



CITY OF GARDNER
OFFICE OF THE
BOARD OF HEALTH
95 PLEASANT ST, ROOM 29
GARDNER, MASSACHUSETTS 01440



Members Present: **Lauren Saunders – Health Director**
 Susan Avallone, RN - Member
 Atty. Geoffrey Tobia – Member
 Michele Parker, MD – Member

In Attendance: **James Walsh, Acting Mayor of the City of Gardner**

Minutes for Emergency Board of Health meeting held Thursday, March 19, 2020

Pursuant to Governor Baker's March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §20, and the Governor's March 15, 2020 Order imposing strict limitation on the number of people that may gather in one place, **this meeting of the Gardner Board of Health will be conducted via remote participation. The transcript of proceedings will be posted on the City's website as soon as possible after the meeting.*

4:00 Meeting called to order.

4:02 New Business: Consideration for issuance of a local Declaration of Emergency due to the Coronavirus outbreak. Acting Mayor James Walsh requested this emergency meeting as there had been a lot of activity over the last few weeks surrounding a Coronavirus outbreak. A Declaration of Emergency had occurred at the Federal level and Governor Baker declared a State of Emergency at the State level. There had been several safety directives required locally at the city level including the suspension and change to various activities such as closing of City Hall to the public. Acting Mayor Walsh had attended a teleconference with the Massachusetts Mayor's Association the previous day, and consideration was for an issuance of a local Declaration of Emergency. The Declaration would not grant any additional authority to the Mayor, but it may streamline reimbursement for additional expenditures that the city may incur. Given this is a public health emergency the local Board of Health has the authority to issue this declaration.

After a discussion period with questions from the Board, the Board unanimously agrees to issue a Declaration of Emergency for the City of Gardner.

4:10 The Board asked for more clarification about buildings that are closed to the public; Mayor Walsh stated that City Hall was closed to the public, at the time no changes had been made to staffing or hours but they were exploring options and it was under review. Several communities have already closed their buildings and have staff working from home to limit movement of people in the community. Sue and Lauren have participated on several Public Health-related conference calls which recommended to shut down as much as possible for a short period of time and then reevaluate. Acting Mayor Walsh informed the Board that the Fire Department, Building Department, and Health Department suspended their inspections.

Both Sue and Dr. Parker expressed concerns that studies have been showing that asymptomatic people can be contagious for several days. With seasonal flu people are most contagious in the first 24 hours of symptoms; with COVID-19 the most viral shedding occurs for several days before symptoms present and they were both concerned that it will be difficult to contain this virus. Standard disinfecting procedures may not be adequate. This is a novel virus, it is new, it

has not been seen in humans before, we do not have antibodies to it, there is no vaccine and there is no guaranteed treatment. The main concern is that if everyone were to get sick at once, that hospitals could get overwhelmed. Dr. Parker stated that we need to slow the spread of the virus, to flatten the curve and try to make sure that there is not a large bolus of people getting sick at the same time as that may overwhelm our capacity to care for them.

The CDC supports that anyone that can work from home should be working from home whenever possible, limiting trips to the grocery store and other trips out in public. People staying home even when they are not infected will slow the spread of this virus. Both Sue and Dr. Parker stated that we should close anything that we can.

The Board Members and Acting Mayor Walsh discuss strategies for limiting risk for employees in City Hall. Acting Mayor Walsh invited Dr. Parker to participate in a Gardner Education Television (GETV) taping on Coronavirus with him and Lauren the next day. This will be posted to the City website and social media along with GETV broadcasts.

The Board Members also discussed getting a message out to the young people in the community, since they may feel that they are not at risk and may not understand the effects their actions may have in this situation.

Set next meeting for March 30, 2020 at 4:00 PM; this will be a remote/teleconference meeting.

4:28 Adjourn.

Susan Avallone RN, Member

Atty. Geoffrey Tobia, Member

Michele C. Parker MD, Member

All conversations are documented on recording identified as B.O.H March 19, 2020.