meeting allowing the Board to get a better understanding of the topic of unclaimed bodies.

**Review and act on update relative to communicable diseases:**

Michael Hirsh, MD, Medical Director of DPH: We have outbreaks of communicable diseases particularly in our most vulnerable populations: the homeless, IV drug abusers and substance use disorders. It started out with an outbreak of Hepatitis A in the fall of 2018. Now we have received an outbreak of HIV and meningitis. Having to do with shared needles and unprotected sex. We are up to 58 confirmed cases and 6 suspect cases. Each week, working with our partners to vaccinate this population, we now have seen the weekly numbers decreasing. Patricia Bruchmann, Chief of Nursing, along with Quality of Life Task Force, Community Health Link, AIDS Project Worcester, Hotel Grace, Mustard Seed and Spectrum has done a great job administering at their home base and going into the field and offering vaccinations.

Karyn Clark, Director of DPH: Clarification - Worcester doesn't have any confirmed meningitis in the City. MDPH is seeing an uptick in meningitis in the same population and informed us of this. We are being proactive and are also administering the meningitis vaccine. MDPH organized a conference call with all of our Worcester partners (75 partners) to step us through what is going on with communicable disease outbreaks in cities across the Commonwealth. The City, like Boston, Lawrence and Lowell, is also seeing an uptick in HIV.

**Review and act on continued discussion regarding CHIP priority areas:**

Agenda item has been moved to the April BOH meeting.

Motion to adjourn; Edith Claros, PhD, Vice Chair, second by Jerry Gurwitz, MD

**Adjourn:** 7:40pm

**Next Meeting -- April 1, 2019 at 6:30pm**

**Future Meeting Topics:**

Invite Director of Decedent Affairs to come in and speak on unclaimed bodies

Presentation regarding diversity on City Boards and Commissions

Presentation on racial disparities

Access to care draft position statement

Update on needle exchange