

City of Westfield, Massachusetts

Health Department

Board of Health Meeting
Via Zoom video conference
January 13, 2021
6:00 PM

Present: Juanita Carnes, Chair Stanley Strzempko, M.D. Margaret Doody

Ms. Carnes opened the meeting at 6:05 p.m. Ms. Kathleen Hillman of 179 Susan Drive and Councilor James Adams were present during public participation. Minutes from the December 9, 2020 meeting were reviewed and accepted as printed. A motion was made and seconded to approve the December 9, 2020 meeting minutes.

The vote was as follows:

Carnes	–	Yes
Strzempko	--	Yes
Doody	–	Yes

All in favor, the Motion was declared passed.

PUBLIC HEALTH:

COVID-19 Update and Discussion: Because no information had previously been provided to the Health Department regarding the vaccine, nothing was relayed to the public. However, information has now been made available and was sent to the newspaper today. Currently, front-line health care workers, those working in long term care facilities, first responders from police, fire and dispatch will be included in Phase 1. Phase 2 is scheduled to begin in February depending on supply and administration. More vaccines are expected to be shipped shortly. Seniors over 75, those 65 and over with one comorbidity, and individuals under age 65 with two or more comorbidities will be included in Phase 2. Phase 3 will include the general public. At this time, it is unsure whether or not the Health Dept. will receive doses or if there will be a mass distribution at a large facility. State Representative Kelly Pease is looking into the possibility of holding a clinic at Westfield State University. Having a state-run clinic at a state facility would be a plus. City employees can be handled locally with current staff resources and retired school nurses.

Before the City can receive doses of the vaccine, however, it will need a doctor to sign for them. Nurse Debra Mulvenna requested Dr. Strzempko to give his approval to electronically sign to receive vaccines, which he did. There will be no shortage of people who can administer the vaccines once they arrive. The state and the federal governments will assist with sites for the first roll out of Phase 2. Currently, the state is focusing on administering vaccines to the seniors. Mr. Rouse will work at getting updated information out to Councilors and the general public. The Big E may also be used as a mass distribution site, which will be run by the state.

Although the Health Dept. has been criticized by some for not doing enough compared to other communities, the Board stated they knew how difficult things have been and are backing the department. There have been a record number of cases – 247 in one week with 2 new deaths. Last week there were 173 new cases, no deaths. 293 are in isolation. There is no known reason for the spike. Possible gatherings at Christmas and New Year could be the reason. Schools are doing fine as they have been closed. The state collaborative is conducting the individual contract tracing. The Health Dept. is serving as a resource to businesses, reviewing with them the isolation and quarantining procedures in an effort to prevent clusters.

It has been asked as to why Westfield is not conducted testing for free as some of the neighboring communities have done. It was determined that the cost to conduct this testing is approximately \$50,000 per day. Although the city was provided sums through the Cares Act, Mr. Rouse did not feel this was the best use of that money as there were many testing facilities already available. In the future, those funds would be needed for the administration of vaccines. Ms. Carnes also voiced her opinion that the testing would be a waste of these resources as multiple testing sites are available and some individuals have been abusing the testing. It is the providers' responsibility to determine when testing should be conducted and proper guidance given with regard to quarantining.


PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:

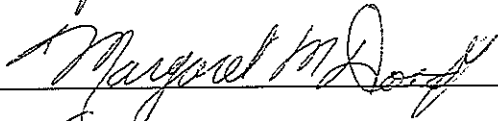
Councilor James Adams of Firtion-Adams Funeral Services thanked the Board members for the information and wanted to let everyone know that not one family of any individual who passed away due to Covid is blaming the department; however, they are looking for answers. He suggested that the information which was discussed at this meeting be forwarded to the general public in some manner.

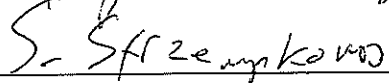
Ms. Kathleen Hillman also thanked the Board for the information which was presented this evening and emphasized the importance of distributing this information to the residents.

With no further items on the agenda to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 6:59 p.m.

Minutes approved by:







/cam

Next anticipated meeting date: February 10, 2021