MINUTES
Board of Health Meeting
June 22, 2020
Virtual Meeting via ZOOM

Present: Robert Carangelo, Esq.; Dr. Marilyn Ross Cahn; Dr. Andrew Bronin, Lauren O’Keefe, APRN, FNP-BC; Julia Chiappetta; Vick Sandhu, Esq.; PA-C Maryann Ramos;

Guests: Daniel Warzoha, Emergency Management Director; Tracy Schietinger, GEMS Executive Director; Tom Miserendino, GEMS Director of Finance

Staff: Caroline Baisley, Director of Health; Joanna Lipson, Operations Administrator; David Fraszka, Public Health Emergency Preparedness Coordinator; Jenny Larkin, IT Project Coordinator (ZOOM meting host)

Chairman called the meeting to order at 06:33

Minutes
The minutes of the February 24, 2020 meeting were approved.
(Motion: O’Keefe / Second: Ramos / Vote: 6 in favor, 0 opposed)

Local Emergency Management Update:

Mr. Warzoha offered the following:
- The Town officials are preparing to develop a COVID-19 response After Action Report. This report will include reports from all agencies/departments that took part in Town’s response activities.
- The response action plan to COVID-19 pandemic took time, but once it was developed it worked well.
- The communication during the response was and continues to be very good among Town departments and outside agencies, such as Greenwich Hospital and State agencies.
- The Town officials have done a good job shutting down Town’s operations in order to curtail the spread of the virus.
- The decision to reopen schools will be made by the Governor.
- The cooperation of the Department of Health and Emergency Management office has been outstanding.

GEMS Quarterly Report

Mr. Miserendino offered the following financial report:
- GEMS ended the fiscal year 2020 very strong, with a positive change in Net Operating Assets of $464,355.
- On the revenue side, the agency was 1% ($65,000) ahead of budget. This was driven primarily by training revenue, which was 44% ahead of budget.
- Investment income, which is the interest income, was $24,000 for the year compared to $3,000 for the prior year.
- GEMS received close to $60,000 Health and Human Services stimulus grant.
- Patient revenue declined 3% from the previous year.
Expenses were 5% under budget, driven by staffing changes, negotiated new lower lease, decreased vehicle maintenance costs and reduced insurance costs.

The number of billable calls was significantly lower, which is attributed to COVID-19. Out of those calls, 30% were responses to COVID-19 positive cases and 65% were responses to patients that were screened for COVID-19 infection.

Ms. Schietinger offered the following operational report:

- One of the biggest issues for GEMS during the COVID-19 was not having adequate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), which made it difficult for the responders to protect themselves and their families.
- The staff did great keeping themselves and their families healthy, both physically and mentally. Out of 50 part-time and full-time employees, six contracted COVID-19 infection.
- The biggest issue currently, other than direct response to COVID-19, is significantly decreased revenue due to lower call volume and reduction in training sessions, while going into the new fiscal year and given that the budget was approved before the start of the pandemic.
- The beach bike patrol will be starting this coming weekend, as well as the marine medic.

**Department of Health’s Pandemic Response Activities:**

David Fraszka offered the following updates:

- The communication between the various Town Departments was outstanding.
- The information sharing between the Department of Health and other first responder agencies was timely and on a regular basis.
- The Greenwich MRC volunteers were an essential part in the case monitoring and contact tracing efforts.
- The Department is planning to host the annual MRC meeting remotely, most likely in July.
- The Department shared information and discussed solutions to problems with other local health departments in the region regularly.
- Social media played a big part in the dissemination of information to the Greenwich community.
- The Department is currently receiving weekly Personal Protective Equipment supplies from the State, which is being distributed to Greenwich health care providers.
- Response data and records of activities are beginning collected in preparation for development of the After-Action Report.
- The Department is at the begging stages of planning for busy influenza vaccination season and potential COVID-19 mass vaccination.

Ms. Chiappetta expressed doubt in the availability of the Red Cross to respond in Greenwich in the event that mass sheltering is needed. She suggested that the Town of Greenwich recruit a bank of community emergency response volunteers in addition to the MRC and CERT.

**Ms. Baisley stated the following:**

- The country is still in the first wave of the pandemic and the second wave is expected to begin in a fall or early winter.
- The COVID-19 vaccine when/if approved will be most likely distributed through the National Strategic Stockpile and the process will be similar to the distribution of the Novel H1N1 vaccine in 2009.
- Since the new vaccine will mostly be appropriated in limited numbers, the distribution will be prioritized based on certain groups, such as health care workers and first responders.
- The Director is confident, given the past experiences with mass prophylaxis, the Department of Health will be able to respond effectively and efficiently.
• Currently, the rate of positive case increase in Greenwich is decreasing, but it is expected to somewhat increase following the reopening of the Town.
• The States of New York, New Jersey and Connecticut have been working collaboratively instituting mitigating measures, which contributed to stabilizing the case increase rate. Other States, which did not institute social distancing measures, are experiencing rapid increase in cases.
• The Department of Health is operating at about 13-14 staff per day and all employees must comply with social distancing measures put in place.
• The total number of cases in Greenwich is relatively low, as compared to cities such as Stamford and Norwalk. The Town mitigation measures, readiness of the Greenwich Hospital, the efforts of the Health Department and the help of MRC volunteers, all contributed to keeping the infection rates down.
• The public education of the community is increasingly important, as big group of individuals are being seen congregating in public spaces such as beach, parks, etc.
• The Department of Health will continue with the case monitoring and contact tracing efforts. In addition, the Director will be monitoring the impact of the reopening on case numbers.

Other Business
The Chairman announced that Ms. Chiappetta will not to seek an additional term on the Board of Health and her term expires at the end of this month. She has agreed to stay on to the Board until the RTM votes on her replacement. Chairman thanked Ms. Chiappetta on behalf of the Department, the Board and the entire Town for her service and her exceptional contributions.

There being no further business, The Chairman moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:00 PM.
(Motion: Ross-Cahn/ Second: Ramos /Vote: Unanimous; 7-in favor, 0 abstentions)

Respectfully submitted,

Andrew Bronin, M.D.