



PRINCETON BOARD OF HEALTH

Monthly Meeting Minutes

September 14, 2021

Zoom Meeting * Princeton, NJ 08540

As is

Board Members – Present

George DiFerdinando, Jr. MD, MPH

Meredith Hodach-Avalos, MD

Darrell Penn, ALT II

Mona Shah, PhD

Leticia Fraga, Council Liaison

Rick Weiss, MS

Kathleen Stillo, MBA, ALT I

JoAnn Hill, RN

Rick Strauss, MD

Staff

Jeffrey Grosser, MHS, HO, REHS

Dr. George DiFerdinando, called the Regular meeting to order at 7:30 pm. He recited the announcement in compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act: *“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.

Dr. George DiFerdinando hosted the meeting in place of Chair Meredith Hodach-Avalos.

Minutes:

Dr. George DiFerdinando deferred review of the minutes due to the large agenda.

Strengthening Local Public Health Capacity 2021 Vulnerable Population Assessment:

Mr. Jeffrey Grosser updated the Board on the Strengthening Local Public Health Capacity 2021 Vulnerable Population Assessment. Mr. Grosser noted that the Health Office is in the second year of the grant and Vulnerable Population Outreach Coordinator position. The VPOC, Gwen Krol, completed the VP Assessment update necessary for Grant Deliverable #4. Mr. Grosser presented the updates from the assessment which include statistical updates with current COVID-19 illness and vaccination uptake rates, a reflection on Princeton’s response to the pandemic and the services provided to vulnerable populations, expansion of the “Vaccine Confidence” section to include the presence of current institutional racism and social determinants of health, and the acquisition of the COVID-19 Generalist position.

Monthly Report:

Mr. Jeffrey Grosser met with the Local Emergency Planning Committee and updated them with the most recent data in Princeton, 814 confirmed positive cases as of this morning since March 2020. Mr. Grosser highlighted that the weekly case count and 2-week totals have been trending upwards which is similar to what was seen in mid to late January. The age demographic of cases have been trending toward the younger population and vaccinated individuals are the majority of new positive cases due to the high vaccine uptake rate and older population presence in Princeton. Mr. Grosser mentioned that there have been six hospitalizations in breakthrough cases with the average age of 85 years old. The Health Office is preparing for booster dose approval for the general population on September 20th. Mr. Grosser noted that there are vaccine clinics scheduled through November and are subject to change depending on the approval of additional doses. The plan is to start vaccinating first responders next week and the week after. Since August 14th, the Health Office has vaccinated 60 immunocompromised homebound individuals. Mr. Grosser emphasized that the department has ample supply of vaccines as long as the State remains consistent.



Outside of COVID-19 related issues, Mr. Grosser noted that Mayor and Town Council approved the annual deer cull in Princeton yesterday evening. There is discussion on potential program improvements and seeking an expert ecologist to explore effects outside of motor vehicle accidents since there are complaints regarding habitat destruction and other types of ecological damage. Mr. Grosser updated that the Registered Environmental Health Specialists have been assisting restaurants that experienced flooding due to Tropical Storm Ida and are performing re-inspections. Mr. Grosser mentioned that the nursing staff are working with neighboring towns to complete contract tracing with COVID-19, Lyme Disease, and Rabies exposures. Mr. Grosser highlighted that the VPOC worked with 25-30 Pace Center volunteers from Princeton University to conduct lead screening and safety in the community as a part of the Gold Star Health Program. Mr. Grosser noted that the new Human Services Director, Rhodalynn Jones has started her position.

Old Business

Mr. George DiFerdinando noted that old business is in the Committee Reports and requested any old business that is not mentioned in the Reports.

Council President Leticia Fraga mentioned that a concerned resident met with her to discuss the monitoring of the sale of vaping and smoking products to minors. She explained that parents are concerned that some businesses in town are selling to minors. Council President Fraga inquired whether Health Office staff can check on the businesses which sell these products. Mr. Jeffrey Grosser explained that they paused the investigations during the pandemic, but normally try to do 1-2 checks per year with undergraduate students so they will resume investigations when school begins. Council President Fraga and Mr. Grosser agreed to reconvene and discuss after the meeting.

Mr. Darrell Penn noted that a group spoke regarding the use of leaf blowers by landscapers and making an effort to protect hearing and put forth recommendations for the township. The group has yet to share materials and results from research. Mr. Jeffrey Grosser did not receive research results and will reach out to Karen Zemble for follow-up. Dr. George DiFerdinando mentioned that Councilwoman Eve Niedergang and Sustainable Princeton have been demonstrating the materials at different sites and listening sessions. He noted that Mr. Rick Strauss might have a connection, but he did not have an update at the moment. Dr. DiFerdinando explained that this is the responsibility of Council, not the Environmental Commission, to work with Sustainable Princeton as they get a grant. Council President Leticia Fraga mentioned that the Council had a work session to solicit feedback which there is nothing to take action on yet.

Mr. Jeffrey Grosser noted that the American Rescue Funding for the adult clinic and expanding public health nursing services proposal is in process and worked on with other departments. Mr. Grosser hopes to have an update by October.

New Business

No discussion was held.

Liaison Report

No discussion was held.



Reports from Committees

COVID-19 Emergency Management Subcommittee:

Mr. Jeffrey Grosser thanked parents and the public for their input during last Wednesday's meeting. As a result, the Subcommittee has compiled approximately thirty emails from parents and have requested to meet with the Superintendent and Principal to discuss protocols and operations. Mr. Grosser explained that there are major trends in how certain classrooms are interpreting the NJ DOH and CDC guidance especially in regards to lunch time, snacking, and mask wearing/breaks. On Monday, he and public health nurse, Kathy Korwin met with Superintendent Dr. Kelley and the administration team of the school district to discuss these concerns and last Wednesday's meeting. Mr. Grosser reflected that there are some fixed facility environment and logistical concerns regarding having lunch outside, however the reward outweighs the risk. A support mechanism from both the Board of Health and Board of Education is needed to address concerns. Overall, Mr. Grosser explained that the protocols may be different in each school depending on their layouts, but the general protocols should be the same. Mr. Grosser mentioned that they discussed the NJ DOH's testing screening program through the \$260 million fund to deploy testing specifically in unvaccinated K-5 schools. The Principal of the district is interested and opted into the program so by the end of the week, they will be logistically scheduling with testing vendors. Dr. George DiFerdinando read a question in the chat clarifying the initiation of testing to which Mr. Grosser reiterated that the testing won't start until after logistical planning with vendors are complete and parents give consent to students under 18 years old. Mr. Grosser repeated a question in the chat regarding when outdoor lunch changes may occur to which Council President Leticia Fraga responded that she has seen more tents put up at the high school. Mr. Grosser answered a question about testing at the middle school to which he responded that they are prioritizing testing at schools with unvaccinated students but since the district opted in, any school can have students tested.

Dr. George DiFerdinando opened the floor to community members for questions. Dr. Lynda Dodd asked how to get the school lunch process rolling quickly to which Dr. DiFerdinando responded that the Board of Health and Health Office have a responsibility to advise all the schools, but do not have the authority to dictate. Mr. Jeffrey Grosser explained that mobilizing parents and reaching out to the Superintendent will be the best way to be heard. Mr. Dylan Robbins mentioned concerns regarding the management of school personnel to properly staff lunches, the 15-minute time constraint for lunch, and cohorting. Dr. DiFerdinando explained that there are competing interests in the general belief that cohorting students will make it easier for public health nurse, Kathy Korwin, to deal with COVID-19 exposure. Once again, Dr. DiFerdinando emphasized that the Board of Health and Health Office do not advise schools on personnel and supervising issues so this question is better for the Board of Education or the individual schools themselves. Mr. Robbins expressed concern about the lunches at the high schools as being unmasked events for 30 minutes a day. He requested a fact sheet comparing the Alpha and Delta variants of the virus. Mr. Alan Braun emphasized that the community must continue support for the Principal and reach out to Dr. Kelley with questions and constructive comments for outdoor lunches. Dr. DiFerdinando and Mr. Grosser confirmed that there are logistical concerns but the Superintendent is committed to the best possible outdoor eating option. Dr. DiFerdinando read a question in the chat asking whether schools will send email blasts reporting positive cases. Mr. Grosser responded that the schools will have a dashboard similar to last year, the public health nurse discusses exposures with school nurses daily, and that Elizabeth Collier, their Communications Director, traditionally is in contact with the Health Office about messaging. They do expect the district to notify parents of close contact exposures as part of NJ DOH guidelines. It was determined that whether parents will be notified of



classroom exposures even if they are not close contacts will be dependent on whether the classroom can still operate and will be determined by the school, not the Board of Health.

Dr. George DiFerdinando brought up the draft for in-person meeting resumption and gave three recommendations: 1) the Board recommends not resuming in person meetings at this time since there is no infection risk of continuing remote meetings from a health point of view, 2) this should be reconsidered often with brief discussion at each meeting on where everyone stands, 3) specific BCC's might want to continue virtual meetings even if recommended to resume in person because a particular Board might be uncomfortable. Chair Meredith Hodach-Avalos asked for comments and input to which Ms. Kathleen Stillo and Dr. Lynda Dodd discussed the value of greater participation virtually but also the loss of individualism. Ms. Stillo confirmed that giving virtual as an option increases greater access. Council President Leticia Fraga explained that Council announced for meetings to begin in person again and asked for BOH recommendations while also exploring the possibility of hybrid versions. It was agreed that the document recommendation for in-person meeting resumption will be created on an official document with letterhead and shared to Council, BCC's, and Task Forces.

Ms. JoAnn Hill made a motion to vote on the official BOH recommendation on resumption of in person meetings seconded by Ms. Mona Shaw. It is decided that the document will act as a living document with the intent to revisit it next month and make edits. Chair Meredith Hodach-Avalos reiterates that they have a motion and second to vote on the document as amended by Dr. DiFerdinando. The BOH unanimously voted in the affirmative and the document will be sent to Council as a BOH recommendation.

Structural Racism Committee:

Mr. Darrell Penn noted that this Committee has the opportunity to present their work and Resolution 2021-04 to the Council for further consideration. The Resolution largely remains the same and recommends that Princeton establishes a Structural Racism Task Force. Mr. Penn added that there are changes in language and the addition of an honoraria for individuals who do not have employers or the resources to support their ability to volunteer. Mr. Penn requests a formal vote from the BOH for approval to send the Resolution to Council. Council President Leticia reviewed the Council meeting process with Mr. Penn and suggested a representative to answer questions at the meeting. Mr. Penn volunteered himself and other available members. Dr. George DiFerdinando made a motion to vote on the Resolution seconded by Ms. Mona Shaw. The BOH unanimously voted in the affirmative and the Resolution will be sent to Council as is.

Planning Committee:

Mr. Jeffrey Grosser noted that this Committee finalized the American Rescue Funding proposal and it is in front of administration for review.

Reports from other Boards/Commissions/Task Forces

Ms. Kathleen Stillo from the Cannabis Task Force reported that they are having their third public meeting on strategy and requested BOH member presence so that all sides are represented. This Task Force continues to move through dispensary questions and the next conversations will include education, funding, and reinvestment. Ms. Stillo mentioned that the Task Force had to opt out of the program since there was not enough progress to opt in. Ms. Stillo, Council President Leticia Fraga, and Dr. George DiFerdinando discussed which entity would enforce and monitor the sale of cannabis and



whether it would fit under the Clean Air Act. Chair Meredith Hodach-Avalos questioned whether this Task Force will continue after dispensaries are set up to which Council President Fraga emphasized that this Task Force is an Ad Hoc Committee, but it makes sense for Council to establish a standing BCC for ongoing research studies and recommendations.

Mr. Rick Weiss had nothing to report on the Mission Zero Task Force. Chair Meredith Hodach-Avalos noted the public concern regarding the pedestrian death on Rosedale Road and emphasized the importance of pedestrian and bicycle safety. Mr. Weiss reported that nothing was sent out from the Task Force after the incident. Council President Fraga mentioned that it was brought up during last night's Council meeting and that there are limited solutions on what the Municipality can do since it is a county road.

Mr. Steven Miller asked for third dose assistance for his friend with Parkinson's Disease and clarification on whether he is eligible as immunocompromised. Mr. Jeffrey Grosser recommended he connect his friend to COVID-19 Generalist, Julie Venema, and public health nurse, Kathy Korwin.

Minutes:

The review of the meeting minutes is deferred until the October meeting.

Adjournment

The motion to adjourn at 9:15 pm was moved by Dr. George DiFerdinando seconded by Chair Meredith Hodach-Avalos and affirmatively carried by all those present.

Respectfully submitted by:

Gwendolyn Krol
Vulnerable Population Outreach Coordinator