

City of Westfield, Massachusetts

Health Department

Board of Health Meeting
Via Zoom video conference
February 10, 2021
6:00 PM

Present: Juanita Carnes, Chair Stanley Strzempko, M.D. Margaret Doody

Ms. Carnes opened the meeting at 6:03 p.m. There was no one was present wishing to speak during public participation. Minutes from the January 13, 2020 meeting were reviewed and accepted as printed. A motion was made and seconded to approve the January 13, 2020 meeting minutes.

The vote was as follows:

Carnes	–	Yes
Strzempko	--	Not present at the time of the vote
Doody	–	Yes

All in favor, the Motion was declared passed.

Mr. Rouse explained the new Agenda format wherein citizens can access public participation.

PUBLIC HEALTH:

COVID-19 Update and Discussion: The Health Dept. is preparing to receive vaccines which are being distributed by the State. Although Westfield applied and was qualified for the vaccines, the State denied our first request. A second request has been submitted. Mass immunization sites are favored to receive the limited amount of vaccines, followed by pharmacies and physicians, and then given to local public health departments. The next phase of immunizations has begun, which will be seniors age 75+. Some communities, such as East Longmeadow and Agawam, did receive vaccines. To obtain the initial doses, these communities needed to order a minimum of 200 doses and administer them all immediately. These communities reached out to their neighboring cities and towns to join them in vaccinating first responders. Westfield accepted Agawam's offer. Unfortunately, it was not made clear by the state that the communities that requested those doses and hosted the vaccinations would be those which qualify to receive future doses, thus resulting in Westfield's request being denied. Other cities, such as Chicopee and Holyoke, have not received doses either. The Town of East Longmeadow held a small clinic and are sharing their experiences with other towns who are preparing to open and operate clinics.

Mr. Rouse indicated that he does not want to give out inaccurate information to the public and will notify everyone as information becomes available. Once the City received approval for vaccine distribution, it will be publicized. Ms. Carnes felt that the state needs to communicate more with the local public health officials so information can be relayed to its citizens. Ms. Doody suggested that a COVID hotline be set up in the department with an outgoing message wherein information could be relayed to residents. Mr. Rouse stated that the department has one phone extension being

used for answering questions. A Westfield State University nursing student is returning those calls as they are being transferred to her. The phone extension is not a published number.

A teleconference was held last week with the Assistant Commissioner to determine how things were going in the western part of the state. Most participants criticized her for the lack of vaccines. Unfortunately, the state has no way of knowing how many doses it will receive for distribution. She did indicate that, per capita, more vaccines were being distributed to Western Mass than anywhere else in the state. One question that was asked of her was how retail pharmacies and establishments were able to receive vaccines before boards of health. The state indicated that pharmacies were more able to give out vaccines all day, every day, which local health departments cannot do. Dr. Strzempko stated that he recently checked to determine who, within a 30-mile radius, had doses available and found no results. Mr. Rouse would like to see the state provide information to the public rather than leaving it to local boards of health.

The number of Covid cases this week was 62, down from 1 ½ - 2 months ago where it had been 247. Last week it was a little over 100. Mr. Rouse gave kudos to the residents for following the guidelines and recommendations. Complacency had been a main factor in the high numbers, but people seem to be more careful and listening to advice.

Schools are doing well and remain in a hybrid model. The health and school departments communicate daily. The Senior Center has been fielding calls from older residents and are assisting them with signing up for appointments. The Medical Reserve Corp. is prepared to assist when clinics begin. By the end of the week, Mr. Rouse hopes additional sites, other than Eastfield Mall, will open.

On Sunday, February 14, 2021, a tribute will be held on the city green from 5:00 to 8:00 p.m. for those 96 individuals who lost their lives to Covid. Banners will be set up in the morning and candles will be placed around 5 pm. The police have been notified and will direct traffic. This event was advertised on social media as well as in the newspaper.

NEW BUSINESS:

A new business would like to open at 285 Elm Street, selling smoothies and healthy energy teas. These drinks would consist of water, ice, and powdered energy protein and be prepared with a blender. No fats, oils or grease will be used and, therefore, no grease trap would be required. The business owner has requested a variance for the installation of a grease trap. Mr. Rouse felt that the variance should be granted with the stipulation that, should the scope of operation be changed, the Health Department would be notified for another determination. A motion was made and seconded to approve the variance request with the provision that, should the scope of operation change, notification would be made to the Health Department for further consideration.

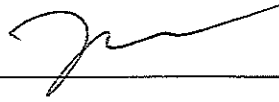
The vote was as follows:

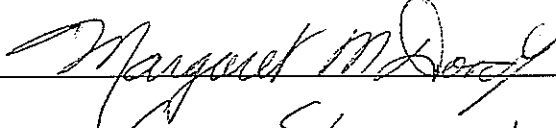
Carnes	-	Yes
Strzempko	-	Yes
Doody	-	Yes

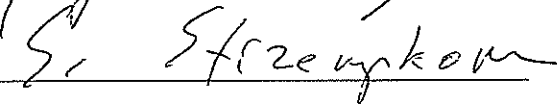
All in favor, the Motion was declared passed.

With no further items on the agenda to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 6:43 p.m.

Minutes approved by:







/cam

Next anticipated meeting date: March 10, 2021