

**Meeting Notes from a Meeting of the Peabody Board of Health,
Regarding the Covid-19 Pandemic, Held remotely via Zoom Video Conference, Tuesday, April 7, 2020
Participating in the Virtual Meeting: Chairman Bernard Horowitz, Dr. Leigh Ann Mansberger, Thomas J.
Durkin III, Health Department Director Sharon Cameron, and Public Health Nurse Chassea Robinson.**

Subject: Meeting to be called to order and explanation of change in meeting format

Discussion: Ms. Cameron explained that Lisa Greene was not present but that the meeting was being recorded for her. Chairman Bernard Horowitz called the meeting to order at 4:31. 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. 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 then turned to the first item on the agenda, approval of the minutes. He explained that he would then introduce each party as they speak, and asked each to hold until they are called. He reminded everyone to mute their speakers, and 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 yield the floor to you.

Subject: Approval of March 24th meeting minutes

Discussion: Mr. Horowitz explained that the meeting minutes were not available due to the increased frequency of these meeting and to other matters taking priority. He added that reviewing minutes is not high priority now and other matters are of greater importance, so they will review and vote to accept the minutes at a later date.

Subject: Update on Response Actions

Discussion: Mr. Horowitz asked Ms. Cameron to provide an update on the City's response actions. Ms. Cameron shared some data on the number cases, explaining that there are currently 124 confirmed cases in the City of Peabody, the first slide shows the breakdown by gender as compared to the state, and we have a slightly higher percentages of cases among females than the state. The next slide shows the breakdown by age. She pointed out that we have a higher percentage of cases, about 38% of cases in Peabody are age seventy or older, as compared to statewide where it is 19% of the cases, and stated that we do recognize that we do have a large elderly population, and we do have several senior housing complexes for senior citizens, so obviously this is something we are very concerned about, seeing such a high percentage among that population.

Ms. Cameron went on to say that the next picture shows the trajectory of the cases, and wanted to stress that these numbers only show confirmed cases, adding that the actual number of cases is much higher because they are clinically diagnosed, by symptoms or exposure history and not necessarily with lab testing, and most of those cases do not get reported to us, so these numbers should be seen as being significantly lower than the actual number of cases in the community. She added that the numbers are still helpful in that they show that the numbers are still increasing, and that increase in the number of cases identified is both a result of increased availability of testing and of increased community transmission of the virus.

Ms. Cameron next showed a slide with hospitalization data, telling that, of the cases we have data for, approximately 10% of cases have been hospitalized. There is a significant portion of cases that we do not yet have data for and once we have that data we will be able to paint a clearer picture. She pointed out that, of the 10% we know were hospitalized, approximately 17% required that use of a ventilator, and everyone is aware that ventilators are a piece of equipment that is in very short supply, and everyone is concerned about how those resources will be allocated when we reach our surge. She told that she had just in the last half hour gotten off of a call with the state health department and they are telling us that they think the surge could hit as early as this Friday, April 10th, and continue through April 20th. She told that the next slide showed the percentage of those who tested positive who had an existing underlying conditions which potentially placed them at higher risk, about 18% of cases for which we have data had those underlying health conditions, and they make up a significant proportion of the cases that get hospitalized, and we still have a chunk of cases for which we do not have that data, but we know that those with underlying health conditions are at a greater risk of suffering complications, which is consistent with what we knew about the disease. She told that the next slide shows data on deaths related to the virus, telling that three people in Peabody have died related to Covid-19, which represents 2% of all cases, which is consistent with the percentages statewide. She told that the demographics data on the deaths shows that they all were in the most high risk age group. Mr. Durkin thanked her and said seeing it graphically really helps. He noted that the residential situation for seniors might be problematic, in cases where seniors are living in facilities like Crowninshield, in comparison to seniors living at home. Ms. Cameron replied that we are aware of the fact that, unfortunately, we have had clusters in some long term care facilities, and explained that clusters means two or more cases. She told that we have been working with the state health department as, like has been shown on the news, some of the long term care facilities in other parts of the state have suffered high numbers of cases and fatalities, so the state has assigned an epidemiologist to each facility that has a cluster of more than two cases, and locally we have implemented additional surveillance, as you know we have brought in additional nurses into our tracking. She explained that we have six senior facilities in Peabody, and one congregate housing facility for older women, and our nurses are being assigned specifically to contact these facilities, and contacted each of them last week, talked through with them the protocols that have been put forth by the state and the CDC, and each appears to have the correct protocols in place. We have now asked each of them to create a line list, which they are now submitting to us every day, which is a list of any resident or staff person who has tested positive for or exhibits symptoms of Covid, so that is received daily and is being reviewed by our nurses so we have increased our tracking. She told Mr. Durkin that while some of the cases are in seniors living independently, there are also some cases of people living in congregate care setting.

Subject: Guidance for large multifamily rental complexes

Discussion: Ms. Cameron told that there has been concern from residents in apartment complexes when someone has disclosed that they have tested positive for Covid, there has been inquiry and request for technical assistance from the staff of those complexes in regard to the type of maintenance that should be performed, what should they defer, guidance on how to keep some common room areas open, like laundry rooms, and on closing some, like gyms, so they have been providing that guidance but are also going to put that information down into a detailed guidance document that they will be distribute to all residential complexes. This is being done in partnership with the Winchester board of health who had expressed a similar need, so they are hoping to get that document out in the next couple of days.

Subject: Guidance for Retail establishments

Discussion: Ms. Cameron told that she has been working on a guidance document for retail establishments. She told that retail establishments that are considered essential under the Governor's orders have remained open, and that

these include grocery stores and pharmacies but also includes hardware stores and other stores. They have been trying to do enhanced social distancing, but said that, as people's anxiety has increased and as some surrounding communities have put in place guidelines, that there has been some effect here and people have been calling in complaints seeing what they consider overcrowding in stores, so we have drafted an emergency order to address occupancy limits and to increase social distancing. She told that the conference call that she had participated in earlier had informed that the Governor is going to release orders on this statewide, but that has not been done yet, and the only information that she has so far is that they are going to set an occupancy rate of 40% of the normal occupancy for that establishment. She said that before we get into numbers she asked if the board thought his is necessary and if there are other things they think should be covered. Mr. Horowitz replied that he has seen that the stores have been taking it upon themselves to take measures to ensure social distancing, but that he agrees that it is a good idea to create this order, and despite the fact that the Governor is going to create something, that there is no reason for us to pause on our work. He added that if the state's numbers are more strict when they are issued, we will have to go with those numbers. Dr. Mansberger echoed that sentiment, saying she only wondered when the Governor's orders were expected, but since they don't know, it makes sense to move forward and, if the Governor's numbers are stricter, we will revise. Mr. Durkin said that he is fine with it as well, and said that he has a couple of questions when we get to that, but he agrees that we should move forward. He said that a paragraph requires grocery stores to close the nonessential areas, and used the flower part as an example. He said he images how difficult it will be for those stores, that he wonders if wild bird food is essential and if frozen birthday cakes are essential, but he moves to suggest that the essentiality portion of this be moved to best practices section. Ms. Cameron said that she too had wondered about how that was going to work in the stores as well. She told that she believes the intent was for parts of the store that had staff specifically coming in to work for those areas, like people coming in to make bouquets, or pet stores, which are essential, but grooming services are not so the staff that would be coming in just to do grooming could stay home, saying that while that was the intent, if he is comfortable with that, she may need to just tinker the language to restrict any staff that would be brought in solely to perform nonessential services, and asked if he would find that acceptable. Mr. Durkin replied that he would. Mr. Horowitz agreed and said it is a good point. Dr. Mansberger expressed hope that nonessential staff might be found some work elsewhere in the store if they wanted. Mr. Horowitz added that with the revised occupancy numbers, that it is a safety measure in itself. Ms. Cameron said that the revised numbers came out of a conversation with the building commissioner, who said that the general rule of thumb would be that one person for every sixty square feet. She told that the governor will be issuing numbers saying 40% of occupancy, and said that the numbers are in the ballpark. She said that the biggest discrepancy was in a convenience store, so she suggests that they adopt language that caps the total maximum occupancy to 40% of the normal occupancy, and that that number would include staff and customers. Mr. Horowitz asked about the maximum shopper section. Ms. Cameron said they would still require each store to post a sign showing the number of total occupancy, and to monitor how many staff are there and allow in only up to the number of customers to not exceed their total new occupancy. She told that if after this is released we would not be monitoring but if a complaint of overcrowding is received, they would contact the store and ask how they got to their occupancy limits and provide guidance. She told that the message from the state was clear, we only want to provide compliance assistance, we don't want essential businesses closing down, we need these services, but also want to be sure that the staff and customers are adequately protected. We have been tasked with providing compliance assistance, to give guidance. Mr. Horowitz asked where complaints have been for. Ms. Cameron said our grocery store, but it makes sense to include all establishments now. Ms. Cameron asked if they are ok with her tweaking the language to reflect what the Governor's order says this afternoon, adding that she will send over a draft after making the revisions for review. Mr. Horowitz agreed that this would be fine. He noted that he liked the reference to one way aisle traffic and offering prepackaged deli meats. Mr. Durkin told that Cerra's Butcher shop on Route 1 is not allowing anyone inside the store, but is requiring people to call and they will bring it out to them. Ms. Cameron told that the Governor's order will include encouraging prepayment and curbside delivery as well. Mr. Horowitz made a motion to approve the directive on the mandated order to retail establishments providing essential services, modified as discussed to include language from the Governor's order. All agreed.

Ms. Cameron told that she has been getting requests from funeral homes and from churches to offer services in alternative settings, and has approved drive in church services and drive through wake services, and has talked through guidance on social distances and other things, so we will be seeing those happening now. She said that there is nothing in the governor's order prohibiting people from gathering outdoors as long as they are maintaining adequate social distances. Church services proposed would be with people sitting in cars and a service being

broadcasted over an FM radio transmission, no literature would be distributed, no collection, no communion, no restroom, no social hour. Wakes would be similar, family would stand in the front of the building, people would drive by to get across a message but no direct contact, so people are trying to think of creative ways to meet the spiritual needs of the community. Mr. Horowitz told that he has seen funeral services recently and the cemetery workers are not coming into contact with the mourners because they are afraid as well, and the services now are restricted to one car load. He told that he has seen in his neighborhood that people are doing caravans driving by homes to wish people happy birthday as well so these drive by wakes should not be a problem. Mr. Horowitz said that he is fine with these new services. All board members agreed.

Ms. Cameron told that they are coming up on their permit renewal cycle for food, and they are going to simply extend those permits for a period of time because she can not expend staff resources on processing routine permits. She told that one of the seasonal permits that she is concerned about is ice cream trucks which get processed this time of year. She told that while food service establishments and takeout are allowed, she is very concerned about issuing a permit to an ice cream truck that is going to drive up to a neighborhood and have 20 kids come running out of their houses with no way to ensure social distancing. The health directors on the North Shore are discussing doing a region wide directive to have these permits delayed until after the emergency has passed, adding that she is inclined to agree with that plan, and asked the Board for their feedback. Mr. Horowitz said that he is wondering how there could be social distancing, very hard to do safely, and the reality is that it will not work well. He asked if the rest of the board had any thoughts. All agreed with not issuing these permits. Mr. Horowitz mentioned that there are other food trucks in addition to ice cream trucks, and that these food trucks pull up and people line up as well. Ms. Cameron replied that those trucks have an adult clientele, and are not appealing mostly to children, so they can be seen as different categories, adding that ice cream truck operators alone are required by the state to obtain a special permit from the police department in order to operate, something other food trucks are not required to do, solely because of their high interaction with children, so she believes it is appropriate to treat them as a special category. All agreed.

Ms. Cameron told that a really important part of keeping people quarantined and isolated who shouldn't be out in the community is to make sure they have access to food and medications and things that they need. She told that in Peabody there have been many different organizations that have stepped up to make sure that no one goes hungry: The School Department, the Council on Aging, the Haven From Hunger, the No Child Goes Hungry in Peabody program, and told that those services are critical, and that the demand for those services is increasing weekly as people become more anxious about going out in public and as more people are subject to quarantine and isolation. Unfortunately some of those organizations are facing a decrease in the availability of workers and volunteers so there is concern that some of those services may not be able to be continued. She told that she is extremely concerned about this, and has expressed her concerns with the Mayor, and they have a meeting scheduled on Thursday morning to discuss what the City can do to ensure that these services can continue, adding that she thinks it is absolutely critical that we do continue these services. She wanted to make the board of her significant concern that these services are in jeopardy, and said no action is required by the board, but wanted to just inform the board of this concern, and will keep them informed.

Ms. Cameron told that some surrounding communities have issued formal stay at home orders and some have considered issuing curfews. She has discussed with the Mayor and he is having conversations with other surrounding communities as well, and she believes that there is a sense that it is important to do these things consistently as a region, so at this time the Mayor feels that we are in lock step with our surrounding communities on these things, and this we may revisit but he is comfortable at this time with the level of security now in place.

Ms. Cameron told that there have been a couple of significant changes that happened within the past week. One is the definition of who is considered to be a close contact of a confirmed case of Covid. The definition up until last week was someone who was within 6 feet for 15 minutes or longer with someone who has tested positive or who was symptomatic. Now since more data has become available that shows that some people can be transmitting virus before they are symptomatic, so our nurses are now tracing contacts of people who were in contact with the case for two days prior to their exhibiting symptoms. This has obviously increased the pool of people that they are doing contact tracing, but has also increased anxiety levels that people have understandably about being out when people have been out in public without being aware that they were sick. She told that this ties into the CDC's

recommendation last week that people going out in public wear cloth masks, but they are still asking people to save N95s and surgical masks for health care workers and first responders. We did put this information out on the Health Department's face book page as well as directions to make their own masks.

Dr. Mansberger asked for clarification on the earlier point about contact tracing back to two days prior to symptoms. She asked about a scenario about going to a grocery store and later being diagnosed, does that mean everyone in that grocery store is considered exposed. Ms. Cameron replied that would not be the case, since the criteria of being within 6 feet for 15 minutes still applies, adding that the only change would be that we are now looking at the people who met that closeness criteria to an affected person now in the two days before symptoms appeared. She said that it is probably going to be the people that someone shares a workplace or household with, adding that people probably continued to go to work before symptoms appeared, so now they would be contacted. Ms. Mansberger thanked her for the clarification.

Ms. Cameron told that that was the end of her updates for today, and asked if the Board members had any additional concerns or actions that they would like her to be working on to let her know. Mr. Horowitz thanked Ms. Cameron and said that she seems to have covered everything, and said that she has been doing a great job covering all of these items. He asked for one clarification. He wondered why the change has been made to trace contact for two days prior to symptoms emerging, which he had thought that a person could have the virus for fourteen days before symptoms arise. Ms. Cameron explained that while it can take up to fourteen days for you to incubate the virus in your body and for symptoms to appear, it is believed that the two days reflects when you have a sufficient load of the virus to be able to transmit it to others. She asked Dr. Mansberger if she was correct in her understanding. Dr. Mansberger said that she was correct. Mr. Horowitz thanked them for the clarification.

Ms. Cameron told that she would be appearing before the City Council to discuss the response actions and will share the information that she had shared with the board today. Dr. Mansberger reminded Ms. Cameron to make one edit to her presentation materials since it was difficult to read on one slide.

Mr. Horowitz asked if she would like them to meet again in a week. Ms. Cameron replied that she understands that it is a time burden on them, but that she finds it very helpful to run ideas past them and to have others helping to ensure that nothing is being missed. Mr. Horowitz agreed, adding that since we are just now getting to the peak numbers of cases, it makes sense to meet again next week. All agreed.

Next Meeting: Monday , April 13 , 2020 at 4:30 p.m. Meeting Adjourned: 5:26 p.m.