

Princeton Board of Health Minutes
Monthly Meeting
December 16, 2014
Monument Hall – East Meeting Room
One Monument Drive, Princeton, NJ 08542

Present:

Board Members:

Lauren Babcock–Dunning MPH
George DiFerdinando, M.D
Joann Hill, RN
Laura Kahn, MD
Steven Miller, PhD
Charles Rojer, M.D., Chairman
Linda Steiner-Sichel, MPH

Staff:

Jeffrey Grosser, MHS, HO
V Bea Snowdon

Liaisons and Guests:

Elizabeth Bidwell Bates HSC
Phil Curran, Journalist
Heather Howard, Council

Absent:

Rick Weiss, MS

I. Call to Order

At 7:45PM, Chairman Rojer called the meeting to order by affirming: “This meeting of the Princeton Board of Health has been duly advertised and is being conducted in compliance with all provisions of the New Jersey Open Public Meetings Act.”

II. Roll Call

The absence of Mr. Weiss was noted.

III. Public Comment & Guest

There was no response to the Chairman’s request for public comment.

IV. Minutes – November 18, 2014

A motion to accept the minutes was made by Dr. Kahn and seconded by Ms. Babcock-Dunning. All present voted in favor of acceptance.

V. Monthly Reports

Health Officer’s Report:

On November 11th, a FEMA hurricane preparedness drill was conducted at the Princeton Emergency Operations Center. Mr. Grosser participated, along with other local staff, regional staff, and experts.

The second issue of PRINCETON HEALTH MATTERS, the department’s newsletter, was released. The newsletter will be created every winter, spring, summer, and fall. It will be distributed by email and website posting.

The significant accomplishments of the Health Department were shared with Council, in a special meeting on December 1st. Strategic planning, national accreditation, and offering more staff nursing hours are some of the goals shared for the Department’s future.

Health Department staff conducted 21 retail food establishments inspections were last month. All annual retail food establishment inspections are now completed.

A Symposium on Ebola preparedness was recently held. Princeton University's plans include isolated housing, in the event of a need. No school/academic travel to West Africa is sanctioned at this time. Faculty arriving from West Africa must now touch base with school officials, in advance of their arrivals, so that thorough risk and exposure investigations can be done. The Health Department and the University will both conduct collaborative risk assessments.

The second round of meningitis vaccines has been administered at the University, with excellent participation reported. Gwen Lee, representative of the Student Health Advisory Board, will provide statistics to the Board.

VI. Old Business

Strategic Planning – Accreditation

The last strategic planning meeting was rescheduled. Mr. Grosser is conducting an internal analysis, to ensure that all appropriate areas and needs are included in the strategic plan. Mr. Grosser expressed thanks to those who have provided feedback. He offered encouragement to those who might still wish to contribute ideas.

Hospital Site

Two complaints were filed from individuals walking near the site. The reports came from different sides of the site and were made in different weeks. Their reports included concerns about a metallic taste in their mouths, with these symptoms lasting 5 to 6 hours before subsiding. Iris Udasin, MD, a Rutgers physician who is expert in occupational hazards, and Ira Whitman, Environmental consultant and licensed expert, were consulted on these reports.

Noise complaints have also occurred. Decibel readings at the site continue to show no violations. Noise dampening walls are offering some remedy, particularly with jackhammer use in the parking garage.

Avalon Bay anticipates the completion of demolition by Martin Luther King weekend.

Ebola

The Health Department sent bills totaling \$7,635 (\$1,000 and \$6,635) to the State of NJ, to cover Princeton's costs to monitor and address the recent quarantine. Mr. Grosser included Excel spreadsheets and other data to support these charges.

VII. New Business

GI Food Outbreaks

Two local foodborne outbreaks have been reported. The outbreak of several cases of Hepatitis A has been traced to Rosa's Restaurant in Hamilton. The Health Department immediately confirmed that we had ample supplies of Hepatitis A vaccine in Princeton.

53 individuals reported becoming sick with a GI illness, 12 to 48 hours after eating at the Nassau Inn. A daylong sanitary inspection was conducted at the restaurant. Some minor violations were found, but no employees were sick and no cause of outbreak could be detected. The restaurant was given 4 days to correct the violations. Mr. Grosser interviewed 30 of the individuals affected, for case assessment. Medical laboratory tests were not conclusive. It is thought that something surface related likely caused the outbreak. The restaurant was not closed, because there were no reports after Friday.

Eating Clubs

Smoking in the Princeton University eating clubs was reported, as a violation of the NJ Smoke Free Act. An investigation was performed after ashtrays were observed. Violations have not been issued. Annual inspections of the eating clubs will occur in January and February. Dr. DiFerdinando pointed out that the Smoke Free Act must protect the people who work at the clubs, regardless of club policy and how members may feel about this issue.

Councilwoman Howard and other Board members added that e-cigarettes should be included, as 80% of them are made in China using processes and formulas that are not regulated. Dr. Rojer expressed concern about the very young children using them as well. Dr. DiFerdinando shared that e-cigarettes and marijuana are also already publicly banned in current State legislation.

Synthetic Drugs

In the Midwest, some children have died from synthetic drug use. Unregulated, synthetic drugs sold online are responsible for many deaths and injuries. Gary DeBlasio reported that local police patrol for synthetic pot and other substances, and remove those placed in attractive packages in stores if found. The recent child deaths are from synthetic LSD.

VIII. Reports From Committees

Reporting for the Princeton Environmental Commission (PEC), Mr. Miller noted that plastic bag fees will be reintroduced as an idea for a local ordinance again.

Food And Water Watch (FWW) and PEC continues to request action on concerns about fracking. Specifically, they request that the Board of Health ban the use of fracking brine*, for winter road clearing and de-icing. (*Benzene, formaldehyde, radioactive compounds, and other dangerous ingredients may be in the solution.)

PEC and FWW request that a full ordinance banning all fracking waste in Princeton be adopted. These legal measures have been taken in Elizabeth, NJ. The State has countered with a response that Elizabeth has to take the waste. Citing the potential of toxins to leach into the soil and water, and to harm individuals, Mr. Miller and his colleagues suggest that a similar ban be adopted in Princeton. Dr. Rojer recommends that protective ordinances be backed, whenever they are appropriate actions to ensure that public health is maintained.

Mr. Miller shared a full draft of a "Fracking Waste Ban" ordinance, with all Board members. In response to group feedback, Mr. Miller motioned for a revision of the draft and movement towards adoption a ban of all fracking waste in Princeton. Dr. Kahn seconded the motion, with all present voting in favor of the creation of a protective ordinance to ban fracking waste. Revision and further readings will be necessary and are planned.

IX. Reports from Other Boards and Commissions

Dr. DeFerdinando cited a New York Times article referencing the billing of a \$5500 echocardiogram at the UMCP, while the National average is \$600. All five hospitals in our area charge the same rate.

The possibility of vapor borne diseases was discussed, in relation to a problem on the exterior of UMCP. The hospital is quite attentive to prevention of this problem. Mr. Grosser shared his recommendation, for the use of a completely safe, effective, non-chemical, permanent solution, with UMCP administration.

X. Adjournment

With no further business to discuss, Dr. Kahn motioned to adjourn. Ms. Hill seconded the motion, with all other present voting in favor. The meeting adjourned at 8:52PM.

Respectfully submitted, V Bea Snowden