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Holyoke City Clerk's
Holyoke, MA

Holyoke Board of Health
Meeting Minutes
July 20, 2021 at 6:00 P.M.
Zoom

Attendance: Patricia A. Mertes, APRN, Chair
Dr. Esteban A. Del Pilar-Morales, MD, Vice-Chair
Dalila Hyry-Dermith, Clerk
Sean Gonsalves, BOH Director
Deborah Schaier, PHN
Beatriz Colon, Head Clerk

Ms. Mertes called the meeting to order at 6:03p.m.
The April 1, 2021 and June 8, 2021 meeting minutes were approved.

COVID cases are overall down. Ms. Schaier has been dealing with a small cluster. Case counts have been in the single digits weekly with no serious calls or concerns. There were 4 cases in Maven a few weeks ago but no reports came in to the BOH. A report came in on a group home with adults and teens. One of the teens was vaccinated. The cluster had a total of six. She is working on getting close contacts. There is a possible Pertussis case at a daycare. The call came in the morning from the state as a whooping cough. She had not received any reports as of then. Out of that group seven children were sick. She made calls to pediatricians. The first child went to Holyoke Pediatrics Association, was not tested for Pertussis but has all 3 vaccines. The COVID test was negative. All 7 kids and parents went to the ER in two weeks with symptoms of pertussis. She spoke to Rosa Hernandez from the state who had no confirmation but suggested everyone involved get a viral panel done. Dr. Del Pilar informed that Noble Pediatrics has a viral panel test and Baystate Hospital does a respiratory panel swab which includes pertussis. He wants to know who the original case was. These children have been sick for two weeks.

There are 2 cases of Salmonella. A 15-year-old who has a turtle and reptiles as pets. There is a possible Mums case on a 70-year-old and a few hoarding cases. One campylobacter from a worker who ate fruits and vegetables at Walmart in Northampton. A rabies case on a couple who were having trouble getting vaccinated due to cost. They finally received the vaccine at a lower cost. Doing Lung Cancer Awareness and screenings. She is working on getting COVID vaccines to Amazon workers and doing a commercial on experiences of COVID vaccine individuals to educate and be proactive. She is working on cleaning old BOH records.

Dr. Del Pilar wants to know the outcome of the influenza virus. He believes people are panicking. Rosa Hernandez from the state suggested having the kids and parents do a viral panel. Ms. Schaier will go with her recommendation. Pertussis results take a long time to come back.

Inspector's monthly reports will resume soon.

City Councilor Juan Anderson-Burgos proposed a change to Holyoke's leash law. There is no need for the Board to take action. Last year there was a dangerous dog incident between a Pitbull and a Chihuahua. The Pitbull was in his owner's private property's porch under voice command but not on a leash and no fence. The chihuahua was urinating in a bush on public property when the Pitbull charged off, exiting the property onto the public area. It mullied and killed the Chihuahua and caused multiple wounds to the owner. A dangerous dog hearing took place. This incident along with another has caused the request from council to review this law. City Ordinance Committee met 3 weeks ago and are considering revising the ordinance Section 14-5; Restraint and control of animals; public nuisances; barking dogs. A dog is under voice command until it is not, then it is too late to change. Mr. Gonsalves doesn't think it is good to change the language to tell people what they can do in private property. This was the issue in the above case. They are thinking to possibly removing or amending section a completely and expanding on the section 'b' definition to include electric fences if a physical fence is not built. Nothing is definite yet. This was sent to the Law Department for a legal language draft. Dr. Del Pilar suggested defining voice command and questions if it's worth changing the language for euthanize purposes especially for one-time events. Mr. Gonsalves feels the same way.

Carlos Cruz, Sanitarian is been out on FMLA and will not be returning to work. Once that position has been closed is expected to be posted on August 1, 2021. He was a good employee and will be missed.


Mr. Gonsalves explained the process of liening unpaid vacant property registrations. Typically, without COVID VBR liens would be all set by now. The Law Department had a new acting Solicitor and didn't have enough personnel to do liens neither did the BOH. Currently, there are under 100 properties that will be liened. Many haven't responded and we had a few hearings.

Mr. Gonsalves received a letter from Sarah McColgan, MHOA Tobacco Control Director via email banning those born after 2000 from using tobacco products. Brookline, MA is the only town that still operates tobacco decisions by town by-laws. They are the first of their kind. The Attorney General's office sent a letter stating they will not challenge the town's decision and that they have the right to make that decision. Ms. Mertes asked if there is a sense this is a pressure to have the Board change their mind, or if they do not have the authority to make that decision? This is a five-year old regulation. Holyoke's regulation is clear. By regulation Mr. Gonsalves cannot give a business a new tobacco permit. There is no internal pressure from city officials, there are a lot of new personnel. He had a visitor who was aware of the decision and was speaking on behalf of Holyoke's community. He explained the regulation, the purpose of it and the process of rewriting a city regulation. They left dissatisfied. Alcohol is regulated by ABCC and put a cap on it on population. Marijuana businesses have an extensive process to follow prior to opening. This law also is enforced to those 21 yrs. and older.

The minutes of April and June 2021 meetings were approved.

Ms. Hyry-Dermith asked if the meetings will continue to be remote. The Governor approved for Boards and Elected Bodies to continue meeting remotely until April 1, 2022; if communities so wish. Reasonable form of public access needs to be provided. Meetings are posted on the city calendar with a Zoom link for the public to join in. There is also a hybrid option where the body meets in person and the public is remote. Other Boards have chosen to resume in-person meetings. The current way is working good for the BOH.

Ms. Mertes adjourned the meeting at 6:58p.m.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Pamela A. Mertes". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'P' and 'M'.

Holyoke Board of Health
Tuesday, August 31, 2021 at 6:00 P.M.
Holyoke, MA 01040
ZOOM

Meeting Minutes

Attendance: Dr. Esteban A. Del Pilar-Morales, MD, Vice Chair
Dalila Hyry-Dermith, Clerk
Sean Gonsalves, RS, Health Director
Deborah Schaier, Public Health Nurse
Beatriz Colon, Head Clerk

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Holyoke, MA**

Dr. Esteban A. Del Pilar-Morales called the meeting to order at 6:01p.m. Patricia A. Mertes was absent. A motion was made by Dr. Del Pilar-Morales to accept the minutes of the July 1, 2021 Board Meeting. Motion passed, all in favor, 0 opposed.

Bloodlines Tattoo located at the Holyoke Mall is requesting a variance to run the business without the need of an AutoClave. This machine is used to clean and disinfect all tattoo and body art equipment. He plans to run the facility entirely with disposable equipment that will have no contact with bodily fluids but has an AutoClave and UV machine available from his original facility in Connecticut. He's been operating in Connecticut for two years. Mr. Gonsalves looked at his equipment and believes it is possible to operate a sanitary environment without an AutoClave. He will also be hiring new staff, but he is not sure what equipment they'll bring. The BOH typically requires that every permitted body art establishment have one. Dr. Del Pilar wants an assurance that no other equipment requiring an AutoClave will be used in the future and the new staff will not bring equipment that will need one. He also wants clarification of what disposable means and the equipment's manufacturing instructions to be followed. All the components are a one-time disposable use. Ms. Hyry-Dermith suggested writing these specifications on revocation of the permit can happen if failure to comply. Mr. Gonsalves suggested granting the request for a variance until such time that new staff comes in using a different type of equipment requiring an AutoClave or bringing in one of their own. Failure to abide will result in revocation of permit. Dr. Del Pilar made a motion to approve exception. All in favor 0 opposed.

COVID-19 updates. HPS started August 23, 2021. There are cases among teachers and students; some teachers don't live in Holyoke. There are 83 cases 18 yrs. of age and younger. These include daycares, schools and after school programs. It doesn't appear that the cases are transmitted in the school. There is just a lot of people in the schools. There was transmission in an after-school program, the rest were separate cases but no transmissible cases yet. Debbie and Mr. Gonsalves are still meeting with the HPS weekly via Zoom and keeps in daily contact with Cynthia Carbone, HPS, Nurse Supervisor. Before school started, she back tracked ten days identifying cases in children and informed BOH. When school begins, Debbie will know which family members and siblings have been in quarantine or who should not return back to school. Mrs. Schaier and Ms. Sullivan did kitchen inspections in several schools and met with those principals to go over their COVID policies. They can reach out to the BOH if they need anything. She also reached out to several private schools. She believes the recent rise in cases might be due to families going on vacation just before school started.

Mrs. Schaier has worked with EHD at Motel 6 and a couple of hoarding cases.

There were a Legionella and Babesiosis case. The majority is COVID. 51% of Holyoke residents have been fully vaccinated. 57.5 % of Massachusetts state residents have received their first dose. That's 50.9% of Mass residents vaccinated. The HBOH feels good about these numbers.

Behavioral Health Network did a clinic at a Cannabis event on August 28, 2021. There were a couple thousand people but only one individual was vaccinated. BHN did a lot of educating and reaching out. Holyoke Safe Neighborhood Initiative had a back-to-school event on August 21, 2021. Holyoke Health Center had a vaccine clinic at the event and vaccinated five people. BHN did a pop-up clinic at the Holyoke Mall during the weekend and vaccinated 30 individuals. HPS is having their second dose clinic this week with HHC. During their first clinic they had 30 people vaccinated. Mrs. Schaier and Ms. Giraldo have been hearing reluctance from people not wanting to provide information or answer any questions. She thinks people are tired. Dr. Del Pilar said the medical community is also tired and hospitals are running out of space for new patients. There are new concerns with the at home rapid testing kits that can be purchased at CVS. These are being performed in children and can be inaccurate. If the tests are positive the information is not being entered in the state system. We don't know the long-term effects of COVID on children. The gold standard is still a PCR test. Mr. Gonsalves spoke to HPS about clarifying their testing policy. HPS will ask that all COVID test results go to the state wherever the test is done. The concern is that either someone has a false positive triggering unnecessary labor or that someone misrepresents a negative result we can't verify. Some parents are refusing testing. Weekly meetings with HPS, the state, HHC, BHN, and Community Partners continue weekly. They try to be available at events for vaccines and outreach. Archipelago Strategies Group partnered with HHC and are located at their lobby for referrals and to schedule COVID vaccine shots. They have been very involved with the BOH and have meet with Mr. Gonsalves to find solutions and improve their operations. He went over the state's testing policies. We also had corroboration from other community partners. Everyone at the BOH has been very involved and have worked very hard during this pandemic.

Fiesta Café, 305 Main Street asked to be at the meeting. They are a restaurant with an outdoor pavilion and want to set up a hookah bar outside. The answer has been no for a few reasons. Under the City's Tobacco Ordinance hookah bars are prohibited. Also, there is to be no smoking where food and drink are being served and to sell tobacco products anywhere in the city you need a tobacco permit. There is a cap on the number of Tobacco permits and that has been capped. There are no permits available to be issued. They asked to come in and have an opportunity to ask questions about the legitimacy of the regulations. The state decided that the city of Brookline has the authority to make decisions on the issuance of permits and the sale and consumption of tobacco products. Brookline's ordinance restricts the sale of Tobacco products to anyone born after the year 2000. The decision was challenged as unreasonable and unconstitutional. Mr. Gonsalves doesn't think there is a valid reason to change Holyoke's current Tobacco ordinance and it would be a conflict and counterintuitive with the city's current asthma rates. The interim Mayor and the BOH have been working with Yale and UMass Amherst on two active air quality studies going on in the city. Massachusetts most recent Tobacco regulations prohibit the sale of flavored tobacco products since 2019. The Board agreed to keep the current Tobacco Regulations. The parties were a no show.

Eric Frary, Dank Farm, Southampton Road, Holyoke, asked to be at the next BOH meeting to continue discussions on the sale of raw goat's milk.

Other surrounding cities and towns have implemented either a mask mandate or an advisory inside municipal buildings or enclosed public spaces. The BOH has not received any requests or inquiries on mask mandates from the public. We received one call requesting masks in a private school if a city-wide mandate was not set. In the meantime, the school decided to institute a mask mandate before opening. Many Massachusetts residents are not wearing masks. There is a false sense of security because 70% of the state's population are already vaccinated. The vaccines have 89% of accuracy but this is not enough. The Commissioners would like this issue presented to City Council for further discussion. They can of better influence and encourage the advisory. If the number of cases continue to rise a mandate may need to be set in place. Mrs. Schaier informed that three of the nineteen cases she received in the morning were vaccinated. She is keeping a record of who is vaccinated. While at the Holyoke Mall she witnessed many of the shoppers were unmasked. Some come from all over the area and other states. Mr. Gonsalves will be reaching out to City Council to find out which committee will make more sense. Having a language and the thought embraced by the community will make this a little bit easier. He wants to know how enforcement looks like for other communities. In the past the state was called in to help with compliance but without their involvement the mandate will be a challenge to enforce. With the holidays coming up and gatherings happening there is a concern for another spike. Dr. Del Pilar believes that this should take some priority and is willing to talk to whoever he needs to talk to. Mr. Gonsalves has a meeting with interim Mayor Murphy and will speak to him about this.

Dr. Del Pilar-Morales adjourned meeting at 7:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,


Dalila Hyry-Dermith, Clerk

Holyoke Board of Health
Wednesday, September 29, 2021 at 6:30 P.M.
Holyoke, MA 01040
ZOOM

Meeting Minutes

Attendance: Patricia A. Mertes, APRN, Chair
Dalila Hyry-Dermith, Clerk
Sean Gonsalves, RS, Health Director
Deborah Schaier, Public Health Nurse
Sue Beyer, Principal Clerk
Terrance Murphy, Acting Mayor
Erick Velez, ACO
Eric Frary, Raw Milk

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Patricia A. Mertes called the meeting to order at 6:43p.m. Dr. Esteban A. Del Pilar-Morales, was absent. A motion was made by Patricia Mertes, to accept the minutes of the August 31, 2021 Board Meeting. Motion passed, all in favor, 0 opposed.

Eric Frary, owns a small Goat Micro-Dairy farm of 2 ½ acres in west Holyoke. He is requesting a permit to sell raw goat's milk. Massachusetts state guidelines sets the safety standards for the inspection and regulation of the milk products. It reads that dairy products can be sold only where they are produced. This also allows local BOHs to regulate raw milk as we would any other substance meaning the city would have to allow the sale of raw milk first. The second part to this is setting standards or limitations on the farm. The farm has to be certified by the state first. They do their own inspections and have their own protocol. The city can work off-of that or go above it. The goal of the proposal is to build a state certified micro dairy farm. After milking, the product will be bottled for sale at the farm. It can either be sold directly to consumers or to a certified home-based kitchen for manufacturing other products. They have been herding goats for 3 years. He has 7 goats with an anticipating production of 70 gallons per week. The outdoor area is certified for 40 the indoor is certified for 24. The milk will be held for a maximum of 5 days in containers to keep it cool in ice bath of 15 gallons bulk chillers. The animals get tested/inspected yearly-CAE CL lab. And state tests. ACO Velez will be inspecting them. The leftover product that is not sold they will use it themselves. Mrs. Schaier asked if the milk will be sold for soap.

Mr. Gonsalves asked what equipment the farm has available for cooling the product to the required temperature in the 2-hour period. They currently use ice pack and at home freezer which is working good. Moving forward as a certified dairy they will use a national milk certified 15-gallon bulk chiller that is used in bulk production. He also asked what their testing schedule is for animal diseases. The animals are tested yearly. State regulations test milk lab? Monthly inspection. Frozen sample every day to back track for purposes of any reasons for concern to identify a batch. Currently they only do not test their milk simple paper blood test for abnormal cell count. Mr. Gonsalves suggested approving the request and capping the amount to a maximum of 12 goats. He also wants monthly testing. No questions from the Board. ACO Velez has not done inspection on the goats during the 2020 season due to covid. This year he will do an inspection. He wants to know if he is working with any vendors? Or are customers just going to walk in? if there is not enough interest for sale he will use it for themselves. For any extra not sold. He wanted to know if he's going to expand? For outside he would need to pasteurize. Mrs. Schaier do you anticipate manufacturing another products?

If public health nuisance it could be shut down.

Mrs. Mertes made motion to approve proposal for sale of raw milk at Dank Farms. Motion seconded by Mrs. Hyry-Dermith.

There has been an increase in COVID cases with HPS seniors. There were 521 cases in the month of September. 192 of them were under the age of 19. Since school started there have been 174 children since the end of August with 12 staff positive. There was a bus company with positive monitors. They requested their names not be given for contact tracing reasons. When a case involving a child comes in, she makes sure she asks if the child is at a day care to avoid an outbreak. The state is handling the contact trading on adults. Not all are being cooperative. Mrs. Schaier is doing the children. There have been a few day care outbreaks occur. The HPS nurses are doing rapid testing but the cases are not being reported into the MAVEN system. If results are positive parents are encouraged to do a PCR test. There is a disconnect between the nurses not informing MAVEN and the parents not getting the PCR test.

Mr. Gonsalves and Acting Mayor Murphy have discussed a mask mandate in the Holyoke. The city of Springfield currently has a mask mandate. The mask mandate for municipal buildings was extended until November 1, 2021. Mr. Gonsalves suggested the Board consider the City of Springfield's Mask mandate language to create a draft for the Holyoke. A meeting will take place to discuss a city-wide mask mandate on Monday, October 4, 2021. Mrs. Mertes adjourned meeting at 7:47 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,


Dalila Hyry-Dermith, Clerk