



Westport Weston
Health District

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

WWHD BOARD OF DIRECTORS

May 11, 2020

Subject to change until approved by the Board of Directors

The Regular Meeting was called to order by Chairman Otis Crawford at 7:05 pm. He noted that because of COVID-19 and Governor Lamont has prohibited all public gatherings at this time, the meeting was being conducted via Zoom. **The following voting Board Members were present:** Chairman Otis Crawford, Vice Chairman Revzon, Director Ilisa Nussbaum, Director Paul Shaum, and Director Linda Lewis Bruce.

Also present were: Mark A.R. Cooper, Director of Health, Patricia Strauss, Westport Town Clerk, Public via Zoom.

Approval of Minutes

Chairman Crawford asked if there were any questions or comments on the February 10, 2020, Regular Meeting Minutes.

Chairman Crawford mentioned a mistake from last meeting's minutes on page 3, Mr. Cooper made three requests for refunds. It should have said that District staff put in *many* hours of work, not *any* hours. Chairman Crawford asked if there were any other questions or comments about the minutes.

There were no questions or comments. On a motion made by Director Shaum and seconded by Director Nussbaum, the Board voted to approve the February 10, 2020, Regular Meeting Minutes as corrected. Chairman Crawford voted yes; Vice Chairman Revzon voted yes, Director Bruce voted yes, Director Nussbaum voted yes, and Director Shaum voted yes.

Motion was approved 5 to 0.

Communications

Included in each Director's meeting package was an outline of Odor School Training sponsored by the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection. Mr. Cooper provided a summary of what Odor Training School is all about. WWHD sanitarians can become certified Nasal Rangers. He noted that the remaining items under Communications were all COVID-19 related but that the more important item was his notification on March 15th to the State Public Health Commissioner that the WWHD had identified COVID-19 in Westport, it appeared to be rapid community spread, and a coordinated regional response was needed. It took the Commissioner over a month to acknowledge his letter.

Director Bruce remarked that it was interesting and a good thing that the WWHD organized the COVID-19 forum on Sunday, March 8th at the Westport Library, because on the following Wednesday everything broke loose on the COVID-19 cases in Westport. Mr. Cooper replied that he thought it was very fortunate to have held the forum when it was, that people paid attention to it and they knew to call the WWHD. Apparently, a large number of people watched the live feed from the Library.

Appointment of the Auditor – Annual Notification to OPM

Mr. Cooper stated that every year the State OPM requires Health Districts to send a letter stating who they have appointed for the current year's audit. We have been using Charles Costello for several years. It isn't necessary to change auditors, the Board can do so if it pleases, but whatever the Board decides the WWHD must notify Connecticut's Office of Policy and Management by the end of the fiscal year, June 30th. Director Nussbaum asked how many years has Charles Costello been the auditor for WWHD, and if there had been any issues or problems with using his services? Mr. Cooper replied that Mr. Costello had been working with the WWHD for about 9-10 years and that the WWHD has followed all of his suggestions for changes or improvements.

On a motion made by Director Nussbaum and seconded by Director Shaum, the Board voted to appoint Charles Costello as Auditor for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2020. Chairman Crawford voted yes; Vice Chairman Revzon voted yes, Director Bruce voted yes, Director Nussbaum voted yes, and Director Shaum voted yes.

Motion was approved 5 to 0.

Director of Health Report

Consolidated Income Statement and Operational & Permit Activity Reports

Mr. Cooper stated that the Board package contains Consolidated Income Statements and Operational and Permit Activity Reports from February, March, and April. He noted a correction to/error in April's income, and it has been corrected. He stated that income is down for March and April. Since no one is traveling, our travel clinic is not currently active. Building permits came to a complete halt in mid-March but have picked up again. Revenue overall will be down for the year, but WWHD has applied for several state grants. Mr. Cooper explained which grants have been applied to or received so far: the CDC is paying the WWHD \$300-\$400/month. Staff has looked into the State loan program and its requirements where funds are available if a small business or non-profit organization doesn't let employees go and keep them on the payroll. WWHD is looking into and considering applying for all applicable state grants to bring in some of the lost revenue.

Director Bruce stated that she is hopeful that building permits will pick up soon. Mr. Cooper said they should pick up soon due to better weather. Director Shaum questioned why contractors are being allowed to work. Mr. Cooper responded that contractors can still do business as usual as they are deemed essential workers by the Governor's Directives. Director Bruce also commented, that it was unfortunate that the Board couldn't track the new clinic opportunities and

things that were proposed for Community Health. Mr. Cooper stated that without the Community Health department, we wouldn't have been able to mount the response to COVID-19 that we did. The skill set would not have been there. Louis, Loren and volunteer nurses have been a godsend. School nurses will also be volunteering with contact tracing soon. Without Community Health we would have had to close our doors. Community Health has been the focus of what we've been doing. Director Bruce asked if there was any help from school psychologist? What was their role? Mr. Cooper said the Town of Westport Social Services Dept. is providing those services. They have the resources to do it. We have highlighted those services on our website and continue to support their efforts.

Mr. Crawford asked if there were any questions and/or comments. There were none.

Budget Discussion

Mr. Cooper explained that the WWHD would have the same operational budget. He also included a special need for painting the building. The Towns have accepted and approved the budget overall, but this is just a placeholder budget. Easton is trying to join us before the end of this current fiscal year. With all the directives and prohibitions on referendum voting they weren't sure they could pull it off this year. He suggested we contract with them for a year with all WWHD services and then they would officially join next year. Easton wants to have a public referendum before deciding. Since that last discussion they are back on track to have a referendum for June 9, 2020, to determine if Easton residents support joining on or before June 22, 2020. The Board could call a Special meeting on June 15th which would give the Board an opportunity to accept Easton into the District on June 22.

Mr. Cooper went on to explain, if all of this happens, WWHD will get an extra \$97,000 from the State of Connecticut and the budget can be adjusted. There are no guarantees Easton will join the WWHD, so a budget that would be significantly less for Westport or Weston cannot be set until Easton has a vote. The budget will consist of the same money as last year, I believe they will join. A new budget will be given on June 15, that works for everyone. Chairman Crawford asked if there is an increase in the budget for employee salaries. Mr. Cooper replied, yes, 2% has been put in the budget for salary adjustments, but performance appraisals and final decisions have not been made. Chairman Crawford noted that the State Retirement fund payments increased from 13.22 % to 16.22% of payroll and asked if there was enough money in the budget to cover the increase. Mr. Cooper replied, that yes there was, but it is out of our control, it is a state mandate. Fees will increase until 2022. Since there were several retirements in the last few years, the salary count is reduced, and less money is being paid out the state fund. Retirement fund dollars are going up. Chairman Crawford asked what the increase amount in dollars was. Director Bruce commented that the increase tops off is at 21.79% over four more years increasing 2 to 2 ½ % each year. Director Bruce also asked if the cost of painting the building is part of one of the line items. Mr. Cooper replied that it was not, it was presented as a separate expense adding that he was surprised it was still in the budget. The Town of Westport owns the building and had

initially indicated the town would take it out. Chairman Crawford asked Mr. Cooper what his best estimate of the pension increase. Mr. Cooper replied about 2% of the salary line item of \$111,000.

Director Nussbaum commented that she was not sure if this would affect budget or operations, but if there was to be a COVID vaccine, would there be any changes to the budget or a plan to roll it out in a vast way? Would WWHD need to come up with a plan from a budgetary and program perspective? Mr. Cooper replied that it could happen a number of ways, the CDC could give vaccines to the state and local health districts at no cost. If not free and there is a cost involved, the WWHD has funds set aside for emergencies such as this to get a vaccination program started. Additionally, Westport and Weston both have said that COVID19 is something nobody could plan for and indicated that if we need more funding, they will find the money to protect the public. Mr. Cooper voiced his opinion that the State would most likely roll it out at no or low cost.

Director Shaum asked what might WWHD's responsibility be once businesses start opening up, for testing and support of small businesses expenses? Mr. Cooper replied that the WWHD is part of Westport's Reopen Committee that meets regularly to make sure plans to open up are sound and to make sure the public and workers are protected. The WWHD is already receiving and reviewing plans for Phase I reopening, and the State sets the requirements. Towns are giving out facemasks to residents. He added that it is WWHD's job to help local businesses try to meet the state requirements.

Director Shaum asked who is giving PPE to small businesses? Mr. Cooper replied that both the town and WWHD distribute PPE and the supplies they are coming from different places. The CDC, the State Department of Public Health, donations from companies, etc. Some donations come directly to the WWHD, some are sent to the Public Works Department, depending on who makes the donations and who they are intended for.

Director Shaum asked again about painting the building. Will it be done this year? Mr. Cooper replied that it is still in the budget, it just depends on where we are financially when it comes time to paint it. Director Shaum stated that the building should be painted if it needs it.

Director Shaum asked about restaurants re-opening. What is WWHD role? Chairman Crawford asked if we would oversee enforcing the rules? Mr. Cooper replied that the WWHD is already responding to complaints and working with other town officials to open them up and try and get them in compliance with the Governor's Directives. WWHD staff will not be going out at night, but if we hear about any problems the next day, will follow up. Westport's Planning and Zoning office, Fire Marshal and Police all have a role.

Chairman Crawford asked if there were any questions on the proposed budget from Board members or the public.

Hearing none, on a motion made by Director Shaum and seconded by Vice Chairman Revzon, the Board voted to approve the proposed 2020 – 2021 budget as presented. Chairman Crawford

voted yes; Vice Chairman Revzon voted yes, Director Bruce voted yes, Director Nussbaum voted yes, and Director Shaum voted yes.

Motion was approved 5 to 0.

Chairman Crawford asked if there were any other questions or business to come before the Board.

Mr. Cooper anticipated moving the June 8 meeting to June 15, due to Easton voting on joining WWHD. Chairman Crawford asked whether a vaccine for COVID19 would eventually be available. Mr. Cooper responded that he did not really know. There was general discussion on how the pandemic could unfold as the year progresses.

Chairman Crawford asked if there were any other questions or business to come before the Board.

Vice Chair Revzon, inquired if we are still offering tick testing and offering COVID-19 testing? Mr. Cooper replied that we are offering tick testing and explained the process. He explained what happened with the COVID testing and that had been done at Bedford Middle School, now it's available at St. Vincent's in Westport, and through other private industries. The WWHD has been trying to get PCR saliva test kits, but they are not yet available to local public health. If we get rapid saliva test, they would be used for fire, police, and EMS personnel. The WWHD does not have the resources to test the public. Vice Chair Revzon also asked if the WWHD fielding a lot of questions about COVID? Mr. Cooper stated that all directives come from the state. He meets regularly with both towns to update the situation. The public calls with many questions about COVID, reopening, etc. We also get questions from public officials more so in Westport than in Weston.

Adjournment

Chairman Crawford again asked the Board and the public if there was any other business to come before the Board.

On a motion made by Director Shaum and seconded by Director Bruce, the meeting was adjourned at 7:43pm. Chairman Crawford voted yes; Vice Chairman Revzon voted yes, Director Bruce voted yes, Director Nussbaum voted yes, and Director Shaum voted yes.

Motion was approved 5 to 0.

Respectfully submitted



Mark A.R. Cooper Director of Health
Westport Weston Health District