

**Meeting Notes from a Meeting of the Peabody Board of Health,  
Re: Covid-19 Pandemic, Held remotely via Zoom Video Conference, Monday, April 23, 2020  
Participating in the Virtual Meeting: Chairman Bernard Horowitz, Dr. Leigh Ann Mansberger, Thomas J. Durkin III, Health Department Director Sharon Cameron, Public Health Nurse Chassea Robinson, and Recording Secretary Lisa Greene.**

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**Subject:** Meeting to be called to order

**Discussion:** Chairman Bernard Horowitz called the meeting to order at 4:30. Mr. Horowitz introduced himself and checked by asking if each board and staff member was present and if each could hear and be heard. All could, so Mr. Horowitz proceeded to explain that this open meeting of the Peabody Board of Health was being held remotely in accordance with Governor Baker's executive order of March 12, 2020 due to the current state of emergency in the Commonwealth due to the Covid-19 Virus. In order to mitigate the transmission of the covid-19 virus, we have been advised and directed by the Commonwealth to suspend public gatherings and as such, the Governor's order suspends the requirement of the open meeting law to have all meetings in locations that are physically accessible to the public. Further, all members or public bodies are allowed and encouraged to participate remotely. The order, which can be found posted with the agenda materials for this meeting, allows public bodies to meet entirely remotely so long as reasonable public access is afforded so that the public can follow along with the deliberations of the meeting. Ensuring public access does not mean ensuring public participation, unless such participation is required by law. This meeting will not feature public comment, however, if the Mayor, City Solicitor, or other elected official is in attendance, I may call upon that person for comment. This meeting of the Peabody Board of Health is convening via video conference via Zoom, as posted on the City of Peabody website, identifying how the public may join. Please note that this videoconference is being recorded, and that some attendees are participating by video conference. Please be aware that other people can see you during this video conference, and that you should not screen share your computer screen as anything that you broadcast may be captured by the recording. All supporting materials that were made available to the Board are available on the city website, unless otherwise noted. The public is encouraged to follow along using the posted agenda which has been posted on the screen. He reminded everyone to mute their speakers, and to remember to speak clearly in a way that will allow for accurate minutes. He also asked that people looking to speak please wait for the Chair to invite you to speak.

**Subject:** Approval of minutes

**Discussion:** Mr. Horowitz explained that the Board has been meeting much more frequently due to the pandemic, so we are behind in reviewing minutes, adding that the meeting minutes are not currently the highest priority and that other emergency matters have taken precedence. He told that the Board has not reviewed the last week's meeting minutes, but said that we will get to them and review at some point in the near future.

**Subject:** Update on Covid Response Actions

**Discussion:** Mr. Horowitz turned the meeting over to Ms. Cameron to report on Covid impacts and response actions. Ms. Cameron displayed a chart which showed the number of cases as of Monday and explained that we are seeing an increase in people getting tested and an increase in the number of Covid cases, and said that this reflects both an increase in cases and an increase in testing. 25% of tests conducted have been positive for Covid. The Peabody case count has increased, and we are up to 449 cases in Peabody, and sadly there have been 44 deaths in our community, with the largest percentage of those having been in congregate care facilities. Of those deaths, one person was in their 50s and the rest were aged 70 or above. She told that Chassea is sharing the data on those testing positive in the state MAVEN system, but told that a nursing home here had the National Guard come assist and do testing, so that may also be a reason for the increase in cases, but said we are looking at trends. She told that there are more cases in women than men at this time, but that may be due to there being a larger population of women and because women live longer. She told that statewide ¼ of cases are among people aged 70 and above, but in Peabody 40% of cases are among people aged 80 and above. She told that they are examining cases by ethnicity and have found that 7% of cases have been in our black community, while only 3.5% of our population is black. She added

that there are still a great number of cases on which they have no data at this time. She told that of the data they have they have seen that 1/3 of those hospitalized needed to be put on a ventilator. She told the greatest toll was taken on those with underlying conditions. She reported that in Peabody so far, 10% of reported cases had resulted in death, and 8% had been discharged from case management, but a large number of people were still being monitored. In Massachusetts 4% of cases had resulted in death. Dr. Mansberger asked Public Health Nurse Chassea Robinson how long they typically monitor those who have been exposed to someone with Covid. Ms. Robinson replied that they monitor for a minimum of 7 days, but it may be two weeks or longer due to multiple people in the household being exposed at different times.

**Subject:** Oversight of Long-term Care Facilities

**Discussion:** Ms. Cameron told that they have been focusing their attention on the long term care facilities, and last week the Board approved a directive requiring long term care facilities to have Covid Response Plans in place, but we did not require that they be submitted to us. Mr. Horowitz said that as we discussed last meeting, we would expect that these facilities would already have emergency response plans of this sort in place. Ms. Cameron replied that this was correct. She showed the Board a document and cover letter to the long term care facilities which included information on how to access PPE through MEMA, and how to access the state portal for emergency staffing, crisis management, and onsite trainings, how to access testing, and the importance of communicating with family members of residents. She said that they are encouraging facilities to be transparent, and said that her office receives calls from family members of people in long term care facilities with questions about numbers of cases at particular facilities. She said that she can not share the number of cases, but can share if the facility has a plan in place. She told that she followed up on the letters to facilities with Zoom meetings with each individual facility, and showed the agenda. She told that they had met with all of the facilities, and had a state epidemiologist assigned to be on call for each. At those meetings they talked about testing, safety protocols, PPE availability, and staffing. She told that there is a shortage of CNAs to staff the facilities, even using the state emergency staffing portal. She told that there is still a shortage of PPE, but that all facilities reported they had masks and gloves but reported that they have had trouble getting gowns. All had plans in place for separating out the sick, and no red flags were identified. She told that the big difference between facilities was in regard to testing. Ms. Robinson told that it was very helpful having the state epidemiologist involved so that he could tell that the state recommends universal testing. She said that facilities are uneasy about testing all of their staff because if they do they may lose a great percentage of their staff. Ms. Cameron told that they had convinced one facility to take us up on the offer of conducting universal testing. They all have good expectations and understand the state and local issues. Mr. Horowitz said that he is curious about their residents, like if they needed to be on a ventilator, would they be transferred to a hospital. Ms. Robinson replied yes, but that some have DNRs in place so they will be given palliative care and just kept comfortable.

**Subject:** Guidance for Group Homes

**Discussion:** Ms. Cameron explained that the state is now expanding the availability of testing to include group homes. Ms. Robinson reported that they are beginning to see more cases in group homes and have learned that staff often work at multiple group homes, so many can become infected. Mr. Horowitz asked how many group homes are in Peabody. Ms. Cameron replied that there are about 20. Ms. Robinson told that one good thing is that they are very quick to call us for guidance. Dr. Mansberger asked how they isolate residents. Ms. Robinson told that each group home has at least two bathrooms, so they put positive person in room with separate bathroom to keep sick residents away from those who are not sick. They also assign one staff to work with just the sick person. Dr. Mansberger asked if they reported any shortage of PPE. Ms. Cameron replied no, but said they report a shortage of staff. She told that the guidance for critical care health care workers has changed: They are allowed to work if they have been exposed as long as they are not symptomatic, and must take temperatures every day, wear masks all day, practice social distancing, and step up cleaning procedures and frequency. She said that she believes that sometimes a facility has a reportable illness and they haven't gotten the message that they must report it, so she has created a sheet with guidance that included that.

**Subject:** Guidance for Businesses

**Discussion:** Ms. Cameron explained that she has created a sheet for businesses with guidance on how to monitor for clusters. She told that the inspectors are important and are going out to see how they are managing, and to stress that they need to report clusters of cases to prevent further spread. She asked if the Board would support making it a requirement that businesses report clusters. Mr. Horowitz said that he has no issues with that. Dr. Mansberger said absolutely, and Mr. Durkin said of course.

**Subject:** Probable Cases

**Discussion:** Ms. Cameron reported that there is a new section in MAVEN for reporting probable cases. Ms. Robinson explained that now, if someone has contact with a person who is a confirmed case of Covid, and if they develop symptoms, we may presume that they are infected. They are then required to follow the same guidance as any other Covid patient, including being required to stay home for 7 days. Mr. Horowitz said that he had heard that people are being required to have two negative tests 24 hours apart. Ms. Robinson said that it is not required, and said that if someone is asymptomatic they are required to quarantine for 10 days, and if someone has symptoms, we recommend that they stay quarantined until they have been fever free for at least 72 hours. Ms. Cameron told that unfortunately the research is looking like people might still shed the virus for up to 6 weeks after they are symptom free.

**Subject:** State Contact Tracing

**Discussion:** Ms. Cameron told that Governor Baker has set up a community tracing collaborative to do contact tracing to support the efforts of local health depts. She told that the Peabody Health Dept would still do their own contact tracing for more complex cases and for any school-related cases, but for simpler cases they would have the state do for us. She said that nurses are seeing small numbers of contacts now, but as things reopen, there will be much larger circles of contacts to follow up with as people begin to go out more.

**Subject:** Noncompliance

**Discussion:** Mr. Horowitz noted that in the file he had seen that there had been some gyms that were non-compliant with COVID standards. Ms. Cameron reported that they are still trying to get the word out about the requirements, and added that it is not just gyms, and said they had to issue 17 cease and desist orders today alone to various businesses.

**Subject:** Review of Communicable Disease Report

**Discussion:** Ms. Robinson reported that apparently fewer people are getting other illnesses. She said that it might be that they are not getting tested, or it could be that because they are staying home and not eating out, people are not contracting the usually expected illnesses. She told that besides Covid, there are no other illnesses being reported in MAVEN, and she hasn't seen another thing reported.

**Subject:** Mechanism for appeal for businesses that believe they are essential

**Discussion:** Ms. Cameron told that her office receives calls from business owners who believe that they meet the definition of essential business to stay open during the pandemic emergency orders. In one case their office had determined that a person's business, a car detailing company, was not essential and he wanted to appeal, but they are directing anyone with these cases to the Governor's office since they wrote the criteria and they have set up an appeal process so people can go through that mechanism. That keeps a consistent interpretation throughout the state.

**Subject:** Guidance for Landscapers

**Discussion:** Ms. Cameron reported that her office has developed guidance for landscapers, and showed a document listing best practices. After reading it, Mr. Horowitz asked about a reference to leaf blowers being strongly

discouraged. He said that he would be more comfortable if it was changed to discouraged. Ms. Cameron agreed to make that change.

**Subject:** Order on facial coverings

**Discussion:** Ms. Cameron told that the order on facial coverings that the Board had approved has been distributed. She reported that her office is getting a large number of calls from people calling reporting others not wearing masks. She said that she believes that there has been pretty good compliance. She told that she had put info onto the website telling how to make simple face coverings. She told that she had received an e-mail from someone saying that the language about masks should be considered guidance and not a directive. Mr. Horowitz replied that since masks protect people, he wants to keep it written as a local directive. Mr. Durkin asked who is responsible for enforcement. Ms. Cameron replied that stores must have a policy in place regarding mask wearing, and many have staff posted at the door. We don't want people confronting people, so we just ask for policies and signage. Mr. Horowitz said that means that establishments are responsible. Ms. Cameron replied that staff feel protected by this, and are happy to see customers being required to wear masks.

**Subject:** Guidance for Multifamily Housing

**Discussion:** Ms. Cameron showed a document giving guidance for Multifamily housing developments, and said that the biggest thing they are stressing is restricting visitors. She said that they don't want casual visitors coming to these developments increasing the chance of spreading the virus. She told that for larger developments a copy was e-mailed and for smaller developments a hard copy was mailed.

**Subject:** Other items- Appeal

**Discussion:** Ms. Cameron told that local ice cream vendors have requested a hearing to appeal the Board's decision to not allow them to operate under the category essential businesses. Mr. Horowitz replied that we already made that decision, had discussion about it and agreed that it is in the best interest of and for the safety of the public. He wondered why we were revisiting this. Ms. Cameron replied that we have to give them a hearing because we have effectively denied them a permit and they are allowed a hearing to give their side. Mr. Horowitz replied that this was a good point. Ms. Cameron told that not one but three ice cream vendors are requesting a hearing on this. Mr. Durkin said that he is interested in hearing from the ice cream sellers how they plan to protect the children. Ms. Cameron said that she had told them that the Board does not make decisions lightly, and only deny if they feel that there is a threat to public health, but they still want a hearing. Mr. Durkin said that he is not optimistic about their chances, but he is interested in hearing what their plan is.

**Subject:** Other Items- Any other Actions

**Discussion:** Ms. Cameron asked the Board if there were any other actions that they think we as a department should be doing. Mr. Horowitz replied no, and said that she has taken all of the necessary steps, adding that she and her staff are doing a great job. Mr. Durkin asked how the office is managing. Ms. Cameron replied that staff are working remotely, with Zoom meetings every other day which have been helpful. She said that they have not been doing a lot of on site work, except today they had to deliver cease and desist orders in person. She said that for now permitting is on hold, allowing permits to run until we are able to get back into the office and focus on something other than Covid. She told that she is also hearing from people looking for guidance on summer camp programs, and some City Councilors have asked about holding their Fourth of July events. Mr. Horowitz replied that we aren't flattening the curve yet so its hard to know when things will be able to resume. Ms. Cameron replied that she hasn't yet told the Councilors that these celebrations should be cancelled but said that she doesn't see it as likely given the way cases are trending.

**Next Meeting:** Thursday, May 5, 2020 at 4:30 p.m. **Meeting Adjourned:** 5:25 p.m.