

**Worcester Board of Health Meeting
Meeting Minutes
Meeting Held at 25 Meade St. Room 109
Monday, October 2, 2023
6:30 pm**

Welcome and Introductions

Board Members Present: Interim Chair Frances Anthes, Chareese Allen, Gary Rosen

Staff Present: Matilde ‘Mattie’ Castiel, MD, Commissioner of HHS; Dr. Mike Hirsh, Medical Director; Cherry Tangri, Tobacco Prevention Specialist; Soloe Dennis, Director of DPH and CMRPHA; Jen Nakijoba, Chief of Community Health

Guests Present: Muhammad Jabber, Edgemere Mini Mart; H. Ganesh, Chadwick Food Mart; Jim Vasiliadis, O’hara’s Wine & Liquors; Jack Azar, Webster Square Mobile; Goe Greige, Gulf Greig Summit; Abdullah Mahmud, No Name Grocery; J. Patel and B. Patel, JK Smoke Shop; Bimal Bhagat, 635 Chandler Mobil; Mousa Bcharah, Smoke Vibes; Unnamed Call In

Interim Chair Frances Anthes called the meeting to order at 6:42 pm. She asked all in attendance to introduce themselves beginning with Board of Health members and Health Department staff and then guests.

Following the introductions, Interim Chair Anthes explained that she was new in the Board leadership role following the resignation of Dr. Khanh-Van Tran. She noted that she had made some changes to the agenda because of the leadership change. She asked to add a COVID update from Dr. Michael Hirsh to the printed agenda and asked the Board to approve the agenda as amended.

Gary Rosen moved to accept the amended agenda and Chareese Allen seconded the motion. All three members voted in favor.

Review and Approve September Meeting Minutes

Minutes of the meeting of September 11, 2023.

Frances Anthes noted that the minutes from this meeting only became available to Board members at the beginning of the meeting. Since the minutes are lengthy, Frances suggested that the minutes be held until the next meeting in order to give members time to review them. Frances also suggested that the minutes need to provide the information required by Robert’s Rules of Order Newly Revised (RRONR) but do not need to fully transcribe everything that is said at the meeting. She noted that full video of each meeting is available on the City’s website. The Board agreed that the September meeting minutes would be reviewed at the next meeting.

Amended Regulation Restricting Tobacco Retail Permits

Frances Anthes said that the Board has received Law Department review and approval of the language of the Amended Regulation as requested by Member Gary Rosen. The Amended Regulations are attached.

Gary Rosen moved that the Amended Regulation be approved with an effective date as soon as the necessary advertisements of the proposed changes have been completed in the Worcester Telegram and

Gazette. Chareese Allen seconded the motion. All Board members voted in favor of the Amended Regulations.

Frances Anthes informed members that the staff suggestions for the Tobacco Protocol Process to Determine Guidelines for Permit Suspension are still under review by the Law Department and would come before the Board in the future. At that time, the Board would likely hold a public hearing.

Frances Anthes asked Board members to move the following agenda item because many of the visitors were in attendance because of the agenda item:

Violation Hearing: Worcester Tobacco Permit Suspension for Sale to Minor

- 1. Rock and Smoke Shop, 830 Main Street**
- 2. Smoke and Talk 2, 834 Main Street**
- 3. Smoke Vibes, 256 Park Avenue**
- 4. Webster Square Mobile, 10 Mill Street**
- 5. JK Smoke Shop, 60 South Ludlow Street**
- 6. Dream Market, 369 Burncoat Street**
- 7. Family Mini Mart, 241 Lincoln Street**
- 8. Grafton Hill Package, 8 Penn Avenue**
- 9. Ohara Wines and Liquors, 867 Grafton Street**
- 10. Edgemere Mini Mart, 72 Houghton Street**
- 11. Chadwick Food Mart, 57 West Boylston Street**
- 12. Gulf, Greig Summit, 853 West Boylston Street**
- 13. No Name Grocery, 49 Vernon Street**

Staff spoke to the issues raised when the listed retailers failed youth compliance checks during the months of June and July. Each of the retailers paid their fines and staff recommends that each of the retailers be issued a warning and not a suspension at this time. Board Members acknowledged the business interests of the retailers but also addressed the importance of the public health issues which are violated when tobacco products are sold to minors.

Gary Rosen moved that the 16 retailers be issued a warning at this time. Chareese Allen seconded the motion. All three members voted in favor.

Role of the Board of Health

Frances Anthes reminded Board members that the Board of Health is an Executive Board and members are appointed by the City Manager. With two current vacancies, staff outlined the process by which prospective members are interviewed by Health Department staff, the Citizens Advisory Committee and the City Manager before he appoints a new member. Frances said that she agreed to the Interim Chair appointment because she wants to leave the permanent Chair open for a medical professional. Soloe Dennis noted that there have been recent interviews and he hopes that the vacancies will be filled shortly.

Election of Vice Chair

Frances Anthes noted that the Board neglected to vote for a Vice-Chair in June and asked for a motion to nominate a Vice-Chair. Gary Rosen nominated Chareese Allen for Vice-Chair. Chareese seconded the motion. All members voted in favor.

COVID 19 Update —Dr. Hirsh

Dr. Hirsh provided an update on COVID infections. He said that the recent uptick seemed to result in less severe illness and those higher numbers appear to be coming down now. Dr. Hirsh noted that health care providers are now wearing masks. He again advocated for vaccination for COVID, the flu and RSV as eligible and appropriate. He noted that the schools are enforcing the required vaccinations. Director Dennis informed the Board that the Division of Public Health is preparing a final report on the City's efforts in fighting COVID.

Next Meeting Dates and Topics

Next Meeting - November 6 at 6:30pm

Agenda Planning

November - Community Healthlink - closing of Detox program/plan for reopening
Substance Use - update/ deaths
Homelessness - plan for Winter

December - Climate Issues - Dr. Hirsh

January - Tobacco Hearing
Mental Health Issues in the Schools

Announcements

National Injury Prevention Day— focus on burn prevention—November 18

Gun Buy Back Program — December 9

Adjournment

Gary Rosen moved to adjourn the meeting, Chareese seconded and all were in favor at 7:58pm