



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: July 13, 2020
RE: WORCESTER BOARD OF HEALTH MEETING
START TIME: 6:30 PM
LOCATION: WEB EX CONFERENCE CALL

Welcome & Introductions:

Meeting was called to order at 6:36pm.

Members on call: Edith Claros, PhD, Chair, Jerry Gurwitz, MD, Vice Chair, Frances Anthes, Chareese Allen and David Fort WPDH Staff: Colleen Bolen, Deputy Director of DPH, Michael Hirsh, MD, Medical Director of DPH, Patricia Bruchmann, Chief Public Health Nurse, Joshan Niroula, Public Health Prevention Specialist and Michele Williams, Principal Clerk

Approval of the June 25, 2020 Meeting Minutes:

Motion to approve the WBOH meeting minutes of June 25, 2020 made by Jerry Gurwitz, MD, Vice Chair, Second –Frances Anthes – Approved

Approval of the July 13, 2020 Agenda:

Motion to approve the WBOH meeting agenda of July 13, 2020 made by Frances Anthes, Second – Chareese Allen– Approved

Public Hearing opens at 6:36pm

Public Hearing “Regulation of the Worcester Board of Health Restricting the Sale of Cigars, Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems and Flavored Tobacco Products”:

Edith Claros, PhD, Chair: Reads information to the attendees on the purpose of the hearing and rules relating to 2 minute testimony, and stating name and residence.

No public comment from attendees.

Joshan Niroula, Public Health Prevention Specialist: Regulations discussed are related to restricting the sale of cigars, electronic nicotine deliveries systems and flavored tobacco products. These regulations are modeled after the State Law, which went into effect June 1, 2020. This restricts the sale of flavored tobacco products from convenience stores and adult only retail stores. Only Smoking Bars are exempt from this policy and only for on-premises consumption. State law also substantially raises the fines for sales to minors and violations of the flavored tobacco product sales restriction policy. Penalties for violations as follows:

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- **\$1000 for a first violation (instead of \$100);**
- **\$2000 for a second violation within 36 months (instead of \$200); and**
- **\$5000 for a third or subsequent violation within 36 months (instead of \$300)**

Jerry Gurwitz, MD, Vice Chair made a motion to adopt these regulations of new state tobacco laws at the local level restricting the sale of cigars, electronic nicotine delivery systems and flavored tobacco products. Seconded by David Fort. BOH members: 5 – yes, 0- no The motion passed unanimously.

Edith Claros, PhD, Chair, made a motion to close the hearing. Seconded by David Fort. The motion passed unanimously.

COVID-19 Response & Recovery Updates:

Michael Hirsh, MD, Medical Director of DPH: The CDC has made recommendations that it is safest for communities to open by wearing masks, physical distancing, hand sanitizing, clean and disinfect surfaces and limit the number of people in venues. Briefed the BOH on COVID19 positive cases decreasing. 1700 people were tested, only 2.7 % were positive. Opening of schools is now in discussion with distancing of 3 feet for elementary schools and 6 feet for middle and high schools with smaller classrooms. Briefed the BOH of the different ideas that colleges have in reopening with testing students five days prior to returning to Worcester and again when they come to Worcester and tested twice a week. Department of Inspectional Services have been conducting inspections to make sure that businesses have been following the COVID19 guidelines.

Colleen Bolen, Deputy Director DPH: The City was awarded funding from the CDC Foundation. Funding will be utilized for temporary support for a lot of our key positions until February 2021. DPH has been answering a lot of COVID19 questions. Grateful for all the help from other city departments for their support through this pandemic. The State website has an interactive map where you could put in your zip code for a list of all testing sites.

Jerry Gurwitz, MD, Vice Chair: What should we be doing right now? Should we move as fast as the state wants us to? Should movie theaters open? How do we consider all these variables in our decision going forward?

Michael Hirsh, MD, Medical Director of DPH: I have continued weekly calls with Community Health Centers and Medical Centers. Medical Centers have opened their operating rooms again. They have closed their COVID19 specific ICU's and are integrating COVID19 positive patients within their ICU's. There are 12 COVID19 positive patients at UMass and 7 at Saint Vincent. The numbers have definitely gone down. COVID19 results are received within 48 hours. We went into Phase 3 after consulting with UMass, Saint Vincent and other healthcare providers and felt that the numbers were not justifying restrictions. We have a dedicated group of contact tracers.

Frances Anthes: There's a gap between when the COVID test is done and when you receive results. What are we doing with contract tracing since we had summer assignments but not permanent assignments? Data on African American and Latino in terms of hospitalizations and deaths.

Colleen Bolen, Deputy Director DPH: Equity Task Force has been in collaboration with the City of Worcester and UMass. Matilde Castiel, MD, Commissioner of HHS, is the co-chair. They have been doing wonderful work with data collection and also education and outreach to some of those populations that are hit the hardest.

Discussion of transmittal sent to Worcester Police Department on the issues of racism, bias and discrimination:

David Fort: The Chief of Police was unable to attend tonight's meeting. Waiting for a date to meet with the Chief of Police, Edith Claros, PhD, Chair and myself regarding the 12 recommendations

sent to the WPD to eliminate racism and to mitigate the potential for police brutality. This is a serious public health issue about life and death and will not be ignored. The African-Americans/Latino/LGBTQ and other communities are crying out for a dialog, which we have not had yet. BOH, communities and all different groups are at the table and are ready to talk about this. The only one that is not at the table and ready is the WPD. At our last BOH meeting, 10% was talked about the actual communities and 90% was defending the WPD. WPD are able to defend themselves. We have voted at the last BOH meeting inviting the representatives of the WPD to attend our next meeting. We are waiting for the opportunity to have communications with the WPD. This is what the community wants. I have had a lot of discussions with the African-Americans/Latino/LGBTQ and other communities in the last 2 weeks and they feel that they are being disrespected because there is silence with the WPD. I let the communities know to be patient because we are meeting with the Chief of Police but he's not here or any of their leaderships to speak with us. I just read in the T&G that Sergeant Boykin, diversity and recruitment officer, stated that since his career of 26 years working for the police department, he has not seen an act or heard of racism or discrimination with in the WPD. That is disingenuous. I have spoken to many diversity and recruitment leaders all over the country and have never heard someone state that they never heard or seen racism in their institution. I hope that the Chief of Police or its leadership will be at the next BOH meeting.

Chareese Allen: I fully support David's recommendations. It is important that we continue to have these discussions with the community. Historically these discussions are difficult and uncomfortable for white individuals. As an African-American these discussions are necessary and are important to our survival. People have to lean towards discomfort and work through this with us as this is the only way to work towards a resolution and improve race relations. On June 24th Chief Sargent issued a public statement regarding racial tensions in the City of Worcester. He said a small organized group calling for a misguided approach that will not bring forth positive change. I want to know what he would suggest a correct approach for us that would bring forth change. Will he come forth with the BOH and community leaders to open dialog about what's going on and what has brought on this small group and their concerns. He also mentioned that officers work hard to build relationships and enhance partnerships and states police are connecting with community providing assistance. They are not here, or connecting with us. We need them at the table and discuss these issues that are being experienced. Also states they look critically at policies and continue to do so. So in an effort to show our communities that we are being transparent, can we sit down and review these policies with him and point out areas that are not in the best interest of the community and work together towards changing them so they can better serve those who are supposed to serve and protect. One of our priority areas in our CHIP is racism and I quote "Improve population health by systematically eliminating institutions racism and the pathology of oppression and discrimination by promoting equitable access to and use of health promoting resources in the community and significantly reduce the structural and environmental factors that contribute to health inequities". By sitting down with our black and brown leaders and citizens, police department and our BOH, we could work out resolutions that will help eliminate the oppression and discrimination of our black and brown population. We can utilize the vital community resources that reduce structural other environmental factors that are contributing to the current environment that's causing so much stress in the lives of our citizens and perform our duties to make sure that we eliminate racism and discrimination in the City of Worcester to the best of our abilities.

Edith Claros, PhD, Chair: As a Latino, I am also a minority and have experienced discrimination. Recognizes it's a problem and needs to be addressed by working together. The statement that was sent to the police was created and drafted without the consulting of the BOH members as a collective unit. It was drafted as an individual with one to one contact with various BOH members,

myself not included. I did not agree with the language in the presentation. The data that was presented was using national data. There was no data from the City of Worcester. Will meet with David Fort and the Worcester Chief of Police before our next BOH meeting.

Motion to adjourn; Chareese Allen - seconded by Jerry Gurwitz, MD, Vice Chair
Adjourn: 8:12pm

Next Meeting -- August 24, 2020 at 6:30pm

Potential Future Meeting Topics:

Continued discussion on the recommendations for the WPD

Update on Health Equity Task Force

Updates on COVID19

Discussion on school openings