

HAMILTON BOARD OF HEALTH

MINUTES OF MEETING

November 24, 2020

Virtual Meeting via Zoom Meeting

Members Present: Christopher Small, and David Smith (Chair).

Members Absent: Giselle Perez, PhD

Staff Present: Leslie Whelan (Health Agent), Rachel Lee, prospective candidate for Public Health Nurse.

This meeting was called to order at 5:00 pm by David Smith. All were in attendance via Zoom.

Meeting Minutes of 10/15/20 and 11/4/20 - Christopher Small motioned to approve both sets of minutes. David Smith seconded. Roll Call Vote: Christopher Small – aye, and David Smith – aye.

Unanimous in favor. Motion carried.

Thank retiring Minutes Taker Marcie Ricker for many years of excellent service.

Motion made and seconded to thank Marcie Ricker for her many years of service. David Smith motioned, Christopher Small seconded. Roll Call Vote: Christopher Small – aye, and David Smith – aye.

Unanimous in favor. Motion carried.

Public Health Nurse search

David Smith stated that he participated in an interview with Rachel Lee and has been very impressed and hopes she will soon be hired. Rachel Lee then joined the call.

Update/Discussion from Board on Covid-19 DPH conference calls and planned Public Health Education Campaign

David Smith stated he was impressed with the plans for how Covid vaccinations will be handled and interpretations about antigen tests vs PCR tests made on the call from DPH today. Leslie Whelan agreed that it was a very good webinar, and relayed the

following information from the webinar: Phase 3 mass vaccinations for the general public are expected to begin in the spring, Phase 2 would be first responders, and Boards of Health may be charged with offering vaccinations to certain populations in Phase 2. Dec 15 is when Phase 1 is expected to begin, wherein 60,000 doses would be available statewide to hospitals and long term care facilities' patients and staff.

Abbott Binex Now antigen test for Covid 19 was discussed in terms of being highly reliable for both positive and negative results. Rachel Lee added that some schools will be making this test available and she will inquire with H/W schools if they will.

Discussion ensued about the challenges for influencing behavior. David Smith placed an educational video on social media that garnered 10 likes vs the 200 likes received for a dog video showing proper and improper mask wearing. Get Back Mass is a new state campaign to encourage the "covid carefree" to follow safety protocols so that we can all "get back" to normal activities. Leslie Whelan will review and see if we could post on the Town's social media

Discussion of draft Board guidance on masks and face coverings

David Smith updated guidance document to include Governor's Order #55. Discussion about gators and single layer of cloth. BOH staff and members will review and get back to David, then it will be uploaded to webpage.

Discussion on whether to adopt the updated and revised metrics guidance for school learning mode published by DESE on November 6th in place of our current metrics provided to the HWRSD

David Smith suggested that the board should decide whether to adopt the new guidance, remain with the HWRSD method, or a 3rd option which would be a blend of those 2. Discussion ensued about the "gray" category in the DESE metrics. Rachel Lee stated that currently there's a desire to keep schools open however there isn't enough information for parents to keep on top of symptoms and to keep positive students out of school. She suggested more education for parents is needed. David Smith would like to find a middle ground between the 2 documents; DESE document is too simplistic; HWRSD is complicated, looking at many factors. Chris Small, as a former teacher, expressed understanding for the concerns of teachers being "on the front lines" but reiterated the benefits of keeping schools open and echoed Rachel Lee's statement that so far school settings have not been a significant source of transmission, for which she credited the entire school community for keeping the schools safe. David Smith suggested that a motion should be made that we strike a balance between the 2

documents. Chris Small agreed and the motion was made, seconded and approved by the 2 members present.

Discussion about HIPPA, protecting the health privacy of individuals and weighing that with the desire from parents to know more specifics about covid cases when they occur in the schools. Discussion ensued about balancing these needs. Chris Small asked whether it would be helpful to provide that a student or staff in a particular grade is positive? Rachel Lee suggested that it would not be helpful, and that as health care providers we needed to not be the source of such information to the public, and was concerned that public shaming of those in isolation or quarantine is not in the public good. Parents are concerned that they aren't receiving enough information to protect their children. David had a similar conversation with a school board member about the need to balance confidentiality with the trust of parents. David Smith is going to have a conversation with his contacts at Gordon Conwell and Pingree School and report back on how they are dealing with this issue. Chris Small stated that he'd like to be able to reveal more information however he is concerned about Covid-shaming and would therefore not want to compromise privacy, and we need to ask folks to trust us that we will share the necessary information with close contacts.

Report from Health Agent, Leslie Whelan

All annual permit renewal applications have been issued, many of the permits have been issued, and this has filled the bulk of Health Agent time. She continues to participate in the Tuesday and Friday DPH Covid webinars

Schedule date and topics for the next Board Meeting

David Smith will email with proposed dates.

List of documents and exhibits reviewed.

Minutes of 10/15/20 and 11/4/20.

Mask Guidance, specifically regarding deficiencies of single-ply masks and gaters.

Adjournment

Motion made by Christopher Small to adjourn at 6:14 pm.

Seconded by David Smith

Roll Call Vote: Christopher Small – aye, and David Smith – aye.

Unanimous in favor.

Prepared by:

Leslie Whelan

Attest

