



**Worcester Board of Health Meeting
Meeting Minutes
Meeting Held at 25 Meade St. Room 109
Monday, June 3, 2024
6:30 pm
Minutes by Desiree Sutton**

Welcome and Introductions

Board Members Present: Interim Chair Frances Anthes, Vice Chair Chareese Allen, Gary Rosen, Leopoldo Negrón Cruz

Staff Present: Dr. Hirsh Medical Director of Public Health; Dr. Matilde Castiel, Commissioner of HHS; Soloe Dennis, Director of DPH and CMRPHA; Ian Wong, Deputy Director of DPH; Mark Abraham of Inspectional Services.

Review and Approve May 13 Meeting Minutes

Gary Rosen made a motion to approve the minutes from May 13, 2024. Chareese Allen seconded the motion. All members voted in favor of approving the minutes as written.

Covid Update

Dr. Hirsh provided a brief update on COVID infections in Worcester. The number of reported COVID cases are not increasing possibly due to immunities from vaccinations. The Worcester Division of Public Health (WDPH) hasn't seen much community interest in new COVID vaccine. This year they will be working on new outreach strategies to increase use of the COVID vaccine. More potentially worrisome is the Avian Flu it is affecting birds and cows. Dr. Hirsh believes the pasteurization process of milk is efficient in preventing the spread in humans. Dr. Hirsh also mentions that the CDC believes this summer will be challenging as far as mosquitos. He mentions that the chemicals that are being used to treat the Mosquito problems are not harmful to children.

Homelessness

Dr. Castiel provided an update in the state of homelessness in Worcester.

- Discussed the need to protect and treat all people equally, especially those in shelters.
- Inquiries were made about the availability of shelter space for those wanting to come in.
- Dr. Castiel noted that while there is sometimes capacity, some people prefer to stay outside.
- Shelter numbers fluctuate, with some people leaving and others arriving, including transfers from hospitals.



- There is a concern about the adequacy of current efforts to help the homeless in an affordable city.
- Discussion on collaboration to improve the situation, expressing a desire to work with Central Massachusetts Housing Alliance.
- Discussion included the possibility of keeping the DMV open or finding new resources.
- They planned to review and possibly revise policies dating back to 2001.
- The aim was to start the policy revision process, hoping for a vote to begin this process.

Body Arts

City Inspector Mark Abraham provides information on Body Arts Regulations.

- Courses are required only once, except for first aid, which requires renewal every one to two years.
- Some association members suggest additional brush-up courses at seminars for Anatomy and Physiology courses.
- The current requirements for teaching include having at least two years of experience.
- Concerns exist regarding unreported infections resulting from tattooing or piercing, which affects the regulations credibility.
- New consent forms will now include a section for reporting issues to inspectional services or the public health department.
- There is a need to ensure Anatomy and Physiology courses are properly accredited.
- Reports of infections are often not made, leading to gaps in regulation and oversight.
- Procedures for handling infections include reporting to health departments for investigations.
- Recommendations include urging individuals to report infections to health authorities and including reporting requirements on consent forms.

Chareese Allen made a motion to approve the Body Art Regulations. Leopoldo Negrón Cruz seconded the motion. All members voted in favor of approving the Body Art Regulations.

Inadequate Staffing in Healthcare

Gary Rosen discussed Inadequate Staffing in Healthcare Settings.

- Concerns were raised about inadequate staffing and care in local healthcare facilities, particularly at Saint Vincent Hospital.
- It was suggested to invite leadership from the involved facilities or representatives from the Massachusetts Nurses Association (MNA) to address these issues.
- The board considered involving the Massachusetts Department of Public Health and the Bureau of Health Care Quality to investigate and address complaints.



- Discussed the possibility of having the state health department representatives attend the next meeting via Zoom to provide insights.

Infant Mortality Rates

The board planned to gather more data and feedback on infant mortality issues, particularly focusing on disparities affecting the black community.

Next Meeting Dates and Topics

July 8 at 6:30

Future Topics

Update on Cancer

CHIP Program

Infant Mortality Rates

Adjournment

Gary Rosen moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:15 PM. Leo Negrón Cruz seconded the motion. All members voted in favor.