

Board of Health Meeting

Monday March 16, 2020 – 3:00 PM – Richmond Town Hall, 1529 State Road

PRESENT: Emilie Jarrett, R.N., Peter Cohen, Chair; Andrew Fisher; Fred Schubert; Tony Segal;

ABSENT:

GUEST: Tammy Jervas, School Dietician; Claudia Ryan; Jill ??, School Principal

Emilie Jarrett reported that she had been in touch with Laura Kittross, the Berkshire County Board of Health Chair, to inquire as to any legal reason why the Richmond School kitchen cannot be used to prepare meals since the school is closed. She said it would be fine to do that, but there must be assurances that whoever is in that kitchen has no symptoms and whoever is preparing or handling the food has been screened very carefully. Peter's concern was that the person preparing the food was not the same person distributing it so that there is a separation between preparation and serving.

There was a question from the audience as to whether there are elderly people in Richmond who are house-bound and in need of support. Emilie noted that there is the Meals on Wheels program provided by Elder Services. Emilie will check with them to be sure that program will continue, but she believes that the elderly on that program are taken care of. Her concern is for any people who are out of work.

On the question of the funds to support this food program, Tammy noted that it is difficult for the school to change the purpose of funds in the budget, but there is a lot of food in storage at the school at the moment so funding is not an immediate concern.

Peter noted that the one of the things he hopes to accomplish at this meeting is to draft a notice to be mailed to the entire town in which he would like to include that anyone in need of food can get it at the school and to include the time(s) that would be happening. Tammy said that 8:30 – 9:30 AM would work and that she would want to have people sign up for as many meals as their household would need and whether they would need the food delivered. She suggested including in the announcement of the food program to contact tjervas@richmondconsolidated.org the night before to request the number of meals and whether the food will be picked up or will need to be delivered. The only problem with that system is that there is an approximate 20% of people in town who do not have email access. Tommy suggested that the school's phone number and her extension be added for those people.

The food program at the school will begin tomorrow, people will pick up boxes and/or bags of food behind the school or volunteers will deliver the food where necessary.

Should the State decide to call for a lock-down, how does that affect Tammy's ability to get to the school and prepare the food and people's ability to pick up the food at the school? Andy replied that exceptions will always have to be made – you can't just lock down an entire state

and not allow essential services to continue and providing food to those in need is an essential service.

Claudia reported that Bartlett's Orchard is staying open and is offering to be a dispensary for non-perishable food items, either to pick up for people in need or for others to donate. The Board agreed that would be acceptable. Announcements of those opportunities to obtain food will be disseminated to the community.

Peter asked the Board of Health members what they wanted to do about the Richmond Library. Andy said that The Movie Club has already been discontinued, the order from the Board of Health should be that the Library is not to hold any kind of meetings but individuals who want to get a book should be allowed to do so. Having said that, he also noted that the book itself could be a carrier if it had been in the possession of someone who was ill with the virus. That was Peter's concern since he has seen books and DVD's come into the Library from all over the State in response to requests for materials not available in our Library. In addition, the Library is open not only to Richmond residents, but is available to any other Berkshire County resident with a Library card.

Fred suggested that disinfectant wipes be provided to wipe down books coming in from outside, but Peter noted that the books sitting on the shelves are not being wiped down and they are being handled. Fred said that it will not be possible to protect everybody from absolutely everything. If the Library is doing a reasonable job wiping things down, which Fred volunteered to demonstrate for the Library staff.

There was a discussion of the relative merits of closing the Library and preventing people who are stuck at home from getting books to read and creating some kind of safety protocol. Emilie was able to advise that the virus remains viable on cardboard for 24 hours and on paper/plastic book jackets, perhaps three days. In conclusion, the following guidelines for the Library include: No meetings, advise people to stay away and issue no fines for late returns, keep sanitizing the door handles and material delivered to the Library from outside and advise people to use hand-wipes on the covers of books they handle. That list will be drafted, and Peter will bring it the Library. Emilie said that close observation will indicate if there is a sudden increase of cases in Richmond and, if so, the Library should be closed.

John Olander brought up the Governor's emergency order, which will go into effect tomorrow. It includes instructions that schools for special needs children may remain open. There was a discussion of whether the local Children's Study Hall of a school program run out of Springfield was for special needs students. The consensus was that it was and that it would, therefore, remain open. Emilie suggested that Gina Coleman, the Director of that school, be called to determine if they are, in fact, closed or open at this time and what her reasoning is if she has decided to remain open. Peter will make that call.

Peter returned to the issue of creating a document from the Richmond Board of Health to disseminate to the entire town. The question was what the document should say. There was

discussion of what the content should be, including using the information provided by the CDC and contact information for the BMC hotline. Andy will work with Peter on drafting the document for the Town.

Danielle reported that she is in the process of setting up the ability to conduct on-line meetings through Zoom and everyone who needs to attend that meeting will receive an email containing a link into the meetings when they are set up. The State is also drafting exceptions to the Open Meeting Laws that will accommodate the requirements of social distancing. At the moment, the directive from the State is that meetings of less than 25 people are acceptable.

Danielle noted that she will be posting an order on Facebook and the Town website, etc. about closing Town Hall to the public, that all meetings will be conducted online, that all public and private schools are closed. She will draft the order for the Board's approval, in keeping with the Board of Selectmen's directive to take no action not approved by the Board of Health.

Peter moved that the Board approve the closing of Town Hall to the public in addition to adoption of the rules and regulations of the Governor's declaration of a State of Emergency as found at mass.gov/coronavirus. The motion was seconded and approved by unanimous vote.

Andy moved that the Board authorize Danielle to draft the letter of recommendations to be sent to the residents of Richmond. The motion was seconded and adopted by unanimous consent.

Emilie asked that the Board follow up with the Berkshire Church as to whether their local school is a physical or mental special needs organization. Emilie will provide Peter with the phone number of the Director's office so that he can determine what they are planning. She also suggested that the Board keep in touch and meet more often than normal because things are happening very quickly. Peter noted that there were only 15 more days remaining in his tenure as Chair of the Board of Health. He asked if the next person in line would be willing to step up early and Fred Schubert volunteered to take over.

Peter will call the Children's Study Hall to determine if they intend to close. If they do not, Peter asked what the next action of the Board should be. Emilie said that it would be helpful to find out what category the school falls under officially. She said she would not think they would ignore an order from the Governor and remain open if they are among the types of schools that are directed to close. Once Peter knows the type of school it is, he can call the State Board of Health lawyers to advise them. That will give the Richmond Board of Health coverage for having done due diligence in the situation. Danielle thought the school will likely begin to feel pressure from the parents of their students and other people and will likely close very soon, if they have not already done so.

Andy suggested that the Board have short meetings every two weeks until the situation becomes more urgent, in which case meetings can be held more often.

There was a discussion of the plans in place to provide food for those in need in the community. The school will be providing meals for pick up and, where needed, delivery and Bartlett's Orchard has opened its doors as a drop-off and pick-up location for non-perishable, unopened groceries.

There being no further business before the Board, a motion was made to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded and approved by unanimous vote.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:30 PM