



Westport Weston
Health District

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

WWHD BOARD OF DIRECTORS

September 13, 2021

Subject to change until approved by the Board of Directors.

The Regular Meeting was called to order by Chairman Otis Crawford at 7:01 pm.

The following voting Board Members were present: Chairman Otis Crawford, Vice Chairman Catherine Revzon, Director Linda Bruce, Director Nussbaum, Director Paul Shaum and Director Doreen Collins were present in the room.

Also, present was Mark A.R. Cooper, Director of Health.

Approval of Minutes

Chairman Crawford asked if there were any questions or comments on the August 6, 2021, Special Meeting Minutes.

On a motion made by Director Nussbaum, and seconded by Vice Chairman Revzon, the Board voted to approve the August 6, 2021, Special Meeting Minutes. Chairman Crawford voted yes; Vice Chairman Revzon voted yes, Director Nussbaum voted yes, Director Bruce voted yes, Director Shaum voted yes, and Director Collins voted yes.

Motion was approved 6 to 0.

Communications

Mr. Cooper noted that correspondence had been received from Letter from the People of the Republic for the USA, Updated WWHD Board Member Directory, a letter dated August 6th to Dr. Diedre S. Gifford, Acting DPH Commissioner informing CT-DPH of the appoint of an Acting Director of Health, and a letter dated August 16th to Eren Ceylan, congratulating and thanking him in his appointment as WWHD's Acting DOH.

WWHD Name Change

Mr. Cooper summarized reasons a name change is being considered. Easton's joining the health district has brought the discussion to the forefront. Just adding Easton to the existing name doesn't seem appropriate and could cause problems if people started to refer to the Health

District as the WWE-HD. Mr. Cooper noted that when the Health District was created in 1965 with the name Aspetuck Valley Health District.

The Health District operated as the Aspetuck Valley Health District until January 1, 1983, when the Board of Directors changed the name to the Westport Weston Health District for the purposes of easier identification as to who the District served.

The process for changing the Health District's name has been looked into and is not that difficult. Basically, two letters to the State of Connecticut, and then changing a variety of accounts, letter head, etc.

Director Collins commented that going back to Aspetuck seemed appropriate and has some historical value. Director Nussbaum also indicated Aspetuck seemed appropriate and would work should additional town decide to consider joining the Health District in the future.

Mr. Cooper noted that the word Aspetuck means along the long river which meanders through Easton, Westport, Weston and perhaps all the way to Bethel. Director Bruce noted that an internet search indicated that the Aspetuck River is 17 miles long starting in Huntington state park in Bethel flowing through Redding, the Aspetuck Reservoir, the Hemlock Reservoir in Easton and Fairfield and into the Saugatuck River in Westport. Aspetuck can be translated to mean river originating at the high place.

There was general discussion on whether the name should be Aspetuck Valley Health District or just Aspetuck Health District, and when the name change should become effective.

On a motion made by Director Collins , and seconded by Director Shaum, the Board voted to change the Westport Weston Health District's name to the Aspetuck Health District, effective January 1, 2022. Chairman Crawford voted yes;, Director Bruce voted yes, Director Shaum voted yes, and Director Collins vote yes.

Vice Chairman Revzon voted no, stating she preferred the name Aspetuck Valley Health District

Salary Study

Mr. Cooper stated he is recommending a salary and job classification study, something which has not been done for many years. It has been getting difficult to attract applicants to open positions and some job responsibilities have changed significantly since the COVID19 pandemic. The WWHD has been looking for additional nurses and in need of a qualified sanitarian to replace the restaurant inspector who recently left.

There was general discussion on some of the open positions and amount of training and certifications needed by those looking to fill them. One of the more significant issues being getting the required field certification from state personnel, many of whom continue to work

remotely. It is a state-wide problem that local directors of health are trying to resolve. Nurses in particular are in very short supply.

There was general discussion on how to go about such a study and how best to utilize existing local resources. Comparisons would be made with other Connecticut public health jurisdictions and the local economy. Chairman Crawford also suggested looking at the private sector for certain positions, as well as consulting with the town's personnel director. Mr. Cooper indicated one of his primary objectives is to make sure the Health District is competitive enough to attract the right applicants with the skill sets needed to best serve the community.

Director Collins asked what were the current restrictions when there is an open position to offer a salary. Mr. Cooper responded that here really has not been any set restrictions – in the most recent hirings, a potential salary is negotiated with an applicant and then brought back to the Board for discussion. Applicants' salary expectations have been coming in higher than anticipated but have been negotiated in a way to keep them within budget. Mr. Cooper also stressed that it is important to look at each job to make sure positions are doing what is needed in light of the significant changes in what public health now needs to do.

Director Nussbaum asked if LPNs rather than RNs would be considered. Mr. Cooper responded that LPNs would certainly be considered as they would be working under our recently hired APRN. Basic nursing help is needed for vaccinations, contact tracing, our typical flu clinics and travel clinic inoculations, blood pressure checks, etc.

Director Nussbaum asked if part-time nursing staff would be considered. Mr. Cooper responded that they would, the Health District has always used some part time per diem nurses, but they are even getting hard to find. Reliable and dedicated part time nurses would be hired so long as they could be depended on to be available when needed.

Mr. Cooper indicated here will start working on this and that any Board member who would like to be part of a subcommittee working on this or has suggestions, to contact him.

COVID-19 Update

Mr. Cooper summarized the chart of Confirmed and Probable COVID-19 Weekly Case numbers. Essentially after a low transmission summer, another wave appears to be starting in early September which could reflect Labor Day gatherings and/or the start of the new school year. There is some good news in that the percent of fully vaccinated in each community continues to increase.

In response to a question from Director Collins as to where the data comes from, Mr. Cooper explained that whenever anyone gets a COVID-19 test, the results are reported to the state. All the data is available on the State of Connecticut's website page dedicated to COVID-19. Mr. Cooper noted that the number COVID-19 positive cases may be under reported in that some individuals with no or mild symptoms may not go to be tested.

Chairman Crawford noted that it was reported to him that some people are already getting COVID-19 booster inoculations at area pharmacies and asked if the Health District can start providing booster inoculation. Mr. Cooper replied that the FDA has not authorized anyone getting a booster inoculation at his point, although it may be approved soon. The only additional COVID-19 inoculations that have been approved by the FDA are for those with compromised immune systems or other such issues. In fact, the Health District just had its first clinic for immune compromised individuals this past Friday where those requesting the inoculation signed a form stating that they qualify under FDA approval restrictions.

There was general discussion on the confusion between booster inoculations and inoculations for those immune compromised. The media has not been clear in their messaging. The big box pharmacies seem to be vaccinating anyone for any reason. The White House, CDC and others keep throwing out various dates when things will be approved and then changing the dates. The Health District should be ready to provide inoculations to the fully vaccinated when finally approved by the FDA.

Chairman Crawford asked if it is advisable to get the flu and COVID-19 inoculations at the same time. Mr. Cooper responded that staff had just discussed this and decided not to inoculate someone with both at the same time so that in the case of a rare adverse reaction, it is clear which vaccine the person is having a reaction from.

There was general discussion on the best time to get a flu inoculation. The big box pharmacies are pushing getting the flu “shot” now. However, by peak flu season in February and March, protection has already begun to wane. For peak protection at peak flu season, the end of October to December is the better time to get the flu “shot”. The Health District has already posted such a message on District’s web page and does issue a press release every year regarding this, however, the big box pharmacies are already advertising on national television and other places to get the flu “shot” now. It is not possible to compete with their messaging since even the CDC recommends getting the flu “shot” as soon as possible.

Mr. Cooper also noted that in each meeting information packet were a number of graphs providing a Connecticut statewide snapshot of COVID-19 as a comparison of the local experience. All these graphs and charts are available on the State of Connecticut’s COVID-19 website page.

Director of Health Reports

Consolidated Income Statement and Operational & Permit Activity Reports

Mr. Cooper stated that the Board package contains Permit Activity Reports for July and August, as well as the Plan Submittals for the same months, as well as a Consolidated Income Statement for July. He noted that July is the first report for the new fiscal year, so the numbers reset to zero and the accumulative count starts anew.

Chairman Crawford asked if the Health District is seeing any West Nile Virus. Mr. Cooper reported that there has been one batch of bird biting mosquitoes that tested positive for West Nile

Virus, but that here have been no human cases in Westport, Weston or Easton. There have been three positive human cases in the state. He noted that there has been a lot of rain recently and over the summer so that there are good conditions for mosquito breeding. A press release was sent out the previous week alerting the public to the low, but likely growing risk of more West Nile Virus until the first frost.

On the Plan Submittal graphic Mr. Cooper noted that prior to COVID-19 the environmental staff were receiving and reviewing about 100 plans a month. With COVID-19 the number of plans has increased greatly, at one time almost 300 plans, but has since settled down to between 150 to 200 plans a month. It has been a challenge for staff to keep up with the demand, particularly since one of the environmental health staff leaving. Mr. Cooper stressed that for every plan that comes in there is usually associated field work, like inspections, that go along with it. So, every new plan not only means more office review time, but also field inspection time. The time it takes to review and approve a plan has increased so it is expected there may be some complaints.

There was general discussion on the application submittal and review process and how the Health District is taking part in the Town of Westport's digital application process.

Community Health Needs Assessment

Mr. Cooper outlined the need to conduct a community health needs assessment, something that should be done every five years or so. It has been several years since the last, primarily because the previous State public health commissioner was attempting to consolidate all local health jurisdictions into five super regional health districts. The attempt did not succeed, and it now appears the new State Public Health Commissioner sees value in local health. Be all that as it may, with the addition of Easton to the Health District and the significant changes in the things local public health has to do because of COVID-19, it is time to conduct another community health needs assessment.

A part time employee is coordinating the effort and attending a lot of the meetings that area hospitals, allied health agencies and community groups undergoing similar planning efforts. It is estimated the process will take a one 1 year to complete.

Director Nussbaum indicated that she is interested to see what changes COVID19 has brought to the delivery of public health services and what role local health might have in countering disinformation as it pertains to health care.

There was general discussion on the area's hospitals needs assessment process and various catchment areas that Westport Weston and Easton are in and how the health care consolidation effort may be changing the delivery of medical services.

Executive Session

On a motion made by Director Shaum and seconded by Director Nussbaum, the Board voted to enter an Executive Session to get an update on the lawsuit filed by atty. Miller. Chairman

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

Motion was approved 6 to 0.

Chairman Crawford declared the Executive Session over at 8:30 PM.

There was general discussion on when the next meeting will be with Mr. Cooper indicating that if there is a need to, a special meeting can be called before the next regularly scheduled meeting on November 8th.

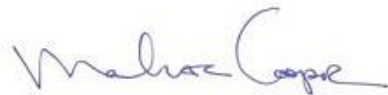
Adjournment

Chairman Crawford asked if there is any other business that needs to come before the Board.

Hearing none, on a motion made by Director Bruce, and seconded by Vice Chairman Revzon, the Board voted to adjourn at 8:32 PM. Chairman Crawford voted yes; Vice Chairman Revzon voted yes, Director Bruce voted yes, Director Shaum voted yes, and Director Collins.

Motion was approved 6 to 0.

Respectfully submitted



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