

Holyoke Board of Health
Thursday, December 2, 2021 at 6:30 P.M.
Holyoke, MA 01040
ZOOM
Meeting Minutes

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**Holyoke City Clerk's
Holyoke, MA**

Attendance: Patricia A. Mertes, Chair
Dr. Esteban A. Del Pilar-Morales, MD, Vice Chair
Dalila Hyry-Dermith, Clerk
Sean Gonsalves, RS, Health Director
Erick Velez, Animal Control Officer
Ryan Paxton, Sanitarian
Beatriz Colon, Head Clerk
Sarah McColgan, MHOA Tobacco Control
KC Dufour, MHOA Tobacco Control
Wilfredo R. Matias, R, MD, Infectious Disease, Harvard Center for
Global Health
Sara Sauer, Harvard Medical School
Yodeline Guillaume, Massachusetts Center for Global Health

Dr. Esteban A. Del Pilar-Morales, MD, Vice Chair called the meeting to order at 6:36 p.m.

Several representatives from the Harvard Mass General Hospital Global Health Initiative Data Cleaning Project attended the meeting. They have been working with Ryan Paxton and the BOH since June 2020 on multiple COVID-19 related initiatives. The Sorology study evaluated rapid tests and the zero prevalence in the region. The first goal of the project is to fill in as much of the missing information and get a sense of what has happened. The second is to try to detect any patterns on the outcomes based on factors of the different demographics. They are also working on organizing and making sure the data is collected, contact tracing gets done and other work is completed. At the beginning of the pandemic the data collected was of sub-optimal quality and of minimum contact tracing. This was due to the large number of cases. A lot of the missing data included the amount of people hospitalized, how many passed away, race ethnicity and an incomplete sense of who has been affected by the pandemic and their outcomes. The general overview of the BOH is contact tracing. The goal is to fill in that information and find out how the pandemic impacted the city of Holyoke and what regions were affected the most. The study shows the response to the pandemic and it has been a great community-based experience. Prior to the pandemic and in normal situations MAVEN would have no gaps in the data collected but the system was not built for the large influx of cases. The collectors from the MGA Harvard Initiative will reach out and re-interview the previous contacts to collect any missing data. We want to ensure that we have equal amounts of information for the population and demographics. The CTC has closed and the BOH does not have the capacity to handle the workload. Due to the private content of the information, collectors need to be appointed as temporary members of the Board. The appointees are Francisco Milano, Tanya Nunez and Marisol Rosa. Mr. Gonsalves thanked them for their partnership with the city and looks forward to working with them. There are approximately 600 calls to make and the projected timeline for completion of the job is January or the mid-February 2022. Mr. Gonsalves made a motion to appoint the current data collectors as temporary members of the Board for outreach and data collection until the end of February 2022. Mrs. Hyry-Dermith seconded the motion. All voted unanimously.

The Massachusetts Health Officers Association have grant funds for a Tobacco Inspector.

Sarah McColgan, MHOA Tobacco Coalition introduced herself and the work they do. MHOA is a trade association for Boards of Health across the state. They provide technical assistance, training, and direct services to Boards of Health on Tobacco Control issues. In addition, they provide direct service on tobacco retail inspections and compliance checks to cities that are currently not receive funding as part of a regional tobacco grant. This includes Chicopee, Holyoke, Brockton and Waltham.

Ms. McColgan asked the Board to appoint Ms. KC Dufour as inspector for Holyoke. She will begin doing inspections the first two months of 2022. Compliance checks and enforcing regulations will follow. This will be done by an under 21-year-old participants under her supervision. The participant will be going into businesses and attempting to purchase tobacco products. Fines will result under the new state laws and local regulations. They will let the BOH know of any violations and recommendations will be provided on how to institute the fines. KC Dufour introduced herself and looks forward to serving the community. Mr. Gonsalves emailed the procedures and inspection letter sent to tobacco retailers giving them ample time. A manufacturer's letter on flavored and nicotine tobacco products was also mailed out. Ms. Dufour will be doing field training tomorrow with an experienced inspector and delivering informational packets. Mr. Gonsalves proposed the appointment of Ms. Dufour as temporary agent of the Board until the end of FY22 to act in Tobacco Inspections and regulations capacity. Seconded by Dr. Del Pilar. All in favor 0 opposed.

Chameleon software for Erick Velez, Animal Control Officer. Mr. Velez introduced himself and explained how the software will simplify data collection, daily reports and digitization. He is familiar with it and has previously used it while working at Thomas J. O'Connor Animal Shelter. Chameleon generates permits, reports, and records inspections indefinitely storing it in a cloud. This will provide shared access to the files with no data loss. The initial cost for the license is \$900.00 a year for two computers (a base and second device) and training included. The software is practical and will bring the office up to currently technology, minimize paper trail and be beneficial for the staff in the office. Currently, Mr. Velez is using Microsoft access and paper. He would also like TJOs reports connected to him. The budget will be reviewed, and cost adjusted. The request will be included in the next budget. The city is looking forward to moving towards digitization. No problems with budgeting the software is anticipated. Mr. Gonsalves will do more research and put in a request for a budget increase in the line item for the ACO services. He will forward the email received from Chameleon to the Board members.

End of CTC. The state has ended their involvement in contact tracing as of 11/30/2021. No follow-up calls will be done. This responsibility is now up to cities and towns. Contact tracing takes up a lot the PHN's and assistance time. Under new state guidelines one phone call will be made. Moving forward any positive cases will receive the quarantine protocol by mail with a call back number and will be referred to a COVID webpage for more information. The highly susceptible population such as children and elderly will be prioritized. CTC offered a large variety of resources such as food assistance, prescription delivery, housing assistance, amongst others. Local BOHs will not be able to render such services in addition to contact tracing. There is a grant funded position available for review in the Personnel department for posting. Mr. Gonsalves is hoping to hire one of the CTC callers that previously worked for the state. The information will be collected for record retention. With Holiday travel coming there is a large pool of people getting tested. The state is trying to transfer the responsibility to the population. People can quarantine or isolate and vaccines are available.

COVID-19 updates. A pop-up clinic is scheduled for this weekend at the Holyoke Mall and is expected to be well attended. 72 people have signed up with a combination of pediatric and booster shots. Vaccination clinics in the community will continue and will work with BHN and the Mall. The Holyoke Health Center has a clinic every day. They noticed people rather do walk-ins instead of making an appointment. HHC is looking to offer clinics to local businesses in the future to get vaccine rates up. These will be useful and convenient. The new variant Omicron has not changed data or workflow much yet.

There are grants and resources available for small businesses that were hit hard by the pandemic and are struggling to stay open and lack of staffing. The offices of Community Development and Economic Development offer comprehensive services and outreach with services going towards tourism, entertainment, food services and many others.

New employee, Timothy Rivers will begin working Monday, December 6, 2021. Ms. Betsy Sullivan will be leaving her position. She is moving from the state. He will be given the opportunity to apply to Ms. Sullivan's position and his position will then be re-posted.

Mrs. Mertes asked if we could go back to the previously schedule when they used to meet the first Thursday of every month. Next meeting is scheduled to January 6, 2022 and February 4, 2022.

Mrs. Mertes adjourned meeting at 7:35p.m.

Respectfully submitted,


Dalila Hyry-Dermith, Clerk

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