

Newton Biosafety Committee Minutes

DATE: January 7, 2015

TIME: 7:00 pm

LOCATION: Health and Human Services office, 1st floor, Newton City Hall

Committee Members Present: Carl M. Cohen, Bill Dietrich, Gary du Moulin, Thekla S. Diehl, Ted Marple, Brenda Mulligan, Aric Parnes

City Staff Present: Linda Walsh, Marie Lawlor

Not Present: Jay Schwartz

Meeting called to order at 7:05 pm

Welcome and introductions

A request was made to create a contact list including affiliations, emails and a short bio of all members. Linda asked the members to send a bio to her via email and she will create the list.

Minutes from October 9, 2014 were unanimously approved

Conflict of interest discussion and role of the committee members

Marie Lawlor gave a brief review of the conflict of interest information. All members should have received an email from the City Clerk, David Olson that contains a link to an online training module that contains important information for each member of the committee. It must be completed every year. Contact David Olson (dolson@newtonma.gov) if you did not receive the email. Marie addressed the role of the committee members and encouraged them to ask questions if any conflicts arose. She gave the example of an attorney who recently asked the City if he could contact the member of this committee for a recommendation for a consultant. This attorney was representing a potential biotechnology company considering leasing space in Newton. Marie explained that in this case it would be best not to give a reference because if this company moved to Newton there may be an appearance of a conflict. In general, it is best to steer away from any of these types of discussions. If any situation arises or if the committee members have any questions please call the City of Newton Law Department of the state ethics commission and ask for a consultation with the 'attorney of the day'.

Linda gave an update on Karyopharm. Their IBC is being formed. There will be a representative from the mayor's office as well as the commissioner of health and human services their application was the first in a long time, The special permit process went very smoothly. The application was unanimously approved with no questions.

Revision/changes to current rDNA ordinance

Marie presented the current rDNA ordinance (Chapter 12 article III section 12-21) A proposed revision was discussed. A two-step process currently exists for obtaining special permits required to conduct rDNA research. The first special permit is granted by the commissioner of HHS and the second is approved by the land use committee of the board of alderman. The proposed revision would eliminate the second special permit requirement by striking the language from section 12-24 (b).

The process would require the committee to docket an item requesting to amend the current ordinance. It would be assigned to the program and services committee for discussion and vote. The full board would be then vote and would require a simple majority to pass. Correlating language in the zoning ordinances that mention rDNA research would also need to be amended. This change would allow properties that are zoned for laboratories to conduct rDNA research "by right". Changes in zoning are referred to zoning and planning committee. This process is required by state law and requires a public hearing to be held after notice in the local paper. After public hearing there is discussion by the committee and a vote for recommendation of approval (or not). Board of Aldermen has 90 days to make a decision and a super majority is needed to pass.

The next step would be to meet with a couple of aldermen to see if they are interesting in cosponsoring the docket item. Three members (Carl, Thekla and Bill) volunteered to meet with the alderman. Linda will set up this meeting for February.

There was discussion about the goals and objectives of this committee. In the short term we assist Newton in becoming more business friendly by eliminating the cumbersome special permitting process. For prospective companies this second permit can be an unknown and cause the decision to lease space elsewhere where rDNA research does not have this requirement. Long term goal could be to address the larger issues of becoming an attractive location for life science companies. This can begin be explain the process more clearly and provide a 'road map' in Newton.

Webpage review

Linda showed the biosafety committee website as it currently exists on the City of Newton website. There was discussion about including useful links and information. Some suggestions were; news items, lists of biotech companies currently in Newton, statements/testimonials in support of businesses moving to Newton. In general the website needs to be user friendly and contain all the relevant information for the public. Also should contain a simple explanation of the permitting process.

Other business

Sam Lipson, Director of Environmental Health Cambridge Biosafety Committee for the City of Cambridge has offered to come to a meeting. The committee is interested in having him attend and share his experiences.

Next meeting date The committee decided to meet monthly on the second Thursday evening of the month. The next meeting would be Thursday February 12th at 7 pm.

DRAFT