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DIRECTOR of HEALTH  
Russell Melmed, MPH

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## Chatham Health District Board of Health, August Special Meeting

Time: August 2, 2022 02:00 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Zoom Meeting ID 88634122850

Present: Andrew Tierney Stan Soby Irene Haines  
Rosemary Coyle Ryan Curley

Others: Russell Melmed

1. Call to order

Chairman Tierney called this regularly scheduled meeting to order at 2:03pm.

2. Additions to the agenda

Item 2. Additions to the agenda is being removed due to the meeting being a "Special Meeting".

3. Public Remarks

There were no public remarks.

4. Communications

There were no communications.

5. New Business

a. Approval of minutes from 5/26/2022

**Motion was made by Ms. Haines, seconded by Ms. Coyle, to approve the minutes of May 31, 2022. Vote was unanimous in favor, with Mr. Soby abstaining.**

b. Assignment of credit card to retail standards grants coordinator

Mr. Melmed noted that Jaime Ellis is working as the Retail Standards Grant Coordinator. In this role, there are several items that need to be purchased and travel arrangements/expenses to be incurred. Mr. Melmed requested the Board authorize Ms. Ellis to be issued a District credit card with a monthly limit of \$2500 for convenience of purchases.

**Motion was made by Ms. Haines, seconded by Mr. Soby, to authorize the issuance of a District credit card to Jaime Ellis with a monthly limit of \$2500. Vote was unanimous in favor.**

6. Director's Report and discussion

Mr. Melmed highlighted the attached Director of Health report.

- a. COVID-19 Situational Awareness Update (see attached)
- b. Administration (see attached)
- c. Environmental Health (see attached)
- d. Community Health (see attached)
- e. Emergency Preparedness (see attached)
- f. Staffing, Budget and Grants (see attached)

7. Public Remarks

There were no public remarks.

8. Adjournment

Following no further business to discuss motion was made by Ms. Coyle, seconded by Mr. Curley, to adjourn the meeting. Vote was unanimous in favor. Meeting adjourned at 2:33pm.



*Colchester, East Haddam, East Hampton, Hebron, Marlborough, & Portland*

## Chatham Health District Director's Report 8/2/2022

### **COVID-19 Situational Awareness Update**

- Cases, hospitalizations, and fatalities largely plateaued in July. If the trend remains the same in August, our communities will have a base of infections likely to drive a significant fall/winter surge. Our contact tracers continue to make calls and support isolation and quarantine decision-making for residents and businesses.
- BA.5 subvariant has taken hold in the region. It is more transmissible and better at evading immunity from vaccination or previous infection than other variants. We are eagerly awaiting the release of a BA.5-specific vaccine, and are currently planning for our fall booster dose campaign.
- Vaccines for children as young as 6-months old, authorized by FDA and recommended by CDC and the American Academy of Pediatrics, appear to not have not been widely sought after by parents of very young children. CHD has chosen not to administer these vaccines ourselves, but have partnered with Griffin Health to offer the vaccine in community settings.
- Updated COVID-19 prevention guidance for K-12 schools for the upcoming school year is being released by DPH in August.

### **Administration**

- The personnel policy manual review took a break in the month of July due to vacations, but will reconvene in August.
- We executed a contract with our chosen digital inspection, application, and payment platform provider, HS GovTech. Over the next 4-6 months, we will be working with them to migrate away from our current paper-based system. We expect to go live with portions of the new platform in late 2022 or early 2023.

### **Environmental Health**

- Public Act 22-52 now allows campers to use portable wastewater holding tanks to transport sewage to a sanitary disposal location at the campground. CHD had been recommending that registered family campgrounds begin to transition away from allowing the use of these devices as they had been prohibited under the State public Health Code. CHD will now support family campgrounds as they develop policies around the use of these devices, including spill response.

- By January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023, local health departments must create an electronic reporting system for property owners to report sodium chloride damage, and we must submit the reports to OPM annually. A stand-alone bill requiring the same was defeated in committee last year, but the text of the bill was inserted into the spending bill passed this year. This is not likely to create a substantial amount of additional work. We are considering a link on our website to a simple Google Form through which residents can self-report, and from which data can be extracted that satisfies the OPM requirement.
- Governor Lamont's Lead Poisoning Prevention Public Act 22-49 passed. Beginning in 2023, the child lead poisoning threshold triggering local health department interventions will lower by 5ug/dL each year until it reaches 5ug/L for full epidemiologic investigations, and 3.5ug/dL for parental notice. A preliminary analysis of the workload impacts indicates that investigations will approximately triple compared to our historical numbers (we have not had many poisoning cases, but full investigations are a tremendously labor-intensive operation. While we will have to manage the additional workload, this is an excellent step towards a zero-tolerance approach to childhood lead poisoning.
- Our summer bathing water monitoring program continues. We had one advisory from elevated E.coli at Sears Park that was lifted after confirmatory testing. Public inquiries about blue-green algae have increased due to recent media coverage of beach closures across the state. The only swim area with a history of blue-green algae blooms is Lake Pocotopaug. Visual monitoring for blue-green algae there has triggered a "swim-at-your-own-risk" advisory. All bathing water data and advisories are posted on our website using a google map. In addition, our communication plan for advisories includes an email blast to subscribers, social media posts, and physical signs posted at entry points to public swim areas.
- We continue to be very busy with regulatory reviews and inspections, and temporary events. Staff vacations have presented some challenges - our system of coverage has been adequate most of the time, but turnaround times for reviews and inspections are running longer than usual. The moderate drought and heat wave has impacted the work of environmental health staff as well, but they continue to show great resilience and commitment to getting the job done. From wells running dry, to difficulties reading soils from lower water tables, and occasionally hazardous outdoor working conditions, extreme weather events present challenges.

### **Community Health**

- After fielding inquiries from local senior services, CHD is going to begin rotating blood pressure screening clinics. CHD discontinued such in-person services at the outset of the pandemic, but the time is right to resume community-based prevention services. Hypertension remains a top priority health condition based on our most recent Community Health Needs Assessment, along with other cardiovascular health conditions and outcomes.
- CHD is partnering with the Sexual Assault Crisis Center of Eastern CT and CT Alliance to End Sexual Violence under a DPH grant-funded project to raise awareness of the impacts of sexual violence and the services available to residents to address the issue. The project will focus on leveraging trusted relationships between cosmetology

establishment owners/workers and their clients. The first planning session for the project is scheduled for August 31<sup>st</sup>.

- We continue to schedule community-based COVID-19 vaccine clinics with our partner, Griffin Health. The clinic schedule is posted on our website and distributed on social media. Two weeks ago, during or shortly after our clinic at the West Rd Fire Station in Marlborough, an air conditioning unit in the fire station failed, and some flooding of a basement office occurred. We are awaiting word from the Town of Marlborough in the findings of their investigation, but early report suggested that an exterior door was propped open, perhaps by a member of the Griffin vaccine team or resident attending the clinic, which may have contributed to an overload and failure of the system. Griffin Health has been notified in case insurance claims must be filed to cover the cost of cleanup and repairs.

### **Staffing, Budgets, and Grants**

- CHD remains fully staffed under our current budget. Summer vacations have caused some episodic but disruptive staff shortages, exacerbated by staff using up carry-over. Changes to our vacation policy could be proposed and discussed with the personnel policy manual review committee to address this issue.
- We still do not have a final response to our ELC-2 grant application, but have submitted requested workplan and budget adjustments.
- DPH has indicated that local health departments who applied for and were funded last year under a VEPF grant (CHD applied and was funded with approximately \$60,000) can expect another round of funding for similar work. The work largely entailed COVID-19 vaccine outreach to vulnerable populations.
- We begin our FY2023 budget year with unwelcome news from CBIA that our health insurance rates were set to increase by 21%. Working with our broker, we managed to reduce the unfunded premium increase to 9% without changing the basic coverage offered to employees by increasing the deductible by \$500 per covered individual. This approach offered the best balance between organizational fiscal responsibility and the generous benefits of employment with CHD, which remains a key to maintaining our workforce in a competitive climate.