

FLORHAM PARK BOARD OF HEALTH

June 9, 2021

Minutes

Present: Peter Kleban, Stanley Wisnewski, Tana LaPlaca, Kathleen Green, Jo-Anna Finegan

Also present: Thomas Cantisano (Health Officer), Gina McConeghy (Registered Environmental Health Specialist), and Maryann Lang (Board of Health Secretary)

Absent: Kristen Santoro (Council Liaison), Marianne Nucci, Sabrina Edmunds, Raymond Holmes and Thomas Michalowski

This meeting was conducted virtually, through "Zoom". The meeting was called to order at 7:04 pm. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited. Ms. Lang took attendance, and stated that the requirements of the Open Public Meeting Act had been met.

Approval of Minutes:

Ms. LaPlaca made a motion to approve the minutes of the April 14, 2021 meeting. Ms. Finegan seconded the motion, and all members present approved.

Approval of Reports:

Ms. Finegan asked for confirmation that there were no public health reportable diseases, including COVID 19, as reported on page five of Pequannock Township's April monthly report. Mr. Cantisano responded that the report was correct.

Ms. LaPlaca made a motion to approve the reports which included: Vital Statistics monthly report for April and May 2021; Pequannock Township monthly report for April and May 2021; Pequannock Township year-to-date report; Pequannock Township inspection activity report for Florham Park, for April and May 2021. Ms. Greene seconded the motion, and all members present approved.

Communications:

Email from M. Quigley

Ms. Lang stated that Ms. Quigley's email was forwarded to Board members, and to Mr. Cantisano, who provided a response. Mr. Cantisano stated that Ms. Quigley has had a series of questions, over the past several months, which he has answered. He stated that she is welcome to contact him, and he will provide a response on behalf of the Board.

Report from Health Department Staff:

Gina McConeghy provided the following update:

Pre-operational pool inspections were conducted in May. All pools submitted COVID 19 plans. The only outstanding inspection is for the Sonesta Hotel, formerly the Wyndham. The hotel is planning to open in July.

Day Camps are all moving forward this season. Some inspections have already been conducted, and the rest of the camps are being inspected next week. COVID 19 plans were submitted.

Many large businesses, such as Siemens and Automatic Switch, are opening back up.

New businesses in town:

Anita's Baked Wonders on Broadway.

Pet Supplies Plus on Columbia Turnpike.

Jersey Mike's on Ridgedale Avenue

New licensed, permanent cosmetic artist is working out of Kathy D's hair salon. An example of the type of work performed is permanent cosmetic "tattoo" for people losing hair.

Report from Health Department Staff (continued):

Mr. Wisniewski asked if there is any indication what kind of year we will have with ticks, mosquitoes, and possible giardia at pools. Ms. McConeghy responded that people have to take personal responsibility for mosquitoes. Containers should be flipped over, when not in use, so water doesn't collect. As for giardia in pool water, she stated that pool water sampling is done on a regular basis. Mr. Cantisano added that the monitoring that is in place is very effective to ensure the safety of water. If lab samples come back with an issue, corrective measures are taken promptly. Have not seen bacterial outbreaks because the system is effective.

Mr. Cantisano thanked Recreation Director, John Timmons, for assisting the Health Department with vaccination clinics at the Community Center. A partnership was formed with Walmart in December, for pop up vaccination clinics. Walmart was not included in the federal response to conduct vaccinations at long term care facilities and hospitals, as were Walgreen's and CVS. Walmart is the largest retailer in U.S. with large pharmacy departments, and was an untapped resource. In February, joint vaccination efforts were planned to target the most vulnerable populations. Staff worked during regular business hours, so virtually no cost to taxpayer. Provided nearly 2,000 doses, with relatively small expenditures. It was a great partnership. We may partner with them for other health initiatives in the future. The Health Department also worked closely with Atlantic Health, at Morristown Medical Center and Chilton Hospital, to get over 500 people vaccinated. Focused on individuals that either did not have access to technology to set up vaccination appointments, or didn't know how to use computers. Calls were made to people, and appointments were made directly with them. It was a terrific, very compassionate operation.

Mr. Cantisano advised the Board that contract tracing is still being conducted by staff. State resources have been used to limit taxpayer cost for overtime. Contact tracing has fallen off at the present time, due to low COVID 19 numbers.

New Business:

None

Unfinished Business:

None

Ratification of Licenses:

The Board ratified licenses issued in April and May 2021.

Public Hearing - Privilege of the Floor:

Mr. Kleban opened the meeting to the public at 7:24 pm. Ms. Lang advised any attendee wishing to speak, to please "raise their hand", and unmute themselves.

Maria Quigley, 6 Insley Road, Florham Park

Ms. Quigley thanked Mr. Cantisano for acknowledging her communications. She stated she sent an email late last night, which also shared links to articles. There is a lot of discussion on masking, especially as it pertains to children. What is the Board of Health's position on masking of children, and are you giving guidance to schools? Mr. Cantisano responded that he replied to her email. He went on to comment that there is a lot of data/information that goes to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), World Health Organization (WHO), and NJ Department of Health (DOH). There are conference calls multiple times per week. They look at a lot of information to make policies. Local officials are prohibited by law to give guidance contrary to directives issued by Trenton. In the case of masking in schools, it is covered under Executive Order 175.

Ms. Quigley commented that the Governor stated exemptions that local authorities can make for their own communities. Isn't that an opportunity for you? Mr. Cantisano responded "no". It is a very clear and specific exemption, for extreme heat or individual health, regarding not using masks. The State did not set up parameters for extreme heat, and that was left up to local districts. Ms. Quigley responded that Ridgedale

Public Hearing - Privilege of the Floor:

Maria Quigley, 6 Insley Road, Florham Park

Middle School had field day on Monday, with students required to wear masks. Mr. Cantisano explained that the district has all of the information regarding masking. The recommendation from CDC, and NJ DOH, was if you have a large unvaccinated group less than six feet apart, masks should be worn even if outside. Our recommendation was to keep kids as far apart as possible, so they would not need to wear masks outside. For smaller portions of the day, masks may have been necessary, based on the activity involved.

Ms. Quigley asked if the Health Department is collecting data, as this has been going on over a year now. Haven't heard much data regarding transmission in school. Mr. Cantisano responded that schools are not a primary driver of the virus. However, we can't just look at the town, because we don't live in a vacuum. Kids belong on travel sports teams, people work out of town. Policies can't change town by town. Policies are set based on regional data. There are six regions in NJ, and we are the northwest region. Each region has an activity risk level assigned to them, based on level of spread. Data is collected through contact tracing. Information is reported to the State and CDC. That is where policies are coming from. Ms. Quigley responded, based on that data, still recommendation that children wear masks if unvaccinated? Mr. Cantisano responded that this is an Executive Order from the Governor, based on input from scientific and medical communities. We rely on those agencies that are pre-designated to do these tasks and make policies. We don't have the authority as a Board to countermand policies.

Mr. Wisneswki asked if there will be a certain percent of population that will wear masks no matter what. Mr. Cantisano responded that there are people with underlying conditions that will continue to use precautions. There is a lot of anxiety, so people do what makes them comfortable. Public health is also about anxiety, depression, mental health, physical exercise, opioid use, suicides, to name a few. We have to be mindful of walking a tightrope of what is required/recommended, so can minimize other impacts. This disease is new, will take a lot of time to know full effects. We will still provide advice on when masks are not needed. It is up to people to decide, unless it is the law. We can't, as licensed public health officials, advise people to violate the law. There is no order then, and dire consequences can come from that.

Ms. Quigley commented that she acknowledges that public health is more than just COVID, and we don't know all of the answers. She stated her greatest concern are the long term consequences to children. Fear children will have to go back to school next year with masks. Mr. Cantisano responded that based on the level of disease activity in the next two to three weeks, the state will be "green" which indicates low virus spread. The way things are going, children are at low risk. Unless there is a compelling reason, the mask mandates won't be in place in September.

Ms. Quigley commented because children are low risk, concerned about the push to vaccinate them. How many children were vaccinated at the clinic that was held in Florham Park? Are you collecting information on adverse reactions? Mr. Cantisano replied that participants were given information regarding adverse reactions, and to report any immediately. If a physician is made aware of an adverse reaction, they have to report it. Since the Pfizer vaccine was provided at the clinic, we let people know it was available for ages twelve and up. There were approximately thirty nine people at the clinic, with about two thirds of those under eighteen years of age. Mr. Cantisano commented that demand for vaccinations has waned. Pop up clinics will be suspended, as there are many places to go for the vaccine.

The public portion of the meeting was closed at 7:47 pm.

Adjournment:

Ms. Greene made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:48 pm. Ms. LaPlaca seconded the motion, and all members present approved.

Respectfully submitted,
Maryann Lang, Board of Health Secretary