

City of Newton



Setti Warren
Mayor

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES DEPARTMENT

Linda Walsh, Interim Commissioner

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Public Health
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HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES ADVISORY COUNCIL

June 16, 2010 - 7:00 PM

Minutes

Call to Order and introductions – 7:15 PM

Present: Marva Serotkin, Julia Feldman, David Shien, Linda Walsh (chair)

Absent: Stephen Colchamiro, Eugenia Marcus, Linda Katz, Joe Frassica, Dena Salzburg

Approval of March 24, 2010 meeting minutes

Emergency Response

Linda Walsh reported on the 2 recent public health emergencies; the boil water order and the flood.

The water main break resulted in a boil water order for Newton. Linda said that Mayor Warren met with a city-wide team twice a day during the event to get updates and to coordinate response. Linda explained the HHAN (health alert network) was the way she was notified. She contacted the DPW commissioner immediately and the Mayor. This system often is used for drills or less important emergencies. In this case, it really was an excellent notification system. All food establishments needed to be notified on a Saturday afternoon and evening. 911 dispatchers called all establishments on the phone. Linda said that this method is under review. Neighboring communities created flyers and sent police door to door. This may be a better way to communicate effectively in an emergency. A water distribution site was set up. Water was delivered to Newton by MEMA. Many people were grateful but some residents complained that this sent a double message as our water was safe to drink if boiled first. Linda explained that not all residents are capable of building water safely so a distribution site served this population.

The damage caused by the floods was significant in our area. Citizens were encouraged to apply for residential home assistance for damage not covered by insurance. Those who applied directly to FEMA have received their reimbursement check. Municipal buildings are still working with the federal government to capture funds. City hall incurred a lot of damage especially in basement offices. Newton Health and Human Services environmental inspectors worked with residents primarily related to mold identification and advice regarding remediation.

Mayor Warren has reinstated the emergency phone call program. Newton has a system called connect CTY but the funding was cut in the previous fiscal budget. The new system is called CODE RED. A test call was made to all Newton numbers listed in the phone directory. Additional numbers can be added. The link is on the Newton City webpage.

Department Updates

Linda reported that the seasonal and H1N1 flu campaign was the largest effort this department has seen to date. The school program would like to continue the vaccination campaign next school year but funding may be a problem. David suggested working with the health insurers to get some seed money. It was also suggested that the colleges could pay toward a program like this in lieu of taxes.

The Department continues to offer the shingles vaccine. It will continue to be offered until the supply is gone. Newton residents have been very grateful for this opportunity as the vaccine is expensive and many health insurers do not pay for it.

Linda announced that she will not be appointed Health and Human Services Commissioner. Marva said she met with the mayor. She discussed the importance of the position and encouraged him to use the advisory council in the process. Linda said she would emphasize that point and said the Mayor will be getting input from her before the next appointment. Marva suggested a letter could be sent from the council. Linda will continue with her interim appointment until a new commissioner is named.

Budget Update

Linda handed out the organizational chart and budget impacts of FY10. She explained the reorganization of the Department as a result of the elimination of the position of human and volunteer service director. Some of the duties were reassigned but most of the duties became absorbed by the remaining staff members. Linda said that the planning for FY12 has begun using zero based budget principals. Meetings have begun to take place to look at data and job functions in the entire department.

Other Business

David asked if third party reimbursement has been discussed to recoup the cost of school nursing services. Linda explained that the nurses report their activities on the municipal medicaid time study but that direct care is not reimbursable. Linda said that the computer software system currently used in the health rooms allows for billing codes but that this is not done in the state of Massachusetts to her knowledge.

Linda asked if the meetings could be moved to Tuesday nights. No objections from the group for the change.

Next meeting date would be October 19, 2010.

Meeting adjourned at 8:50 PM