



PRINCETON BOARD OF HEALTH

Monthly Meeting Minutes

March 9, 2021

Zoom Meeting * Princeton, NJ 08540

Board Members – Present

George DiFerdinando, Jr. MD, MPH
JoAnn Hill, RN
Rick Weiss, MS
Linda Schwimmer, JD
Meredith Hodach–Avalos, MD
Rick Strauss, MD
Kathleen Stillo, MBA, ALT I
Darrell Penn, ALT II

Leticia Fraga, Council Liaison

Board Members – Absent

Mona Shah, PhD

Students

Lavina Mital & Brendan Chia

Staff

Jeffrey Grosser, MHS, HO, REHS
Gwendolyn Krol, Vulnerable
Population Coordinator
Minutes submitted by:
Julie Moy, Board Secretary

Chair Meredith Hodach–Avalos called the regular meeting to order at 7:30 pm. *“This is to affirm that the regularly scheduled meeting of the Princeton Board of Health have been duly advertised and are being conducted in compliance with all provision of the New Jersey Open Public Meetings Act.”*

Roll Call was completed.

Guest Speaker – Gwendolyn Krol, Vulnerable Population Coordinator for the Health Dept.

Mr. Grosser introduced Gwendolyn Krol, Vulnerable Population Coordinator; he explained her role and that the position has been funded for 2 years. Ms. Krol reported on her activities to date and what she found the community needs are; her report was submitted to this Board for review. She summed her findings and responses from the community survey. Ms. Krol explained the various clinics hosted by the Health Dept. and their partners. She described some of the grant deliverables as required. No. 7 is to create a Social Support Service Directory; she will complete assessment by end of month and will submit to NJDOH. Chair Hodach–Avalos found the report interest and informative; it will be helpful with future planning. Ms. Krol provided a summary of questions and target audience for both surveys to community partners and residents. Councilwoman Fraga suggested she provide outreach marketing at the laundry facilities. Ms. Krol gave a brief list of questions asked in the residents’ survey and will look into adding the laundry facility to the marketing. Veronica Olivares-Weber, chair to the Human Services Commission had question about the survey; how the communications are being received; will they ask if respondents are willing to share their phone. Public Library is using What’s Up App in Spanish to commutate with people; will the Health Dept. consider doing same. Ms. Krol stated that the survey responses are anonymous, so they cannot ask for contact information. Health Dept. just started using the What’s Up app in Spanish. Nymisha Herrera Nimmagadda would like to see the link; she asked what the plans are to address the disproportionate parts of the community. Ms. Krol described some activities that is planned. Mr. Grosser added information on the state data based vaccine; the Health Dept. has registered some residents for the 75 state allocated vaccines that is being distributed at the Cure Arena.

Chair Hodach–Avalos moved the discussion of minutes to end of agenda.

Health Officer Report – Jeff Grosser

Mr. Grosser reported on the vaccine roll out and how distribution was done. Princeton Community Housing (PCH), specifically Elm Court and Harriet Bryant developments hosted their 2nd dose vaccine clinic in collaboration with CVS and Walgreens; several hundred was administered. Health Dept. received 50 doses of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine and was distributed to 45 First Circle Senior Housing residents and 5 care givers. When the Health Dept. can secure additional vaccines, they will host clinics in other senior housing developments. They have been sending people to Cure Arena for the allocated 75 vaccines by appointments. Princeton residents have been having difficulty getting to Cure Arena. Teachers are now eligible for vaccine; the Health Dept. is working with the schools to get teachers vaccinated. Princeton’s COVID case counts have



dropped. The Health Dept. does not anticipate additional Johnson & Johnson vaccines for several weeks. Councilwoman Fraga commended Mr. Grosser for his work. He is hopeful that the vaccine will open to the food workers, who has been front line workers during the pandemic, they will host weekend and evenings vaccine clinics for them.

Old Business – None

New Business

Chair Hodach–Avalos reported that the Princeton Senior Resource Center (PSRC) is running the Vaccine Navigator Program that is currently underway. She explained the program’s process; to connect people in town who had difficulty in registration and securing an appointment. Princeton Mutual Aid (PMA) has been assisting with outreach and identifying other populations who may be eligible for vaccine. Mr. Grosser stated that Sharon Hurley, Director of Social Services and Volunteer Coordination has been a great help; working with those by communicating at their comfort level, assisting with securing appointments and finding transportation. Linda Perez from PMA’s team stated that there is a greater need for more resources to continue assisting these efforts. She asked what the plans are when vaccines will be increased at the end of the month to connect everyone for vaccines. Chair Hodach–Avalos made a statement of appreciation for all the volunteer assistance we have been receiving during this pandemic; Mr. Grosser agreed. He explained the intentions of the Health Dept.. Mayor Freda explained what the Municipality is doing to help the communities and what the proposed plans would be; plans will continue changing as things progress. Councilwoman Fraga commented that this pandemic was not something we were able to prepare for, however we had many community partners that came together to help the community. Food and Security Task Force who serve our vulnerable population, now may assist with vaccine distribution when necessary. Ms. Schwimmer made comments in response to the questions regarding vaccine and preparation for additional vaccines. Ms. Nimmagadda added comments that the infrastructure that is currently/will be available; how are we making this process equitable for all to register and access vaccines.

Cannabis Task Force

Chair Hodach–Avalos reported is still seeking a diverse group of people to sit on this task force. Dr. DiFerdinando commented on the passage for recreational use for cannabis. Councilwoman Fraga explained what the task force will initially focus on: decide if opting in or out; educational efforts and working with social and racial justice. Ms. Stillo will represent the Board of Health. Chair Hodach–Avalos sent out resources for this board to review. Dr. DiFerdinando referred the Board to Massachusetts Cannabis Commission if interested in seeing a report at the state and local levels. He opined that it is possible cannabis smoke will banned from where ever indoor use is banned. Cannabis home delivery is allowed to any location. Ms. Stillo has started reviewing the legislation. Councilwoman Fraga stated that the Council adopted the resolution for the task force and identifying community partners and representatives will be on the task force. Ms. Stillo described some concerns already coming from Princeton Alcohol and Drug Alliance (PADA). There was discussion on the Health Dept.’s involvement regarding policy making and regulations for establishments in the Municipality; this will be discussed on the task force. The task force will also discuss the sales regulations and who will participate in enforcing guidelines. Mr. Grosser anticipates their participation in licensing and/or safety guidelines.

Commission Members’ Report

Structure Racism Subcommittee

Mr. Penn described what they subcommittee is discussing. He shared slides and discussed various areas the subcommittee is considering and looking to partner with other organizations. Ms. Nimmagadda asked if one of their initial projects can be vaccine and structural racism. Mr. Penn anticipates additional participation in public forums where they can request additional participation from the community. Councilwoman Fraga commented that the Racial Equity Tool Kit from the Civil Rights Commission has not been finalized yet by the Municipality.

COVID Subcommittee

Dr. DiFerdinando reported that as of today, NJ has highest numbers amongst all the states. Highest counties in NJ are Monmouth and Ocean. Variant testing is not being done; no resources. Chair Hodach–Avalos encourages everyone to continue with masking and social distancing. She reported on activities and concerns from the Board of Education.



Local Board of Health meeting was held last week; Dr. DiFerdinando gave a presentation at the meeting. He reported what was discussed at meeting. Ms. Schwimmer also attended and summed her option of the meeting. Dr. DiFerdinando explained his participation with the Superintendent for the schools. Mr. Grosser reported that Dr. Heldbrick is the Medical Director for the school district and a few private schools; he is also the official contracted Medical Director for the Health Dept. He explained Dr. Heldbrick's role and how he has been assisting. There was discussion on how other towns' board of education is working in partnership with their board of health. There has not be any transmission in the public schools.

Ms. Stillo previously provided a brief report on PADA regarding their concerns for the Cannabis legislation. She reported that the schools are experiencing increased request for medical leave and mental health referrals; not as many drug and alcohol issues, but more request for therapy and outpatient services. PADA's grant was cut from \$40,000 to \$14,000; money was redirected to COVID. Chair Hodach–Avalos stated that it has been reported showing alcohol and smoking use has increased during the pandemic.

Chair Hodach–Avalos reported that she attended the Princeton Human Services Commission monthly meeting last month. She reported on their activities and overlay of services between Human Services and Health.

Chair Hodach–Avalos stated that Dr. Shah was able to attend the Environmental Commission meeting and reported on their discussion on artificial turf planned at one of the schools. Councilwoman Fraga provided details on the artificial turf.

Councilwoman Fraga reported that 5G issue; it was not on the Council's agenda. However, someone gave a presentation for public interest. A resident expressed concerns with 5G. Dr. Strauss is interested in assisting with this topic. Councilwoman Fraga stated that two Council representatives Dwaine Williamson and Eve Niedergang have been working on this issue.

Approval of Minutes

Chair Hodach–Avalos received a number of revisions and amendments from Ms. Stillo. No other comments were provided by Board Members. Comments to the December 2020 and February 9, 2021 minutes will be sent to the Board for review prior to vote prior to vote.

Adjournment

The motion to adjourn at 9:40 pm was first moved by Dr. Strauss seconded by Dr. DiFerdinando, all in favor by voice vote.

Respectfully submitted by:

Julie Moy
Recording Secretary