

**CITY OF SALEM
BOARD OF HEALTH
MEETING MINUTES**
Virtual Meeting held via Zoom
and also
Recorded by SATV
August 4, 2020

MEMBERS PRESENT: Dr. Jeremy Schiller, Paul Kirby, Geraldine Yuhas, Datanis Elias, Sara Moore

OTHERS PRESENT: David Greenbaum, Health Agent, Suzanne Darmody, Public Health Nurse, Maureen Davis, Clerk of the Board, Patti Morsillo, City Council Liaison, Mayor Kimberley Driscoll

ATTENDEES ADDRESSED: Cynthia Jerzylo and Cristina Nuncio, both residents of the Willows neighborhood

TOPIC

DISCUSSION/ACTION

J. Schiller read aloud that, pursuant to Governor Baker’s orders, there exists COVID-19 Emergency Open Meeting Law Guidance regarding the implementation of virtual public meetings.

1. Call to Order

7:02pm

**2. Approval of Minutes
(July 14, 2020)**

G. Yuhas motioned to approve the minutes. P. Kirby 2nd. All in favor. Motion passed.

D. Greenbaum said the Mayor told him she will be joining the meeting after 7:15pm, so we will move on with the other agenda items until she is able to join in.

3. Discussion on the return to school policy from Salem Public Schools

D. Greenbaum reported that the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) would like the Board to agree with their plan, but Salem Public Schools did not get the draft of their plan to him yet. He feels some of the items proposed are in conflict with the State’s quarantine guidelines. For example, if students or staff are in contact with a confirmed positive COVID case, they should quarantine for 14 days. DESE is proposing that after five days of having a negative test result that person can return to school. DESE wants us to endorse a letter of agreement.

J. Schiller feels there is no justification to deviate from the CDC guidelines.

D. Elias agreed and said anything we endorse should be supported, at minimum, by CDC guidelines. We need to see the plan before we can endorse it.

J. Schiller said we need to strongly communicate that the Board is unanimous in their view.

We commit to review anything that is presented that, at a minimum, supports CDC guidelines.

D. Greenbaum said the Board may need to meet after we see the plan so we can review it and vote on it. He will let Salem Public Schools know that they must meet CDC guidelines, at the very least. The school’s final plan has to be turned in to DESE by Monday, 8/11. He told DESE’s consultant that he was going to talk to the Board about his concerns. He told her he felt the Board would agree with him. School is supposed to start September 14th. He said their goal is to have six feet between desks and

wear masks.

P. Kirby asked what the Board would be prepared to do if their plan uses the five-day standard instead of the 14-day.

J. Schiller said we would oppose it. The Board was set up to be outside the political and fiscal arenas to make public health decisions.

S. Moore asked if the Board has the ability to create that policy.

D. Greenbaum said the Board has the ability and the legal authority to make any reasonable public health regulation that they deem necessary. So, the Board could certainly, without a doubt, create that policy. Last night the Marblehead Board of Health met and voted to require that their school department follow the CDC guidelines.

S. Moore asked if DESE has a structure for contact tracing.

D. Greenbaum said the schools would provide us with contact information and we, along with the State community tracing collaborative, would conduct the tracing.

J. Schiller said it is inevitable there will be COVID cases in the schools. But by following the CDC guidelines we can do our best to contain it. Singapore did temperature checks on all the kids coming into school. They took a picture of the classroom so there were instantaneous contacts of whoever became ill. He hopes there is a plan in place for our schools.

D. Greenbaum said he is on his soap box to make sure all school-age children and teachers are getting their flu vaccines to vastly reduce the amount of flu in the community. Taking those proactive steps will allow us to know that, when we do see flu-like illnesses, it is more than likely not the flu.

G. Yuhas asked if there will be recess for the kids.

D. Greenbaum said whatever plan they have will be done to eliminate a lot of close personal contact. They are planning for three possible models; All in-classroom, hybrid of some in-class and some remote and a complete remote offering to students. There is a high probability that we may have to close schools again this year, but we don't know for how long.

D. Greenbaum said the Governor called the recent increase in cases a "slow creep", but he thinks it is a little more than that. He hopes the State has a plan to deal with increases to keep us ahead of it. He would really like the State to have a rollback plan so regionally the guidelines are the same.

J. Schiller said if we start to see more hospitalizations, we will know that means the community is much more infected than we are testing.

4. Updates on COVID-19

D. Greenbaum reported that the Mayor worked with the State to get seven days of COVID testing for Salem. There will be a couple of drive-up sites starting in the next couple of weeks. The sites so far will be at the Salem State University O'Keefe parking lot and the access road behind Salem High School. There will also be walk-ups in congregate housing sites, such as senior housing at 27 Charter Street. Fallon Ambulance will be the testing facilitator. They do everything from registration, to testing, to results. The only thing we will have to do is, once we get a positive result, pick up the case investigation and do the contact tracing. The results will be available within 36 hours or less. The tests are for anybody and people do not need to have symptoms to be tested. They will do as many tests as we need.

S. Darmody said the urgent care sites are using the antigen testing so people can get the results faster, but we have been told by DPH that the

antigen tests have a 30% false-positive rate.

D. Greenbaum said October will look vastly different this year than the last 20 years. He sent a notice to the known event coordinators that their plan must meet CDC guidelines.

We don't want big crowds, but some people will come.

J. Schiller asked if we are getting any pushback about wearing of masks.

D. Greenbaum said some feel we are infringing on their rights and freedoms, but for the most part he estimates there to be between 85-90% compliance. He spoke to the police and they may accompany the inspectors. Our inspectors are out weeknights and weekends walking around the downtown and some of the bigger parks and playgrounds where we have had some issues over the last few weeks. Most people comply. If not, once they are advised of the rules and requirements, they are usually happy to put on a mask. Our inspectors are trying to give masks out to those who don't have one. He said our goal is education and compliance, not revenue stream.

He ordered some banners that will say mask required zone at all times.

They will have the same graphics as the mask signs that are currently downtown. The banners will go up across the pedestrian mall and possibly the Willows.

There are some industries that are upset about how the guidelines have been written and are concerned that they are being treated unfairly.

P. Morsillo asked if any tickets have been written for not wearing masks.

D. Greenbaum said no; it is challenging because people need to give us their information in order for us to write a ticket. His staff have encountered some belligerent people. He said DPH will be starting a "Mask Up MA!" campaign and that should help.

He is concerned about the increase in cases. Being careful right now is imperative. If not, we can end up like we were back in March and he certainly doesn't want to see that. If that happens, he feels businesses will be in way more danger of never reopening than they were the first time.

J. Schiller said he is concerned about October. Tourists are less apt to comply with local guidelines and they are higher risk because they have been traveling.

D. Greenbaum said his real concern is Halloween night. He does not want to see huge crowds on the pedestrian mall. This year we are not doing many of the things that normally attract people to the City.

Attendee Cynthia Jerzylo asked if anyone has talked about the situation at Willows Park. It has been littered with tremendous amounts of trash, which is attracting wildlife. Recently a resident got bit by a rabid woodchuck. There are always large crowds and there was a small fire started by hot coals that were dumped on the grass. The neighbors have had it. She said the Health Department has been doing a fabulous job with limited resources, but wants to know if there is anything else we can do to help.

D. Greenbaum said he knows the Mayor has been working on some additional staffing in the parks, in particular the Willows and Forest River, due to the trash issue. DPS is trying to get there more often to empty the trash, etc. The Health Department staff are there frequently there to be sure people are wearing masks and complying with the public health guidelines.

Attendee Cristina Nuncio said she also wanted to speak with regard to the crowds that have been coming to the Salem Willows. She said the

neighbors all share a concern that on weekends, from Friday night and into late Sunday night, the size of the crowds coming in are very large and she estimated there is barely 50% compliance of people following the mask requirements. It is problematic and we need to find a way to control the crowds coming in. She feels there is minimal, if any, enforcement and it is a free-for-all. She said the Willows establishments close at 8:00pm due to COVID, but the activity picks up after 8:00pm.

D. Greenbaum responded that his staff has been out there every single weekend since mid-June, sometimes until 7:00pm or 8:00pm, trying to make sure people are complying with the mask orders. The staff reports 85-90% compliance. They are educating people and providing masks when needed, but they have been belittled and accosted on a couple of occasions. Those are the kind of situations we are trying to avoid. The Police Department will handle crowd control as a public safety issue and have been dispersing crowds on a pretty regular basis. He will follow up with Acting Chief King tomorrow about the crowds to see if there is anything more that can be done.

Attendee Cynthia Jerzylo said the park is supposed to close at 11:00pm, but there is really no way to “close” the Willows like at Forest River. Maybe we need jersey barriers? The neighbors have been taking pictures and posting on Facebook. It is crazy down there every single weekend. The Willows neighborhood gets no help from either the Park Department or the Police Department. She feels if this was happening on the Common it would have been stopped immediately.

D. Greenbaum said we are absolutely doing our best to make sure we have compliance with the mask order. He said we get a good amount of complaints about the Common, too, and we respond to them as well. He will talk to his staff to make sure that they go to the Willows again this weekend. If there are problems with the crowds after the park is technically closed, that is a police matter and they should call the Police Department and ask them to send a cruiser to break up those crowds.

5. Mayor Driscoll – Discussion of the Race Equity Task Force and her intention to sign the racism as an ongoing public health crisis pledge

The Mayor thanked the Board for supporting the Health Agent and his staff. She said she is grateful for the response to COVID and acknowledged the amazing work of D. Greenbaum and S. Darmody and said she is very appreciative of the extra efforts they are putting in to keep everything going.

The Mayor explained the municipal leaders pledge stating that racism is an ongoing public health crisis. The pledge is an effort by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), who represent 101 communities. More than 20 mayors around the Commonwealth have adopted it. Some City Councilors, including P. Morsillo, have also taken the pledge.

Through the creation of Salem’s Race Equity Task Force (RETF), she wants to put ideas and plans into action so that our pledge will not be just words on paper. We have a diverse population and we need to address systemic issues.

The Mayor shared the pledge on-screen for all to see.

She said both the pledge and the effort with the RETF is more than about law enforcement. We think there are disparities in healthcare, education, housing and economic activities. This is not a once-and-done issue. Our goal would be to create benchmarks as a community in various categories and hold ourselves accountable on a daily basis. We need to accomplish

changes now to pressing issues and be thoughtful about the process to ensure it is sustainable.

She knows the Board and the Health Department are interested in being involved.

There are over 20 members of the task force. We are hoping to work with an agency known as GARE, Government Alliance in Race Equity, that works with cities. It is a partnership you enter into and opens up toolkits, the availability to share resources and best practices. Other GARE communities exist, and we would have a collective ability to come together and work on initiatives that are aimed at breaking down disparities within municipal government.

One of the issues the RETF want to try to understand better is how to bring more voices into this. The goal is to bring a coalition effort into this issue and leverage all the expertise and talented individuals in our community.

We are very fortunate to have a hospital and a university. We have a community who *wants* to be involved. We heard from 40 other people beyond task force members who want to be involved and engaged.

J. Schiller said he is proud to be in a City that is going to put this forth and would love to help in any way he can, both as a Board member and a citizen of the City.

The Mayor said the task force is more as a steering committee right now, but once it gets organized, we will have working groups to work in various areas like data collection, setting priorities, etc.

S. Moore said the Board talked about making racial equity a regular agenda item. We want to think about the implications of health disparity, food and nutrition, physical safety and security and the effect that has on both mental and physical health.

The Mayor wants to have as much transparency as possible. We want to respond to the skepticism about whether or not we will have accountability. Attendee Cynthia Jerzylo asked the Mayor if any police officers were included in the task force. She said most of the points made already exist within the Police Department.

The Mayor responded that former Police Chief Butler, as well as Acting Police Chief King, retired police Captain Conrad Prosniewski, Representative Tucker and Senator Lovely are on the task force. There will be other opportunities for participation later on.

The Mayor wants to be sure the business community is aware that we will be in Phase III guidelines through October so that will affect the October plans.

6. Chairperson Communications

J. Schiller said the Board doesn't usually meet in August, so he thanked the Board members and said he appreciates all of their willingness to meet.

7. Monthly Reports-Updates

a. Public Health Nurse's Report

S. Darmody said there are 281 cases as of the date of the meeting. There has definitely been an increase in confirmed cases in the last week. She is worried it is ahead of us more than she would like it to be because of lots more socializing. The same is happening with the State.

S. Moore asked if they are identifying any themes in any of the cases, like people that have come from weddings, etc.

S. Darmody said there is no event or venue that she can link anything to.

D. Greenbaum said it seems to be younger patients than the ones we saw in

March, April and May.

S. Moore said that is what worries her about the 1,200 potential students at Salem State.

S. Darmody said there is a meeting with Salem State tomorrow. She is worried about Salem State University students and the Halloween season. Large crowds of students usually head downtown.

Copy available at the BOH office.

b. Health Agent's Report

Report not available.

c. Administrative Report

Copy available at the BOH office.

d. Council Liaison Updates

P. Morsillo said there is nothing new to report. There is no Council meeting scheduled for August.

S. Moore motioned to approve the reports. G. Yuhas 2nd. All in favor. Motion passed.

8. New Business/Scheduling of Future Agenda Items

J. Schiller said the schools opening will be the highest concentration of people and could be a hotbed. That's why the CDC guidelines are so important to apply to schools where hundreds of kids will be going to school and then going back home. There should be no wiggle room on that.

D. Greenbaum said the Salem Public Schools is presenting their plan to the School Committee on Thursday. They have to have their final plan in to DESE on Monday. He said the Board having input about the return to school is extremely important. He expressed to DESE, as well as to DPH, that he and his colleagues around the State feel that opening schools is a mistake.

G. Yuhas said the Recycle Committee wants to be sure that we publicize that Household Hazardous Waste Day is September 12th.

D. Greenbaum said he is working on getting it set up so we can comply with the vendor's COVID requirements. He said we will post the information about Household Hazardous Waste Day as soon as it is confirmed.

G. Yuhas reported that the Recycle Committee has canceled the book swap scheduled for September and probably will cancel the repair café in November. She asked D. Greenbaum if he thought they could still go ahead with the textile drive in November since it is a truck where people just drop items off from their cars.

D. Greenbaum thought it would probably be ok and asked if they could send him something to review.

D. Greenbaum informed the Board that he will be taking a long weekend. He needs to try to disconnect as much as possible, but he will of course be available if need be.

MEETING ADJOURNED:

**P. Kirby moved to adjourn. S. Moore 2nd. All in favor. Motion passed.
8:30pm**

Respectfully submitted,

Maureen Davis
Clerk of the Board

*Next regularly scheduled meeting is
Tuesday, September 8, 2020 at 7:00pm
Virtual Meeting Via Zoom*