



Westport Weston
Health District

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

WWHD BOARD OF DIRECTORS

September 14, 2020

Subject to change until approved by the Board of Directors

The Regular Meeting was called to order by Chairman Otis Crawford at 7:02 pm. He noted that with the Governor's office reopening Connecticut, the meeting can be held in compliance with the State's directives of social distancing and no more than 25 people in a grouping. All present were wearing face coverings and chairs were spaced six feet apart.

The following voting Board Members were present in the room: Chairman Otis Crawford, Director Paul Shaum, and Director Linda Lewis Bruce. Director Ilisa Nussbaum was present by telephone.

Also present were: Mark A.R. Cooper, Director of Health.

Approval of Minutes

Chairman Crawford asked if there were any questions or comments on the June 22, 2020, Regular Meeting Minutes.

On a motion made by Director Shaum, and seconded by Director Bruce, the Board voted to approve the June 22, 2020, Regular Meeting Minutes. Chairman Crawford voted yes; Director Bruce voted yes, Director Nussbaum voted yes, and Director Shaum voted yes.

Motion was approved 4 to 0.

Chairman Crawford asked if there were any questions or comments on the August 3, 2020, Special Meeting Minutes.

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

Motion was approved 4 to 0.

Communications

Mr. Cooper noted that there has not been a lot of written communication to the office these days other than some file search and FOI requests for records. This past month a letter dated August 20th from the CT-DPH was received regarding COVID19 funding through a CDC Cooperative Agreement. The intent of the funding, a total of \$153,036 over three years, is to build COVID19 response capacity. Staff has reviewed the agreement and would like to use the funds to hire a nurse or two for contact tracing, the administration of vaccine, and help in all the reporting that needs to get to the State. Additionally, some of the funds can be used to purchase equipment to enhance communications with

the public and other agencies. Mr. Cooper indicated he likes to let the Board know about such funding opportunities and obtain consensus on applying and using such funds, that obviously must follow the grant guidelines.

Director Shaum noted that the grant appears to be geared toward hiring people and asked if the grant funds would cover the cost of doing so. Mr. Cooper responded by saying he would be looking to hire nurses part time or on a per diem basis, up to what the grant allows. There was a general discussion on how a nurse would be helpful in contact tracing and that with the recent opening of schools, an increase in contact investigations is contemplated. Existing staff is very busy now.

Chairman Crawford asked if interns from the area colleges could be used for contact tracing. Mr. Cooper replied that the colleges have stopped placing interns in the community because of COVID19 concerns.

Director Bruce asked if the CERT volunteers could be used. Mr. Cooper responded that the WWHD has used CERT volunteers in the past and willing to use them more, but all contact tracers need to undergo State approved training. Director Bruce indicated she is a CERT member and is aware that CERT members have been asked if they are interested in becoming a contact tracer. She was wondering who may have signed up. Mr. Cooper stated that he would love to engage volunteers, however getting and keeping volunteers engaged has gotten more difficult during the pandemic and there is also a need for nurses who are licensed to give vaccinations.

Director Bruce asked who will write the grant. Mr. Cooper responded that he and staff will put the grant request together. One of Mrs. Scott's responsibilities, as Assistant to the Director of Health, is to help put the grant request together, track the expenditures and report back to funding agencies. Mr. Cooper added that he will reach out to Easton officials to see what they are doing with their potential grant of about \$27,000.

On a motion made by Director Shaum, and seconded by Chairman Crawford, the Board voted to authorize Mark Cooper as Director of Health to apply for and execute the CDC Epidemiology and laboratory Capacity Enhancing Detection Cooperative Agreement for Enhanced for COVID19. Chairman Crawford voted yes; Director Bruce voted yes, Director Nussbaum voted yes, and Director Shaum voted yes.

Motion was approved 4 to 0.

COVID19 Activities

Mr. Cooper provided a summary of COVID19 activities and data. He presented a chart showing Westport and Weston's confirmed and probable COVID19 cases from March 2 to August 29th which shows an accumulative total of 352 confirmed and probable cases and 23 deaths in Westport and 88 confirmed and probable cases and 2 deaths in Easton.

Director Shaum stated that this is the kind of information that the public wants to see and needs to be put somewhere on the WWHD website where it can be easily found. There was general discussion on the WWHD website and how it is not the easiest to navigate. Mr. Cooper agreed and stated that part of the issue for staff is that there is so much information being developed and so much that keeps changing, it is hard to keep up with it all and do all the other things needed to get done on a daily basis. The data exists, the issue for him is how to make it easier to find and more accessible. Mr. Cooper also stated that he has begun a review of the WWHD's website platform which appears to no longer support WWHD needs. It does not have the design capability needed for the more complex postings being requested.

Chairman Crawford asked if the web page can be made simpler for the public to use. More line with a landing page where all of Westport's and Weston's COVID19 metrics can be seen focusing on what is happening locally. Mr. Cooper outlined what WWHD staff review and report daily, such as the number of positive cases. He also indicated he has scheduled a meeting with the First Selectmen from Westport and Weston to discuss what information they would like to see posted and how would they like to see it presented.

There was general discussion on how much COVID19 data is being generated by the CDC, State of Connecticut, even locally and the difficulty in sorting out what officials and the public need to know and/or want to know. Initially, the need seemed to be local daily metrics which is what WWHD staff has been providing. The need seems to be changing to weekly summaries, which is actually helpful for staff; Staff can produce or gather just about any information, the question is what information should be presented and how.

Director Bruce stated she feels something is needed to counteract the fear and negativity being generated by the media coverage about COVID19 and that this year's flu season will be the worse ever. There was general discussion on how social distancing, mask wearing and the other mitigation strategies in place for COVID19 should actually help reduce the flu's impact this year. Various ideas of how to present a more informative view to the public to counter the national media's negativity were discussed, including a direct mail campaign.

Mr. Cooper summarized the typical process, things that need to be considered, and steps taken when a person is identified as a positive COVID19 case, in and outside of a school setting. Though COVID19 needs to be taken seriously and precautions judiciously used, there is no need for fear or panic.

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 for June, July and August.

Chairman Crawford noted that with the July financial report there is a new fiscal year and the permit activity resets to zero. He questioned whether blood pressure screening was worthwhile. Mr. Cooper responded that it is a basic public health screening and the nursing staff works them in to their normal daily routine.

Mr. Cooper provided an update on providing public health services to the Town of Easton, which began September 8th. There was quite a backlog of work for the WWHD's new hire to tackle which is

keeping him very busy. No time restrictions have been placed on the sanitarian assigned to Easton – the immediate primary mission being to take care of the back log and establish good working relationships with the public and Easton officials. Once the backlog has been addressed, the contract provisions in terms of office hours will be more closely followed. All things considered it is going well, positive feedback is being received from Easton’s First Selectman. The understanding is that Easton will be putting the question of whether to formally join the District to a public vote before the end of this calendar year.

Chairman Crawford asked if there were any questions about the Income statements or permit activity reports. There were none.

Executive Session

At 7:46 pm on a motion made by Director Shaum, and seconded by Director Bruce, the Board voted to enter into an Executive Session to discuss Mr. Cooper’s performance evaluation and contract renewal for Director of Health services. Chairman Crawford voted yes; Director Bruce voted yes, Director Nussbaum voted yes, and Director Shaum voted yes.

Motion was approved 4 to 0.

Mr. Cooper asked the Board if they preferred he stay or leave the room. The general consensus was that Mr. Cooper not be present. Mr. Cooper had on objections and left the room.

At 8:25 pm Chairman Crawford declared the Executive Session over and invited Mr. Cooper back into the meeting room. Chairman Crawford stated that the Board had completed its review and have WWHD’s Office Manager draw up the documents after which he will meet with Mr. Cooper to review and discuss.

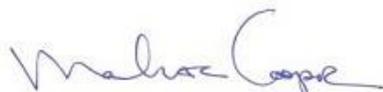
Adjournment

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

Being none, on a motion made by Director Bruce and seconded by Director Shaum, the meeting was adjourned at 8:26 pm. Chairman Crawford voted yes, Director Bruce voted yes, Director Nussbaum voted yes, and Director Shaum voted yes.

Motion was approved 4 to 0.

Respectfully submitted



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