

**Meeting Notes from a Meeting of the Peabody Board of Health,  
Held remotely via Zoom Video Conference, Thursday, June 23, 2020 Participating in the Virtual Meeting:  
Chairman Bernard Horowitz, Dr. Leigh Ann Mansberger, Thomas J. Durkin III, Health Department  
Director Sharon Cameron, and Recording Secretary Lisa Greene.**

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**Subject:** Meeting Called to Order

**Discussion:** Chairman Horowitz called the meeting to order at 4:30 explained 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, and that 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 in, and added that this videoconference is being recorded. He also explained that one person can speak at one time, and that everyone else should remain muted, and can use the "raise your hand" button or type in the Q& A section to indicate that they would like to speak on a subject, and the Board would get to those questions.

**Subject:** Year-end Report from Polished Dental

**Discussion:** Ms. Cameron explained that the Polished Dental Program is a public health dental program that provides cleanings and sealants to students in the schools. She referenced the report saying that the program had a good amount of usage this year despite the Coronavirus Pandemic. She also referenced the cover letter accompanying the report which detailed the additional COVID-related safety precautions being taken which may be continued into the future. She also reported that this service comes at no cost to the City and is a very valuable program.

**Subject:** Hearing Re: application by Charles and Mary Smith to keep up to nine hens at 779 Lowell Street.

**Discussion:** Mr. Horowitz asked if anyone was present to speak on this application. Mary Smith indicated that she was present and told that she owns her home and has already purchased the chickens. She told that she had contacted her neighbors last fall to ensure that they are ok with it, but delayed purchasing then due to the coming winter months. Mr. Horowitz asked why Ms. Smith wishes to keep chickens. She replied that they seemed like a fun pet to have and that she wanted to get her kids involved and wanted the eggs. Mr. Horowitz referenced the pictures in the application saying that the coop is already constructed and asked if Health Inspector John Yale was present to speak on this. Mr. Yale indicated that he was present and told that he had been out to inspect and found that the coop was set far away from other properties, and far exceeds the required setbacks. He told that it was very well constructed and there were galvanized containers for food and water. Mr. Horowitz noted that the lot is 26,000 sq. feet, so there is plenty of space for them, but asked why they were asking for nine hens. Ms. Smith replied that her daughter had chosen three breeds and wanted three from each breed. Mr. Horowitz asked if anyone had any questions. Mr. Durkin replied that he did not. Dr. Mansberger replied that it was a very well written and complete application and said that she was satisfied. Mr. Horowitz asked if anyone else participating in the Zoom meeting wanted to speak on the matter. None replied. Ms. Cameron told that it appeared that someone present had clicked the raise hand button. Mr. Horowitz again asked if that person or anyone wanted to speak on the matter. Ms. Cameron indicated that no one was now raising a hand or asking a question. Mr. Durkin made a motion to approve the permit, and Dr. Mansberger seconded. Mr. Horowitz agreed and the permit was granted. Mr. Horowitz reminded Ms. Smith that these permits are granted conditionally, and that it can be revoked if problems arise. He went on to explain that, if complaints are made, permit holders are first asked to attend a hearing to ask for corrective action, and if those corrective steps are not taken then the permit can be revoked. Ms. Cameron told that these permits renew in January, but there would not be a requirement to attend another meeting, but Ms. Smith will need to submit a renewal application and the connected pest management inspection report. Ms. Smith asked if she would receive a reminder and Ms. Cameron replied that the renewal application will be sent out to permit holders a month in advance. Ms. Smith thanked the Board. Mr. Horowitz closed the hearing at 4:45.

**Subject:** Hearing in regard to a request for a variance from the requirement to have a lifeguard by the Eaves Peabody.

**Discussion:** Mr. Horowitz asked if the applicant was present. No one was present from The Eaves. Health Inspector William Pasquale was present and told that he had conducted his inspection and that he had expected that three representatives from the Eaves would be present for this hearing. He told that the company had the best plan to address Covid precautions that he had seen, and would allow two hour time slots for families to use the pool, with intensified cleaning in between, and restrooms would be closed. Mr. Horowitz indicated that he needed to hear from the applicants directly as well, and asked Mr. Pasquale to try calling them. Mr. Pasquale did, but returned saying that he had left a message but could not reach his contact there, adding that the number he had was the office number and it would be after hours now. Mr. Horowitz suggested that the Board defer this matter until the next meeting to allow the applicant to be present. All agreed and the matter was deferred.

**Subject:** Year-end report on the Interface Referral Service

**Discussion:** Ms. Cameron reported that the new mental health services referral program INTERFACE had commenced just a few weeks before the Covid closures, so they had made telehealth available, but their usage was very low. INTERFACE reported that usage is down all over the state as well so this is not a surprise. She added that the program was promoted during the pandemic as many people are in need of mental health services due to the effects of the virus and the lockdown, and will be promoted again once some time is found if things slow down.

**Subject:** Pool permitting status

**Discussion:** Ms. Cameron gave an update on the status of pool permitting, explaining that after having every applicant for a lifeguard variance come before the Board to apply last year, the Board had granted the department the ability to oversee and renew these without Board approval, adding that only new applicants for the variance were required to come before the Board for a hearing. She reported that several pools had opted not to open at all this summer, including Bourbon Street Condos, Tannery 2, and Ledgewood Condominiums, with three others still deciding. All of the rest have been working with Bill Pasquale to open in accordance with state social distancing and safety guidelines.

**Subject:** EEE Overview for 2020 Season

**Discussion:** Ms. Cameron explained that the state health dept said that last year was the most active EEE season since the 1950s. Since these tend to occur in three year cycles, it is expected that this year will also be a very bad year for EEE. She told that the onset is usually in late August or early September, but added that West Nile typically comes a few weeks later, which brings the question if they're discontinuing mosquito surveillance too soon. She added that the main issue is to remind people to take precautions at all times. Mr. Horowitz noted that he had read and been surprised that Massachusetts is the second state after Florida in number of cases, noting that communities like Ipswich are also have many marshes.

**Subject:** Rousselot Update

**Discussion:** Mr. Horowitz indicated that he saw some of the parties from Rousselot on the conference, and Ms. Cameron unmuted Gary Less, Tom Loch, and Linda Sapienza from Rousselot. Mr. Horowitz explained that, while he knows Mr. Less is new at Rousselot, that this subject is not a new one at these meetings, and this Board has seen many people come and go who have promised to get rid of the odors, yet they are still happening.

Mr. Less introduced himself as the new Plant Manager since February. He told that his background is in both the food industry and in wastewater management. He told that he was happy to see that when he arrived, Rousselot in Peabody already had in place a set of four priorities, the first of which is to be a good neighbor. He told that they have meetings every 4-6 weeks to discuss odor issues. He added that he is aware that there had been some issues over the past few months, but said these were a result of fine tuning attempts to create a better operation. Mr. Loch asked to share his screen to show a slide show presentation he had created on the steps they are taking. He showed

the slideshow and outlined he has conducted a site evaluation and determined that there are five points in the basin area to attend to: DO (diffused oxygen) levels, load stabilization, aeration capacity, load distinction and type, and system maintenance. He explained at some length about these different points and how they all play into the creation of odors. He went on to explain that the second component in review is the cooking process. He explained that they are currently under a Mass DEP consent order, which is a legal order and requires them to hire an outside consulting firm to inspect and make recommendations. He told that they have hired Woodward and Curran consulting as that firm, and they are reviewing WWTP capacity, conducting an air analysis study, and a plant engineering and cost analysis. Their completed report is due to be submitted to DEP later this year.

Mr. Horowitz interjected saying that the Board had also required Rousselot to hire an outside consultant to assist the company with identifying and correcting these issues, and a report, called the Bowker Report, which listed all of these things as well, and it just seems like they are reinventing the wheel. He added that this company has been in business for a very long time, and is an international company, so these issues should have been figured out a long time ago. He asked what the timeline was going to be now before they took the necessary actions to control the odors, adding that they owe it to the neighbors to give a timeframe.

Mr. Less replied that they are using the Bowker report as well, which addresses some of the issues, and had made most of the recommended changes made in that report. In regard to timeframes he explained that there are several different timelines going on: One timeline for the consultant to complete their analysis and recommendations for submission to the state, another timeline for the state's review of that submission, and another for responding and taking actions.

Tom Loch, Human Resources Manager for Rousselot, offered that they have taken steps, and they do have policies and procedures in place now, and they have had to hold people accountable for following them, but had not been doing so well, but had to make staff changes, including bringing in Mr. Less in February, one of the key things they needed to do.

Mr. Less again stated that they want to be good neighbors, so have taken several steps: to equalize the load going to aeration; to inspect and replace the biofilters that were installed after being recommended by the Bowker report ahead of their scheduled July replacement; installed a new biofilter on the 80 foot clarifier. He added that he is aware that last year there was a major upset due to sludge as their one vendor could not take it away, but now they have a contract in place for the removal of sludge, and three other vendors who are in line to take it away if for some reason the first cannot, so there is now a safety net in place so that that issue never occurs again. He added that they always referenced the importance of aeration, and now have rented two surface aerators at a cost of \$40,000 to keep odors inside while working toward purchasing and installing a permanent upgrade, because that will take up to six months and they wanted to act now. He also told that they are aware that cooking odors and vapors leave through the stacks, so they will be installing a new kettle stack to contain, treat, and eliminate odors by the end of July. He stressed that these are all different from prior actions, and wanted to stress that they are doing everything they can. Mr. Horowitz asked if the kettle stack is something used in another facility or was an experiment. Mr. Less replied that it is a proven method, adding that they have been in contact with headquarters and their air and wastewater treatment personnel say it is a proven method. He added that they have a dedicated staff person, Ian, who is their wastewater treatment Officer, and Linda Sapienza is also on that team.

Mr. Horowitz asked Ms. Sapienza how it has been dealing with the community lately. She replied that they are trying to be transparent and to get the word out when an odor has occurred, adding that Mr. Loch puts out regular updates on Facebook. Mr. Horowitz asked if perhaps people are not calling so much because they are frustrated. Ms. Sapienza replied that there is some of that, because some people do not first call to report to her but will simply call the Health department. Ms. Cameron replied that they had received one complaint at 7:00 last night, which they have logged in, but they had not been able to go out and confirm it. She explained that she had also forwarded it to DEP as they are overseeing the administrative order, adding that Rousselot has paid about \$5,000 in fines to the Peabody BOH.

Mr. Horowitz stated that on June 8<sup>th</sup> 2020 the BOH issued a cease and desist order on the creation of nuisance odors, which is still in effect, so additional fines could be put in place. Mr. Less replied that Rousselot has spent \$40,000

for the rented aerators and \$270K for the Stack treatment, and is trying to show that they are taking this seriously. Mr. Loch added that they are making this their priority, which is why they have hired Mr. Less to address this. He added that the neighbors have made it clear that they do not want any more excuses or apologies, and he understands that, which is why they are going to have these things in place by July, in advance of the new consultant's review and recommendations coming in. Mr. Less added that these steps have already been approved by their higherups and are going forward.

Ms. Cameron told that she had been contacted by the new consulting firm and had given them all of her complaint data and charts for the past 10 years worth of complaints, but added that she feels very strongly that someone from the consulting firm needs to be at the site when they are experiencing an odor event to experience it themselves. The lead consultant is based out of Connecticut and said that he would not be able to make it here quickly enough, but said he could contact another staff of the firm who is closer if necessary. She asked the team to please get the consultant on the phone right away to ask them to send someone out the next time an odor event is identified.

Mr. Durkin said that the neighbors have a right to the peaceful enjoyment of their yards and these odors currently impinge upon that right. He added that his patience is running low as well, adding that marginal improvements would not be enough, and they need to invest financially and otherwise in this issue. Mr. Less replied that he hopes the Board sees that they are invested by seeing that they have taken concrete steps, namely, the hiring of the third party consulting firm and the proactive steps they are taking and that they are not waiting for the report to be completed before taking action.

Mr. Horowitz asked if he should just tell the neighbors to wait and see. Mr. Less said no, that things are better and that they had a great Father's day with no complaints. Mr. Horowitz said that he hopes that these measures work and that the consultants can complete their review sooner rather than later because time is of the essence.

**Subject:** Update on Covid-19 Response Actions

**Discussion:** Ms. Cameron presented slides showing the current Covid-19 data. She explained that the first slide was data from the state's website and showed the factors taken into consideration for reopening, including the average number of positive tests, the number of people hospitalized, the average number of deaths, and all are trending in the right direction in Massachusetts. She added that many other parts of the country that have reopened are seeing increases, and we expect to see some increase as they open more businesses. She reported the good news, that Peabody has actually had several days without any new cases for the first time since reporting began. Unfortunately there have been 160 deaths. Currently they are showing a 17% positivity rate of those tested, but that has to take into account the fact that most of those being tested are those with symptoms. The percent of daily positive tests is trending down across the state. Unfortunately the elderly have been the hardest hit by deaths. 50% of positive cases are people under 60, the possibility of asymptomatic transmission is great, and they will continue to communicate that through public health messaging.

Mr. Horowitz noted that nursing homes are still not allowing visitors inside. Ms. Cameron confirmed, adding that the public health nurses continue to be in daily contact with all of the assisted care facilities, and that PPE, which was a big issue for them at the beginning of this, no longer seems to be an issue. She added that racial minorities appear to be affected more greatly, with African Americans comprising 8% of the cases in Peabody while only 3.5% of our population is African American. She told that a state task force has been assigned to study this across the state. One possible issue may be language barriers, and in Peabody we have been conducting contact tracing in different languages, but the state has run into issues accessing translators and has had difficulty doing this. She reported that Peabody has been loaning its bilingual nurses to other communities and charging their time to the Covid-19 Grant. Ms. Cameron reported that 16% of cases in Peabody were among healthcare workers, and that 89% of deaths have been in long term care facilities. She added that this data would be going onto the city Website, which is updated weekly, tomorrow.

Ms. Cameron said that, while the number of new cases is going down, their workload is not. Their staff is assisting with businesses reopening, fielding many questions, working many extra hours. Mr. Horowitz asked if churches were opening. Ms. Cameron replied that some are, but are not having choirs, communal wine or food, and are

separating by leaving open pews. Mr. Horowitz asked if masks are required in churches. Ms. Cameron replied that she was not sure if the state regulation is worded to include places of worship. Dr. Mansberger interjected that those attending religious services should definitely wear masks, since there are people gathered indoors and are coming from all over, they must wear masks. She told that there are now studies confirming the effectiveness of masks, so they are working, and added that a friend who performs in a choral group was told that singers must stand not 6 feet apart but closer to 25 feet apart. Mr. Horowitz recalled a case early on where a choir member in another state went to practice and spread Covid-19 to a huge number of people in the choir.

Mr. Horowitz added that he is glad that the numbers are finally going down, and said that Ms. Cameron should be very proud of herself and her staff for all of her and their hard work.

**Subject:** FY21 Budget Request

**Discussion:** Ms. Cameron reported that the city has completed a first pass of a budget for FY21, but has warned that things will be regularly reevaluated and that more drastic cuts may be required later. She told that the Mayor's office understands the amount of work her staff has been putting in and for that reason the Health Department was spared from having to cut any staff at this time. She added that, through a separate non-city source of funds to address the pandemic, she will be actually hiring two more public health nurses to support the work of Chassea Robinson, their only full time public health nurse, who has been assisted by the school nurses but they will be refocusing on transitioning the students back to school soon and will no longer be available to support these efforts. In addition, through this grant they will also be hiring an additional three school nurses to help with the transition back to school. She added that both Chassea Robinson and Brenda Wolf have been working 70+ hours per week during the pandemic, which is not sustainable, and it was decided that there was a need for additional support. Mr. Horowitz recalled that there was at one point only one nurse for every two schools. Ms. Cameron replied that due to the refinement of special education requirements, and with more students with health issue being kept in the schools, there was a definite need for each school to have a full time nurse on staff. Mr. Horowitz replied that he was fortunate that, when he made that case to the Mayor he agreed and made the change.

**Subject:** Mr. Horowitz's Retirement

**Discussion:** Ms. Cameron announced that the Mayor had selected a replacement for Mr. Horowitz as he had requested, so this will be Mr. Horowitz's last meeting, and Anthony Carli will be joining the board as the new member. Ms. Cameron expressed her thanks for Mr. Horowitz's many years of service to the board, adding that, due to his experience as a public health director, as a business owner, as a member of the faith community, and as someone who is just great with people, he has truly served the Board well, and will be missed. Mr. Durkin and Dr. Mansberger also expressed their thanks to Mr. Horowitz saying that he will be missed.

**Next Meeting:** Thursday , July16th, 2020 at 4:30 p.m. **Meeting Adjourned:** 5:57 p.m.