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DIRECTOR of HEALTH
Russell Melmed, MPH

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

Chatham Health District Board of Health
September 29, 2020, 2:00 PM
Zoom Conference Meeting (Meeting ID: 85010675144)

Present: Andrew Tierney Kate Morris David Cox
 Stan Soby Robert Smith Peter Hughes
 Susan Bransfield (arrived 2:16)

Others: Russell Melmed Dr. Emmanuel Kenti-Bibi

1. Call to order

Chairman Tierney called the regularly scheduled Board of Health meeting to order at 2:06pm.

2. Additions to the agenda

Chairman Tierney requested that an agenda item be added "Flu Vaccination Fee Review".

Motion was made by Mr. Soby, seconded by Mr. Cox, to add agenda item 5.1 Flu Vaccination and Fees. Vote was unanimous in favor.

3. Public Remarks

There were no comments from the public.

4. Approval of Minutes

a. 8/25/2020

Motion was made by Mr. Cox, seconded by Mr. Soby, to approve the minutes of August 25, 2020 Board of Health meeting as written. Vote was unanimous in favor.

5. Director's Report and Discussion

a. COVID-19 Situational Awareness Update

Mr. Melmed stated that we are beginning to see an uptick in cases. Mr. Melmed noted that the spike in our district was largely due to cases at a long term care facility in Colchester. However, cases throughout the district are also on the increase.

Brief discussion was held regarding the increase in cases, moving forward as restaurants open to 75%, and continuing to promote and encourage social distancing and mask wearing. Mr. Melmed also noted that, through contract tracing, the increase in cases seem to be stemming from travel and social gatherings. Dr. Kenti-Bibi also encourages individuals to get flu vaccinated, wears masks, and washes hands.

Discussion was also held regarding the possible misperception residents may have of the number of cases within the district and associating them primarily to the long term care facilities. Recommendation was made to separate them out in order to reflect the actual number of cases throughout the community.

b. Contact Tracing

Mr. Melmed stated that there has been more resistance with contract tracing, individuals troubled with the fact that we know who they are and that they are positive and they do not want to share any information.

c. COVID-19 Sector Rules Enforcement

Mr. Melmed stated that we are continuing to receive complaints about establishment not following rules. We are also receiving lots of calls regarding gatherings; number of people, where they can be held, etc.

d. COVID-19 Vaccine update

Mr. Melmed stated that although there is no date as to when the vaccine will be out we are being advised to prepare for vaccinating Tear 1 agency partners; police, fire, ems. We are beginning to assess individuals requiring the vaccine and venues to conduct vaccinations. When the vaccine is delivered it will come with a “push pack”, continuing all equipment for vaccinating; gloves, masks, wipes, needles.

e. Environmental Health

Mr. Melmed stated that the environmental health staff continues to be very busy with land use as well as enforcement of sector rules.

f. Community Health

Mr. Melmed stated that Vickie Han has completed the last chronic disease management program for the Block Grant. Mr. Melmed also noted that Ms. Han has been extremely busy with the chronic disease program, planning flu clinics and all contract tracing. Mr. Melmed also stated that Chatham Health District (Ms. Han) was recognized by the State as being one of only 10 health departments conducting our own contact tracing, 7 days a week, in the State system since the beginning. Mr. Melmed stated that he is currently working to bring on a couple of volunteers to assist, as well as posting for a part-time Health Educator/Covid19 Coordinator through the ELC Grant.

g. Staffing

Mr. Melmed stated that we have posted for a full-time sanitarian, reminding the Board that he collapsed the 2 part-time positions to 1 full-time position. Mr. Melmed noted that he did offer the position to our current part-timer, who did decline. Mr. Melmed stated that the part-time Health Educator/Covid 19 Coordinator has also been offered to our current part-time sanitarian.

h. YTD Expenditure and Revenue

Mr. Melmed stated that we are currently one quarter into the budget year, currently on track with expenses and revenues. However, we have already expended our budgeted line item for overtime. Mr. Melmed is hopeful that the ELC Grant is approved as submitted.

Dr. Kenti-Bibi stated that he will be attending a couple of the flu clinics along with a nurse or two to assist Ms. Han with vaccinations.

Discussion was held regarding continued non-compliant mask wearing establishment enforcement and fining. Although the Governor has issued an executive order for fining, there is no structure or process for doing so.

5.1 Flu Vaccination and Fees

Mr. Melmed stated that United Healthcare will not contract with local health departments conducting public vaccination clinics. We are receiving a high volume of calls from residents insured by United Healthcare inquiring if they can pay out-of-pocket. We currently have an "Administrative Fee" of \$25 on our fee schedule. Most of these residents are interested in the High Dose flu vaccine. The cost of this vaccine is approximately \$51 a dose. In the past, we have taken the \$25 administrative fee in the field for the regular vaccine, which cost approximately \$17 a dose, to uninsured individuals. Mr. Melmed questioned as to the process for establishing this type of fee? Mr. Melmed also noted that we have very limited doses at this time. Consensus of the Board was that if we wanted to charge a fee to cover the cost of the vaccine, no action was required. In light of the limited High Dose on hand additional discussion was held, and consensus was, to only administer to individuals insured with our contracted companies.

6. Old Business – Director of Health Review

Mr. Soby stated that the Personnel Committee has met to discuss recognition in Mr. Melmed's review and his outstanding handling of the COVID19 response. The Committee is recommending, in addition to the 2.5% annual increase, a \$3000 one-time stipend. **Motion was made by Mr. Hughes, seconded by Mr. Smith, to grant Mr. Melmed a 2.5% annual salary increase retroactive to July 1, 2020 and a one-time \$3000 stipend. Vote was unanimous in favor.**

7. Reopening Discussion – Schools

Mr. Melmed stated that he has been working a lot with schools in the last few months and more so recently with school reopening and contact tracing. Mr. Melmed began working with superintendents weekly or every other week since June. Half the district schools have opened under the hybrid model, half fully opening. There have been a couple of positive cases in schools with the hybrid model which seems to be working based on the lack of secondary cases. Mr. Melmed stated that Colchester Elementary closed, not because there was an outbreak, but there were not able to staff due to quarantining.

8. Public Remarks

There were no comments from the public.

9. Adjournment

Following no further business to discuss motion was made by Chairman Tierney, seconded by Mr. Cox, to adjourn the meeting. Vote was unanimous in favor. Meeting adjourned at 3:23pm.