

BOARD OF HEALTH MEETING

Wednesday March 4, 2020 – 5:00 PM – Richmond Town Hall, 1529 State Road

PRESENT: Peter Cohen, Chair; Phyllis LeBeau, Recording Sec.; John Olander, Agent: Andrew Fisher; Louise Maron;

ABSENT: Fred Schubert; Tony Segal

GUEST: Fire Chief, Steve Traver; Claudia Ryan; Emilie Jarrett, Comm. Health Assn.; Laura Kittross, Berkshire Regional Planning; Mark Maloy, Berkshire Regional Planning; Dave Rash, Hancock Fire Chief; Edward Fahey, BPHA

Peter opened the meeting at 5:05 PM.

OLD BUSINESS:

Presentation: Peter introduced the Fire Chiefs from Richmond, Steve Traver and from Hancock, Dave Rash, who are the Emergency Management Directors for their respective towns. He asked Emilie Jarrett for an update on the monthly meetings that used to take place. She reported that those meetings were about preparing emergency response for Hancock and Richmond. Discussions were about organizing traffic and who would be responsible for which aspect of such events. The Town Administrator at the time, Bruce Garlow, took the lead on that and an EDS Plan was created for the two towns.

Chief Traver noted that in the intervening years many changes have occurred, and Emilie said that, in the interim, the EDS Plans have also evolved. Peter suggested that something needed to be done to resurrect those meetings, but, as this meeting was not the place for that discussion, he created a working group comprised of Alison of the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission, Emilie Jarrett of Community Health, Andy Fisher, Richmond Board of Health, Steve Traver, Richmond Fire Chief, Dave Rash, Hancock Fire Chief and Claudia Ryan, Richmond Resident. Laura Kittross will ask Allison to arrange for meetings to take place and create agendas, etc.

Andy Fisher said that there is a new principal at the Richmond School and she will need to be involved in creating a Memorandum of Understanding to allow the Emergency Management people to store materials at the school and to be a party to any plans to use the school as a shelter or vaccination center (EDS).

Andy reported on the conference call from the Board of Health from which he took away the admonition to call Boston in the event of a problem and not to close schools or businesses until Boston is notified and sends their epidemiologist to oversee the situation.

The COVID 19 Virus: Emilie addressed the issue of a possible outbreak of the virus in this area and whether the Richmond Emergency Department will want to be involved in discussions of what measures will be taken. Consensus was that the answer must be “yes.”

On-line Permitting: Mark Maloy of Berkshire Regional Planning, addressed the Committee on the subject of on-line permitting for septic inspections, food permits, etc. This system allows the user to log on, create an account and apply for any permit the Board of Health requires. Education of the vendors who will be needing to use this system is key. Letters could be sent to current vendors the Town deals with advising them of the move to on-line permitting. The Alliance has a grant for the initial set-up fee (\$3,500.00) and the first-year service fee (\$400.00). Subsequent yearly service fees will be the responsibility of the Town.

Andy Fisher moved that the Board agree to sign up for the on-line permitting program. He was seconded by Louise Maron and the motion was approved by unanimous consent.

Ed Fahey, the new BOH Agent through Berkshire Regional Planning Commission: Laura Kitros introduced Ed, who will be replacing Jayne Smith as the Board of Health Agent. He has been a health agent for twenty years, mainly in Dalton. In 2009 he also picked up Lanesborough when John Olander retired from that position. He started in this new position for the BRPC and Richmond as of yesterday.

Peter voiced his concern about the beaches and the camp. Laura provided an update on those issues from Sandra Martin, who has been working on them. Camp Russell is cooperating and working through the paperwork they need to update. She is working with them to determine that some of the uses of the camp will fall into the permitting exceptions. It does appear that they will. The subsequent inspection for the Camp will include Chief Traver at his request.

Wading Pool: Laura read the report submitted by Sandra Martin on the issue of the cannon in the wading pool: “My advice is that Camp Russell have a written, posted policy on safely managing the water cannon in the wading pool and have lifeguards follow it exactly. Then the Board of Health can give Camp Russell a Code Exception, based on the fact that the Safety Policy makes them in substantial compliance, which is essentially what has been happening, but I’m not sure if the Safety Policy is written and posted.” Laura will give Ed the finding of the State about the wading pool and he will look at the situation when he goes to the Camp and then decide whether what Sandra is proposing seems reasonable.

Beach Signs: Final review of the exact wording, and layout of the signs: Discussion resolved that a blank space will be provided after the words, “As of” where the date of the closing of the beach can be inserted by marker. Claudia Ryan will be the one to fill in the date when she posts the signs.

Algorithm for Beach Testing and Closing: in the absence of Fred Schubert, the topic was tabled for a future meeting.

Approval of Minutes of the February 2020 Meeting: There being no discussion of the minutes, Andy Fisher moved to approve the minutes as read. The motion was seconded by Louise Maron and approved by unanimous vote.

NEW BUSINESS

Coronavirus – Information Address: Peter provided website sources for information on the Coronavirus. (see attached)

March 24th Tabletop Exercise dealing with the coronavirus: To exercise the Berkshire Regional Emergency Dispensing Site Plan at Lenox Town Hall Auditorium and on March 10th the BCBOHA will hold an information, planning and situation update on the spread of the disease. Laura Kittross explained that the Tabletop Exercise was substituted for the usual call-down drill to make sure that boards of health outside the host communities know what is going on and what their responsibilities are in the case of a major outbreak. There will be representation from the Board at both meetings.

Emilie Jarrett, R.N. provided a report on the Covid-19 virus (See attached)

The situation is extremely fluid and reports from the boards of health, etc. are changing rapidly. Emilie explained the difference between Isolation, Quarantine and Social Distancing:

Quarantine – separates and restricts the movement of people who have been exposed to a contagious disease (someone from a high-risk area) to watch and see if they become sick. The quarantine lasts long enough to be sure that the person has not contracted the disease, approximately 14 days.

Isolation – prevents the spread of an infectious disease by separating anyone who is sick from those who are not.

Social Distancing – way of keeping people from interacting too closely with each other frequently enough to spread infectious diseases. It is used to slow the spread of the contagious disease.

Emilie distributed a Risk Assessment for Public Health in Management and Decision-Making (see attached): For the information of the members of the BOH.

Testing has been expanded to allow physicians to test anyone they feel might be at risk. Health workers should now be prepared for a drastic rise in cases with that change.

Emilie offered some guidelines for prevention: Reach out to the Richmond school with the Emergency Planners to discuss preparation for possible school closures. The Dept. of Public Health has already contacted schools with suggestions to think about the process in case the school needs to be closed for several weeks. The decision to close the school is made on a case-by-case basis with the Board of Health Emergency Planners and the Dept. of Public Health. In case of an emergency, the Board can call a meeting without the 48 hours of notice.

Andy asked if a person is quarantined at home and there is some kind of emergency requiring a call to 911 and the fire department arrives to help, not aware that there is a person in quarantine in the house, what should be done. Emilie responded that the person in quarantine will be instructed to call the Community Nurse if symptoms develop; if an emergency arises, they can call the nurse and prepare wherever they need to go, such as an emergency room. In the case of a house fire, they are directed to advise the fire department when they call of the quarantine situation at the house. There was a discussion of the legality of advising fire departments and EMT's in advance of their being called by the individuals of the addresses where people were in quarantine. HIPPA makes it illegal to provide the names of individuals, but the addresses can be given out so that the responders can prepare with protective gear.

Emilie returned to the subject of reaching out to the school and discuss with them the recommended guidelines from the Department of Health; handwashing, regular cleaning schedules, etc. They should know that there is a group in town they could be working with if a case of the virus developed in the school to prepare for school closings if necessary and for the process of re-opening the school and eliminating the fears of parents and teachers about possible exposure from students who have recovered from the virus. Emilie asked who on the Board and/or Emergency Preparedness would like to be a part of that conversation with the Principal, the School Nurse and the Superintendent. From that point, it would be the responsibility of the Superintendent and the Principal, with the advice of the Board to Health, to consider closing the school. Emilie will send an email to Jill Pompey, the School Principal, to arrange for a meeting between the Board of Health, the School Nurse and herself to have that discussion. Peter Cohen, Chief Traver, Louise and Emilie will make up that group.

Emilie moved to discussing offering information and help to the public in general. The Mass Board of Health has advice for employers, for pregnant women, etc. and she asked how to disseminate that information to Richmond residents. She suggested that it be included in the weekly e-newsletter, which Phyllis LeBeau said she would do.

Emilie asked if the Board would like to reach out to the local businesses. Emilie and Peter Cohen will bring that information to Berkshire Equestrienne, Balderdash, Bartlett's, the Post Office and Hilltop Orchards to begin.

Emilie advised that the Board should be prepared for the possibility of having to advise businesses of a State Order to cancel events should there be a major outbreak in this area. Emilie asked how she could arrange for an emergency meeting or the opportunity to speak confidentially with the Board. The Board can establish Executive Sessions, from which the general public is excluded, for that purpose. Laura Kittridge explained the process for establishing an Executive Session.

There was a discussion of availability of Personal Protective Gear stored at the school in prior years.

Budget: In the absence of Fred Schubert, this item was tabled for a future meeting.

2019 Annual Report: Peter asked for input for the Annual Report that he is writing. There was a discussion of when certain projects of the Board were completed that would be appropriate for the report.

Agent's Report: John Olander went over the items in his report to expand and explain where needed. (see attached). There was a discussion to clarify the exact procedure between the Board of Health Agent, John Olander, and Berkshire Regional Planning to deal with inspections, permitting, etc. so that there is a single, accurate record of everything that has been done.

Berkshire Regional Planning Alliance: Laura reported that the Alliance has received a grant from the State Dept. of Public Health that has allowed them to hire a part-time Administrative person, Rebecca, who will work with Ed Fahey, to create efficient work systems. The email that goes to Ed will also go to Rebecca and she will be doing a lot of the scheduling, keeping of files, and communicating with Claudia to insure that permitting is handled efficiently.

Next Meeting Date: April 7, 2020 – 5:00 PM.

There being no further business before the Board, Louise moved that the meeting be adjourned. She was seconded by Andy and the motion was adopted by unanimous consent.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:30 PM.