

**Rehoboth Board of Human Services and Community health
Minutes of Meeting
September 14, 2023
Francis Building, Francis Farm Campus**

In attendance: Brittany Bixenman, Kimberly Ciociola, Marie-Juanita DiGioia, Elizabeth Doyle, Robert Lambe, Richard Panofsky, Bruce Thayer, Gary Zimmer. Guests: Geraldine Hamel, Public Health Nurse; Susan Pimental, Director of Finance

1. The meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm.
2. Minutes. R. Panofsky moved to approve the minutes of the meeting of August 10, 2023, as written and distributed; B. Thayer seconded; the motion carried unanimously.
3. Public Health Report.
 - R. Lambe reviewed the various status documents distributed by email. COVID stats are generally trending up. Covid in water tests and hospitalizations have increased but ICU placements are lower.
 - G. Hamel reported that the current Town Doctor no longer has a controlled substance number. R. Lambe indicated that he has a current Massachusetts controlled substance number and the Town can use his number to order vaccines. Lambe will give that number to G. Hamel after the meeting.
 - G. Hamel will post about available vaccines on her town webpage. She will investigate the process for having a scrolling announcement show on the town pages.
 - R. Lambe reported the risk for EEE is present, but still low. As of the date of the meeting, Rehoboth had no cases. Tick incidents are relatively low. Malaria's new presence in the USA is worrying; while still in just a few southern states, it can be expected to move, and we need to stay alert.
 - The public are seeking information about the correct timing of vaccinations and whether to double- or triple-up. G. Hamel will research current informed opinion and make it available. She attends a regular Webinar on health issues and will send the link to members of the Board.
4. Review of interdisciplinary issues from member boards and agencies.
 - a) Board of Health. G. Zimmer reported the Board of Health is framing a new policy on licensing of health spas. They are also working on new policies for minors and smoke shops.
 - b) Council on Aging. B. Bixenman reported the meals program is going well and expanding. There have been no reported Covid or other health concerns among clients. The program of cleanings is continuing.
 - c) Rehoboth School Department.
 - New curricula for health development are under development.
 - The schools have supplies of Narcan and administration is working on a Narcan policy.
 - The schools have nursing shortages and are exploring using part-time agency nurses through Culture Care. Nursing assistant positions have been cut in the budget.
 - Building evacuation plans are nearing completion; fire drills are ongoing; and issues are being resolved.
 - A social-emotional learning support program, School Pulse, is being implemented.
 - Transitioning back after long absence is a concern in the high school. They are looking into the BRYT Program, which provides a bridge. They also have a program for in-hospital tutoring, with participation doubled recently.
 - d) Human Services Department.
 - E. Doyle reported on welcome reconstruction and modifications in their office building

- as well as expansions in parking. A grant is in process for expanded video programming.
- Smoking policy is becoming an issue. Apparently there is an area set up for smokers; it is not well signed. G. Hamel recommends looking into cessation programs for clients. Some smokers are not our clients. A no-smoking-on-the-campus policy could be a deterrent or simply be ethical. B. Thayer moved we declare the entire Francis Farm campus to be no-smoking; M. DiGioia seconded. After discussion, the group moved to table this motion for more study.
- e) Rehoboth Community. No report.
- f) Board of Selectmen Representative. R. Panofsky discussed a project that Selectman Vadnais wishes us to undertake for emergency readiness. After considerable discussion of the variety of concerns, it was decided by consensus that Panofsky will again contact Vadnais and bring further particulars to the next meeting.

5. Old business.

- a) Opioid settlement funds. S. Pimental offered background information. \$41,028 has been accepted so far, with more to come. Funds must be used for opioid-related recovery and prevention. Our Board would be a proper place for consolidating plans how the Town should to spend these funds and set up a reporting system. It was decided by consensus to form a subgroup to perform an assessment to discover the range of applicable needs in town. G. Hamel, B. Bixenman, and R. Lambe will meet for this purpose.
- b) Systems for distributing public health alerts to Rehoboth residents. The Board will work through S. Pimental with the new town TV/Media Manager. R. Panofsky pointed out that we need to keep announcements clear and not unintentionally raise doubts among the public; discussion and issues can be aired on specific web pages.

6. New Business

Pandemic preparedness: We're on track with this. R. Lambe explained that the existence of our Board is a major tool. Many of our ongoing projects touch on this work.

At 8:30 pm E. Doyle moved adjournment, B. Thayer seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Richard Panofsky, Clerk


Robert Lambe, Chair


Richard Panofsky, Clerk