

EMERGENCY MEETING OF THE BOARD OF HEALTH
Minutes of Meeting
March 19, 2020

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TOWN CLERK

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An Emergency Meeting of the Board of Health was held at the Town Hall on Thursday, March 19, 2020, at 3:00 p.m. The meeting was duly posted. Board members present: Chairwoman Jeannine Lopes, Michael Silvia and Peter DeTerra. Also present: Mary Freire-Kellogg, Health Agent and Amanda Blais, Administrative Assistant.

Before the Board:

Chairwoman Lopes stated the purpose of the emergency meeting was to have a discussion regarding the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

The Health Agent invited the following individuals to participate in the discussion:

- Mark Rees, Town Administrator
- Todd Correia, Deputy Fire Chief
- Robert Lincoln, EMS Lieutenant
- Warren Rensehausen, Recreation Director

The Health Agent received a notice from Governor Baker stating local Health Departments have permission to give first responders the home address of a person who has tested positive for COVID-19.

Todd Correia mentioned that every first responder must ask the following questions as a precautionary measure to protect themselves: Have you been in contact with someone who has COVID-19? Have you been in a high-risk area, such as traveling to China, etc.? Have you been quarantined?

The Health Agent stated that as guidance documents come in from the State, the Health Agent has distributed to all department heads. Daniel Shea has emailed the guidance document regarding tips on what to do for those who cannot leave their homes. As always, all updated information is on our Health Department website.

The latest update as of March 18, 2020 – Mandatory closure of daycare facilities with specific locations offering childcare services to children who have parents that are first responders. Some salons in Town have opted to close their facility as a safety precaution.

- Governor Baker – no more than twenty-five people in one area
- President – recommends no more than ten people in one area
- Public transportation has limited the number of people

The Health Agent stated there may be an increase in test availability through Quest Labs, Morton and St. Luke's Hospitals. St. Luke's currently has a limited amount of tests. A referral from your physician is required first. It is important to note that someone can't walk in to a facility to receive a test.

Todd Correia is urging residents to call 911 if there is a severe medical emergency. He reiterated that in order to be tested, you must call your physician first. Please do not call 911 for testing.

The Health Agent stated that if an employee presents with flu-like symptoms, they cannot return to

work if fever persists or has been reduced with medication for 72 hours. If first responders are experiencing flu-like symptoms, they should make this known to their physician because this will expedite a test being done since their risk is heightened.

The Health Agent cannot stress enough the importance of following these guidelines:

- Social distancing
- Clean and sanitize areas
- Sneez or cough into a tissue and throw away
- Wash hands often (sing 'Happy Birthday')

Chairwoman Lopes stated this is not a time to engage in Spring Break activities; schools are closed for a reason and this does not mean it is acceptable to go to the store for leisure shopping or to throw a party. This is not a hurricane that might come – this is the hurricane that is already here. This situation is not a joke.

Mass.gov and the CDC both have websites strictly for updated information regarding COVID-19.

The Health Agent stated we all need to be aware and conscious of the people who are in the room with us when we discuss COVID-19 in order to cope and move forward. Children and the elderly are already vulnerable. It is advised to sit with children who are emotionally disturbed by COVID-19 in order for them to understand what is happening so their thoughts can be at ease.

The Federal Government and the State have stated all non-essential personnel work from home. The Town of Fairhaven has issued a policy where employees can use their sick time if they do not feel comfortable reporting to work.

Mark Rees stated the Board of Selectmen have approved policy changes where employees will not lose their sick time incentive during this time. Employees who are currently in the negative with their sick time will have to owe sick time back. Employees are encouraged to stay home if needed. Mr. Rees further stated that the Health Agent is the Public Health Commander during this situation. Chairwoman Lopes asked Mr. Rees what would happen if an employee is healthy but still does not feel comfortable about coming to work – what is the policy? Mr. Rees responded that employees can still charge their sick time, as doctor's notices are not required during this time; vacation days are also an option.

The Health Agent mentioned the Health Department will receive funding to be used for additional personnel, equipment, etc.

The Health Agent stated this situation is what the Emergency Preparedness team has prepared for. This situation may not be normal for the public, but it is for emergency personnel. There is a plan in place.

Todd Correia stated fire resources are available. Warren Rensehausen stated the recreation building has been cleaned and is ready if/when needed.

Chairwoman Lopes expressed her concerns for both health and building inspectors having to interact with the public. A state of emergency has been issued for both Massachusetts and Fairhaven. Todd Correia mentioned that all unnecessary inspections have been suspended; residents do leave the inside of their home while a necessary inspection occurs. Chairwoman Lopes stated non-essential inspections shouldn't occur. Mr. Rees mentioned he will consult with the Health Agent to see if the policy should be

amended.

The Health Agent mentioned that all food establishments have been following Governor Baker's order. Fairhaven Police has been notified to contact the Health Department of any violations. The Health Department has not received any violations thus far.

Mr. Silvia asked the Health Agent if she could foresee her needing anything from the Board and the Health Agent responded there are no votes as of yet and she doesn't foresee the Board having to make a decision. Todd Correia stated that since a state of emergency has been issued, all authority goes to the Town Administrator for signing on behalf of the Town.

Todd Correia wished to acknowledge Daniel Shea, Health Inspector for stepping up and being professional during all meetings and public service announcements during this time.

Public Hearing:

None.

Health Agent's Report:

None.

Invoices/Other Business:

Chairwoman Lopes stated the Board will continue to meet for their monthly meeting.

There being no other business before the Board, Mr. Silvia made a motion to adjourn and was seconded by Mr. DeTerra. The motion passed unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 3:52 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Amanda L. Blais

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Recording Secretary/Administrative Assistant