



**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 7, 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: Edith Claros, PhD, Chair, Jerry Gurwitz, MD, Vice Chair, David Fort

absent: Chareese Allen WDPH Staff: Colleen Bolen, Deputy Director of DPH, Michael Hirsh, MD, Medical Director of DPH and Matilde Castiel, MD, Commissioner of HHS

**Approval of the October 7, 2019 Agenda:**

Motion to approve the WBOH meeting agenda of October 7, 2019 made by David Fort, Second - Jerry Gurwitz, MD, Vice Chair - Approved

**Review and act on continued discussion regarding window guards:**

Michael Hirsh, MD, Medical Director of DPH: Briefed with the Board their discussion at a previous BOH meeting on January 7, 2019 regarding the difficulties in establishing window guard placements here in Worcester. The Fire Department felt that any window guard has to be releasable without the use of a tool, key, special knowledge or force it takes greater than a door. They were strongly against the mandate for landlords to have these installed in thinking about, once they are in a burning building, window guards would make it hard to egress from the building. There are about a half dozen to a dozen a year of children falling out of windows. Because our window heights here in Worcester are not that high, the likelihood of lethality is less. In cities with high rise buildings, their problems with lethal window falls is much higher because falls from three or more stories are more likely to result in severe injury or death. In the absence of passing an ordinance, we need to teach our children to stay away from windows and not have furniture against or under a window. Briefed the Board on the ordinance that was passed by the City of New York for families with children under 10 years of age and an article regarding a 30 year review by Dr. Amita Toprani (distributed). Should window guards be revisited, we could try to get such an ordinance past here. We need to get together with other Fire Departments that have dealt with cities that have been successful to relay their concerns. Was informed by companies that it's very easy for an adult to disengage the window guard.



Jerry Gurwitz, MD, Vice Chair: Very concerned and would like to revisit window guards and have some advice as to what the Board should be doing. Feels that we should share some communications between Fire Departments.

Matilde Castiel, MD, Commissioner of HHS: Wondering what other cities and towns are using window guards? I would like to see what the guards look like. See what other cities and towns have done in this situation.

David Fort: I want to be as proactive as we can. Education should come along with action. If New York and Boston are using window guards, how does this impact Worcester?

Edith Claros, PhD, Chair: Need additional discussion with having the Boston Fire Department come to a BOH meeting and speak with Worcester's Fire Department. How do they deal with window guards in a fire in Boston?

Michael Hirsh, MD, Medical Director of DPH: Can invite a window guard manufacture to come to a BOH meeting to demonstrate and also invite the other city departments come again and revisit this item.

**Review and act on presentation with David Crispin relative to a proposal for expansion of Notre Dame Cemetery (vote):**

David Crispin, Senior Associate, BSC Group: Gave a presentation for the Boards approval of the proposed expansion use of the Notre Dame Cemetery under MGL Chapter 114 Section 34. (Slides and information distributed). The Zoning Board did vote to approve this under a special permit.

**Edith Claros, PhD, Chair, made a motion to approve the expansion of Notre Dame Cemetery under MGL Chapter 114 Section 34. This was seconded by Jerry Gurwitz, MD, Vice Chair. The motion passed unanimously.**

**Review and act on update relative to opioids:**

Matilde Castiel, MD, Commissioner of HHS: Briefed the BOH on the September 2019 overdose report (distributed). The fatality is a little high. Encourages individuals to carry Narcan. Went over the top locations for repeat OD activity.

David Fort: The biggest problems is that some of these nursing homes are also rehabs. Would also like to see arrests data for the monthly OD report.

Matilde Castiel, MD, Commissioner of HHS: Not only does it affect the patients that are there but also the staff. Do they feel safe? We are working on how to provide assistance. Staff are actively involved to do the right thing.

**Review and act on update on EEE in Worcester County:**

Michael Hirsh, MD, Medical Director of DPH: We have had a total of 12 confirmed cases of EEE reported in New England. Total of 5 were fatality. There is still a risk for EEE until we have a hard frost. The recommendation from the State is to still follow the five D's : Avoid being outdoors during **Dawn** and **Dusk**, when mosquitoes are most active; **Dress** in long sleeved clothing; use insect repellent with **DEET**; and **Drain** any standing water from around your home.

Edith Claros, PhD, Chair: Does the recommendation still stand for the time limitation for sport activities and parks?

Michael Hirsh, MD, Medical Director of DPH: Yes. There are no activities after dusk. We are at moderate risk level.

**Review continued discussion regarding youth vaping data:**

Colleen Bolen, Deputy Director of DPH: Reviewed with the Board their discussion at the last BOH meeting on September 9, 2019 regarding youth vaping data and will continue to provide updated data. In your packet, we provided you with information on the vaping ban that the State put in place on September 24, 2019. The State provided a letter to all establishments explaining the ban and DPH sent out an additional letter to all Worcester retail stores. About a month ago, it became mandatory for physicians to report on cases of what they thought maybe these severe respiratory pulmonary issues related to vaping. There is very specific criteria the CDC has in place. Since the ban the State has had over 100 open investigations. There have been some probable and confirmed cases that have gone forward to the CDC. There has been one death that has been related to vaping in Massachusetts. The State is in the process of collecting data utilizing local reporting from physicians. The State is going to put a lot more emphasis on working and looking at the CDC data and reports over the next four months.

Michael Hirsh, MD, Medical Director of DPH: As of today, there are 121 reports in Massachusetts. 9 confirmed cases, 10 highly probable cases and 1 death. Nationally there are 1,088 cases and 22 deaths. Numbers are increasing. Different providers are starting to recognize that this lung issue is not just a routine viral pneumonia or something else. Depending on the CDC findings, the vape ban might extend the four months. Working with the Academic Health Collaborative, we have teamed with Holy Cross, who will be working with some youth groups in the City to develop a public service announcement campaign to send out a public health message on vaping via cell phones. Dr. Castile, Commissioner of DPH, is holding a forum on November 6<sup>th</sup> at 4:30pm on Your Health Up in Smoke – The Truth about Vaping at the Levi Lincoln Room 3<sup>rd</sup> floor, at City Hall. Also will discuss the physical and psychological effects they have, and do they actually help with smoking cessation. The event will feature a keynote speaker, Dr. Kathryn Waksmundzski-Silva, a UMass Pulmonary and Critical Care physician.

Motion to adjourn; Jerry Gurwitz, MD, Chair, seconded by David Fort  
**Adjourn:** 7:56pm

**Next Meeting -- November 4, 2019 at 6:30pm**

**Potential Future Meeting Topics:**

Review and act on continued discussion of unclaimed bodies

Review and act on medical marijuana dispensary license for Resinate

Update relative to window guards