MINUTES OF THE PUBLIC HEALTH COUNCIL

Meeting of August 9, 2023

MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

**PUBLIC HEALTH COUNCIL MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH**

**Henry I. Bowditch Public Health Council Room, 2nd Floor 250 Washington Street, Boston MA**

**Docket: \*\*\*REMOTE MEETING\*\*\* Wednesday, August 9, 2023 – 9:00AM**

***Note: The August Public Health Council meeting will be held remotely as a video conference consistent with St. 2021, c. 20, s. 20, which provides for certain modifications to the Massachusetts Open Meeting Law.***

Members of the public may listen to the meeting proceedings by using the information below:

Join by Web:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/87035877784?pwd=WXZoY1YrcmFMSUZFck1rVkx1R1pRdz09>

Dial in Telephone Number: 929-436-2866 Webinar ID: 870 3587 7784

Passcode: 207247

1. **ROUTINE ITEMS**
   1. Introductions.
   2. Updates from Commissioner Robert Goldstein.
   3. Record of the Public Health Council Meeting held July 12, 2023 **(Vote)**.
2. **INFORMATIONAL PRESENTATIONS**
   1. Informational presentation on Mosquito-borne Disease Surveillance in Massachusetts.

*The Commissioner and the Public Health Council are defined by law as constituting the Department of Public Health. The Council has one regular meeting per month. These meetings are open to public attendance except when the Council meets in Executive Session. The Council’s meetings are not hearings, nor do members of the public have a right to speak or address the Council. The docket will indicate whether or not floor discussions are anticipated. For purposes of fairness since the regular meeting is not a hearing and is not advertised as such, presentations from the floor may require delaying a decision until a subsequent meeting.*

Attendance and Summary of Votes:

Presented below is a summary of the meeting, including timekeeping, attendance and votes cast.

Date of Meeting: August 9, 2023 - Start Time: 9:05 am. Ending Time: 10:01 am.

| **Board Member** | **Attended** | **First Order:**  **Approval of**  **July 12, 2023**  **Meeting Minutes**  **(Vote)** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Commissioner Robert Goldstein** | Yes | Yes |
| **Edward Bernstein** | Yes | Yes |
| **Lissette Blondet** | Yes | Yes |
| **Kathleen Carey** | Yes | Yes |
| **Elizabeth Chen** | Yes | Yes |
| **Harold Cox** | Yes | Yes |
| **Alba Cruz-Davis** | No | Absent |
| **Michele David** | Yes | Yes |
| **Robert Engell** | Yes | Yes |
| **Elizabeth Evans** | Yes | Yes |
| **Eduardo Haddad** | No | Absent |
| **Joanna Lambert** | No | Absent |
| **Stewart Landers** | Yes | Yes |
| **Mary Moscato** | Yes | Abstain |
| **Gregory Volturo** | Yes | Yes |
| **Summary** | 12 Members Present;  3 Members Absent | 11 Members Approved;  1 Abstained  3 Absent |

**PROCEEDINGS**

A regular meeting of the Massachusetts Department of Public Health’s Public Health Council (M.G.L. c. 17, §§ 1, 3) was held on Thursday, August 9, 2023, by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, 250 Washington Street, Boston, Massachusetts 02108.

Members present were: Commissioner Robert Goldstein; Edward Bernstein, MD; Lissette Blondet; Kathleen Carey; Secretary Elizabeth Chen; Dean Harold Cox; Michelle David, MD; Robert Engell; Elizabeth Evans; Stewart Landers; Mary Moscato, and Gregory Volturo, MD.

Also in attendance was Beth McLaughlin, General Counsel at the Massachusetts Department of Public Health.

Commissioner Goldstein called the meeting to order at 9:05am and made opening remarks before reviewing the docket.

**1. ROUTINE ITEMS**

*b. Updates from Commissioner Robert Goldstein*

Commissioner Goldstein proceeded to update the council on the following:

**Immunization Awareness Month**

Commissioner Goldstein said that August is Immunization Awareness Month. The Massachusetts Vaccine Confidence Project (MVCP), a statewide initiative formed in 2018, will be promoting back-to-school immunization, sharing CDC resources, highlighting the HPV vaccine as cancer prevention, and celebrating the 2023 Immunization Champion for Massachusetts. This season, along with the flu vaccine, there are two new vaccines to prevent RSV infection. The Department will continue to follow developments from FDA and CDC regarding COVID-19 vaccine.

**Overdose Awareness Month**

Commissioner Goldstein said we will observe August 31st as International Overdose Awareness Day, where over 22,000 purple flags will be planted on the Boston Common to remember the individuals lost to overdose in Massachusetts from 2011 through 2022. He will be joining BSAS Director Dee Calvert, Deputy Commissioner Jen Barrelle, Health and Human Services Secretary Walsh, and Undersecretary Mahaniah for this important remembrance.

**Childhood Experiences Media Campaign**

Commissioner Goldstein highlighted a new media campaign that the Bureau of Family Health and Nutrition is running this summer. It aims to increase awareness about the importance of positive childhood experiences (PCE’s). These ads will be run in 20 communities across the Commonwealth with higher social vulnerability indices.

**Sumner Tunnel Closure**

Commissioner Goldstein followed up on a conversation from a prior Public Health Council meeting – the Department’s Office of Emergency Medical Services’ is monitoring of the impact of the Sumner Tunnel closure on ambulance response and transport times. He noted there was no discernible difference in the amount of time it takes to get to the scene and provide care. However, a slight increase of about 3 minutes for transport to hospital was noted. 95% of emergency ambulance transports in East Boston go to Mass General.

**Reminder – CHEI Survey Release**

Commissioner Goldstein said the 2023 Community Health Equity Survey (CHEI), formerly known as the COVID-19 Community Impact Survey, is now live online and will be open until early Fall.

**Families Experiencing Homelessness**

Commissioner Goldstein shared an update on migrant families coming to Massachusetts. Governor Healey recently declared a state of emergency in the Commonwealth, calling on the federal government to streamline and expedite work authorizations and increase funding to states. Massachusetts continues to welcome families and continue the many ongoing efforts to provide emergency services and housing.

Commissioner Goldstein asked if there were any questions from the members.

Mr. Landers thanked the Department and the Office of Emergency Medical Services for providing data on the effect of the Sumner Tunnel closing. He asked, if possible, to be provided with the n-values to know how many emergency ambulance runs are actually being seen in the data.

Dr. Bernstein asked beyond the strategic planning, what are the issues surrounding the overcrowding and boarding in the EDs including the crisis of migrant health care.

Commissioner Goldstein said he would provide more specific data at a later meeting, but broadly said they continue to monitor the toll of the migrant crisis across the Commonwealth. In particular, with the closing of several medical facilities in the Southeast region of the state, there is significant pressure on the system, with elevated emergency department (ED) utilization. He said capacity across the state remains at 91 – 92% of staffed beds that has been maintained with and without peaks of COVID-19. The Commissioner offered to bring some more specific data back to the council addressing hospital capacity.

Dr. Bernstein said he was interested in strategic planning addressing the issues of COVID-19 and migrant capacity.

Ms. Blondet said she would like to see a breakdown of data concerning the migrant families based on their numbers, countries of origin, race and ethnicity, age, size of families, and region of the state where they are being settled. She also requested data on sports betting, including the ages and ethnicities affected, noting she has seen a greater interest in it.

Commissioner Goldstein said we could work with the Office of Problem Gambling to collect data on sports betting. He then shared some numbers regarding data of the migrant families. There are over 5,600 families that are in emergency shelter, translating into over 22,000 individuals. They are spread across the Commonwealth, and this is not a region-specific concern.

Dr. Volturo said regarding migrant communities, he has seen a large influx of Haitians in Central Massachusetts. He said they have not had a significant impact yet in emergency departments. He said that UMass has been proactive in getting out to the community, using resources through “Road to Care” and at a minimum, getting their prescriptions organized so they don’t run out of medications. DPH has been very helpful with this. He suggested that when we start to talk about ED capacity, we must include post-acute care because he feels that lack of post-acute care is clogging the hospitals.

Commissioner Goldstein noted the spectrum of what happens before an individual arrives to the hospital, and their care after the hospital. He added that DPH is happy and willing to collaborate with emergency assistance and community based organizations.

Ms. Moscato mentioned that she works on a state-wide, post-acute network initiative committee which is working statewide trying to address transitions of care to acute care partners and appreciated this being brought up for its relevance and importance.

With no further questions, Commissioner Goldstein turned to the docket.

**1****. ROUTINE ITEMS**

*c. July 12, 2023 Minutes* ***(Vote)***

Commissioner Goldstein asked if there were any changes to the July 12, 2023, minutes. There were none.

Commissioner Goldstein asked if there was a motion to approve the July 12, 2023, minutes.

Dr. Volturo made the motion, which was seconded by Dr. David. Ms. Moscato abstained. All other present members approved.

**2. INFORMATIONAL PRESENTATIONS**

1. *Overview of the Massachusetts Public Health Data Warehouse & New Data Highlight*
2. *Update: Special Commission on Racial Inequities in Maternal Health and Related Department Work.*

Commissioner Goldstein invited Dr. Catherine Brown, State Epidemiologist and State Public Health Veterinarian, to provide the annual update on mosquito borne disease surveillance in Massachusetts. She was joined by Nalina Narain, Director of the Bureau of Climate and Environmental Health.

Upon the conclusion of the presentation, Commissioner Goldstein asked the members if there were any questions. There were none.

With no further questions, Commissioner Goldstein stated that this concluded the final agenda item for the day and reminded the council that the next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, September 13, 2023, at 9 AM.

Commissioner Goldstein asked if there was a motion to adjourn.

Dr. Bernstein made the motion which was seconded by Ms. Blondet. All present members approved.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:01 am.