

Newton Biosafety Committee
Minutes April 9, 2015

Committee Members Present:

Carl M. Cohen, Bill Dietrich Thekla S. Diehl, Ted Marple, Jay Schwartz

City Staff Present:

Linda Walsh, Marie Lawlor

Not Present:

Brenda Mulligan, Gary du Moulin, Aric Parnes

Meeting called to order at 7:10 pm and introductions made.

Minutes from March 12, 2015 unanimously approved with 2 spelling corrections noted.

Atrium Center

Committee members Carl and Bill described their experience appearing before the Board of Aldermen land use committee on March 31st. The first part of the meeting was held in the aldermanic chambers and was a public hearing. Three people spoke. The aldermen then moved to the smaller room to begin a working session. The public was also allowed to comment in the working session. This is not always the case but this allowed members of the public more time to comment and ask questions. Bill and Carl said the residents were well informed and very articulate. Some questions were easier to answer than others. Whenever possible, Bill and Carl would answer by referring to the written document answering the questions that were asked of the Biosafety committee. Linda distributed a copy of the board order to all committee members for their review and pointed out the conditions listed as part of the decision to grant the special permit. Currently the rDNA ordinance only applies to a potential tenant that plans to do rDNA research. In the board order, the board of alderman added a condition that any potential tenant will need to consult with the commissioner of HHS for any "life Science" use.

"Prior to the issuance of any building permit for a tenant whose operations involve living organisms (hereafter "life sciences industry tenant"), the petitioner shall submit the use clauses in the lease agreement for any such life sciences industry tenant to the Commissioner of Health and Human Services for review to determine compliance with all relevant regulatory requirements, in consultation with a third party consultant, to be selected by the Commissioner of Health and Human Services. Said consultant's fee shall be paid by the petitioner."

Expanding scope of Newton ordinance

The committee discussed the scope of the current ordinance and the possible options to expand their responsibilities to include laboratories in life science companies that do not

conduct rDNA research. Marie explained one option could be to draft a biosafety regulation. Linda provided a copy of the City of Cambridge biosafety regulation. The committee discussed this option. Marie said the goal would be to look at activities and risk levels not just rDNA technology. Jay said the role needs to be expanded in an effort to make things predictable and clear to a petitioner so they know what is expected. Carl said we should make sure not to create duplication of efforts. Jay suggested we create a template to use as a working document. It was noted that the role of the Newton Biosafety committee is to vet incoming companies, answer questions from the alderman and provide reassurance to the community. The website can be the place to post this statement along with the purpose and goals of the committee. Thekla will be working on the website with Linda and a student intern hopefully over the summer.

The committee asked Linda to extend an invitation to Sam Lipson from Cambridge to join us at a future meeting. Committee members will send questions to Linda to share with Mr. Lipson before the meeting to learn more about his experience in Cambridge. Linda will invite him to the meeting on May 14th.

If a regulation is promulgated that would be a good step in creating more oversight. However, the ordinance would still need to be changed to eliminate the requirement for the special permit. The special permit requirement would need to be deleted from both the Health Dept. and zoning ordinances. The regulation could come first followed by the revised ordinance. The language from the regulation could be added to the revised ordinance. The goal would be to make the process more structured and transparent, aligned with state and federal regulations/laws that make laboratory practices safe for all in the community.

Linda was asked to contact Safety Partners (the consultant used by the 2 existing rDNA laboratories in Newton) to get assistance in identifying what agencies already provide oversight for laboratories in Massachusetts. Linda will request a general outline or checklist of things to be considered when certifying or verifying the work in a life science company. This would be in an effort to explain the regulatory requirements and who is responsible for oversight so our committee does not duplicate efforts. Committee members can generate this list also and send it to Linda so that all areas are identified and discussed.

Other business

Linda attended the IBC meetings for both Karyopharm and Boston College. She gave a brief report on the content of the meetings. She also let the committee know that 2 Newton representatives sit on the IBC in addition to the commissioner, John Castellot and Chris Murphy. One is a representative of the mayor and other is an appointed representative from the board of aldermen. They meet twice a year or whenever a new protocol needs IBC approval.

Meeting adjourned 8:45 pm

Next meeting date - May 14, 2015 at 7 pm

