



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

Minutes for Emergency Board of Health meeting held Tuesday April 14, 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.*

12:00 Meeting called to order.

12:05 Old Business:

Transfer Station status – At the March 30, 2020 meeting the decision was made to close the Transfer Station for 2 weeks due to the COVID-19 pandemic over concerns for the safety of the attendants and residents. There is a discussion about attendant and public safety, hours and operations. The Board discusses social distancing, masks, sanitization and instructions for the attendant to limit his contact with the public and enhanced guidelines for residents when using the facility. The Assistant Director will instruct the attendant with safety protocols and will arrange for signage to be posted to help direct the residents. The Board votes to reopen the Transfer Station with limited hours for 2 weeks, and it will be open Fridays from 9am-3pm and Saturdays from 7am-1pm beginning April 17, 2020. They will meet again to reassess the status and hours of the Transfer Station again in 2 weeks.

12:25 New Business:

Funeral Director licenses – Annual Funeral Director licenses have been processed and are ready for the Board Member's signatures. In past years, all 3 Board Members have signed the certificates but with the current COVID-19 pandemic and meeting remotely, there is a discussion if the Health Agent has the authority to sign for the Board or if there is a legal need for the Board to physically sign them. There is also discussion about different options such as mailing them to each Member in turns or electronically signing the certificates. It is decided that Lauren will contact the City Solicitor for legal advice for this matter.

COVID-19 related calls – There has been an increase in calls to the Health Department from residents concerned that other residents and employees at stores are not following face-covering and social-distancing recommendations. The Assistant Director has calculated each stores capacity from the State COVID-19 guidance and has already visited all the local grocery stores to advise them of the current recommendations and guidance, but there is no mandate or order that can be enforced. The Board asks that the Lauren also write a letter to advise all retail grocery stores the stores to follow the State guidelines.

Wachusett Manor Nursing Home – There is a cluster of approximately 16 cases of COVID-19 positive people associated with the nursing home, mostly residents but a few employees. The state epidemiologist is working with the facility. Sue, in her capacity as a contact tracing nurse has also been in contact with the facility. The state is conducting testing on the residents and employees.

The COVID-19 positive residents are contained to 2 of the 4 units in the facility. There have been challenges with meeting the staffing needs as some of the regular staff is now in quarantine.

There was also discussion about other area facilities of concern as they could be at high risk for clusters of cases. There have been no COVID-19 cases confirmed at Heywood Commons Assisted Living, Gardner Rehabilitation & Nursing Center, or in the Gardner Housing Authority to date. There have been a few cases that were reported as inmates at North Central Correctional Institute but they were of inmates who had been transferred to Bridgewater State Hospital for unrelated treatment prior to their diagnosis.

Dr. Parker briefly described that there is a hospital pandemic triage protocol which would become more involved in decision making in the event of a surge in hospitalizations.

Dr. Parker is going to write a letter to the Gardner News about precautions for residents to take when grocery shopping which she will also share with Lauren. Sue suggests that we put up some message boards around the city with COVID-19 related messages such as mask-wearing and hand washing. The DPW owns those signs and Lauren will inquire with that department about availability.

Next meeting set for Monday, April 27, 2020 at 4:30 PM and will be a remote/teleconference meeting.

1:00 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 April 14, 2020