

CAROLINE CALDERONE BAISLEY  
DIRECTOR OF HEALTH



MICHAEL LONG, Director  
DIVISION OF ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES  
MARY RACHO, Director  
DIVISION OF LABORATORY  
DEBORAH TRAVERS, Director  
DIVISION OF FAMILY HEALTH  
ROBIN CLARK-SMITH, Director  
SPECIAL CLINICAL SERVICES

## DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

### Minutes

#### Board of Health Minutes

June 26, 2023

Present: Joel Muhlbaum, Esq., Chair; Dr. Sarah Gamble; Sarah Madden; Lauren O'Keefe, APRN, FNP-BC; Maryann Ramos, MPH, PA-C Emeritus; Anne Fountain

Absent: Danielle Goodwin, DDS

Staff: Caroline Baisley, Director of Health; Debora Edwards, Operations Administrator; Mary Racho, Director of Laboratory; Michael Long, Director of Environmental Services; Kristin Donlin, Environmental Health Supervisor; Deborah C. Travers, MSN, APRN, FNP-BC, Director of Family Health

Presenters: Tracy Schietinger, GEMS Executive Director; Tom Miserendino, GEMS Director of Finance; Joseph Laucella, Emergency Management Director; Mary Racho, Director of Laboratory; Caroline C. Baisley, Director of Health, Dr. Sarah Gamble, Vice-Chair, Board of Health and Chair of Board of Health Sub-Committee

The meeting was called to order by Board Chair, Joel Muhlbaum, Esq. at 6:32 pm

### Minutes

The draft minutes of the May 22, 2023 meeting was presented. There were no edits requested. Motion to accept the minutes as submitted were approved and accepted. **(Motion: O'Keefe / Second: Fountain/ Vote: 6 in favor-0 opposed-1 absent)**

## **GEMS Quarterly Report:**

### **Tracy Schietinger, GEMS Executive Director**

- Call volume has returned to pre-pandemic responses
  - Ended the year with 6560 incidents- 500 more than last year
  - 4235 transports
  
- Cardiac arrest Utstein save rate – 50%, nat'l 27%
  - Childbirth- 2
  - 20 CPAP
  - Narcan 17
  
- Fundraising
  - Successful gala in April
  - Cos Cobber Event During EMS week in May
  
- Training
  - Annual Skills Training was conducted the week of June 19 for HALO (high acuity, low occurrence)
  - This week a joint tactical training on hostile events with GPD and GFD was conducted at Hamilton Ave school

### **GEMS Director of Finance: Tom Miserendino**

- Mr. Miserendino provided an overview of the fiscal year Operating budget results through April 30, 2023
- Total Year change in net operating assets was a positive \$413K
- Total Year Revenue was 7% ahead of budget driven primarily by patient revenue
- Total Year Operating expenses were 1.8% over budget

### **Emergency Management: Director Joseph Laucella**

- Explanation on Greenwich Alerts was offered. All residents can register at [www.greenwichalerts.com](http://www.greenwichalerts.com).
- Review of drills conducted included a helicopter landing drill and an emergency plan update.

- Regional Joint Unified training is scheduled for June 28 & 29th. Medical Response to Dynamic Incidents will also be covered.

### **Lab Update: Mary Racho, Director of Laboratory:**

- Radon Gas is the 2<sup>nd</sup> leading cause for lung cancer in non-smokers
- Cos Cob, Riverside and Old Greenwich are the “hot spots” in Greenwich, where 40% - 50% of homes tested had high levels of radon gas (above US EPA levels of 4.0pCi/L)
- In 2023, over 127 homes were tested for radon gas, and close to 4000 homes were tested from 2000 - 2023
- The responses from a survey conducted of homes with high levels of Radon gas showed:
  - Half the homes with high Radon gas levels put in mitigation systems
  - Customers liked the service they received from Laboratory staff
  - Laboratory staff were professional and very helpful

### **Air Pollution Report: Caroline C. Baisley, Director of Health**

- The Greenwich Charter includes Chapter 8, entitled “Pollution”. This ordinance was adopted in September, 1968 so that the Department of Health’s Laboratory could begin testing the air, mainly around the operating coal-fueled Cos Cob Power Plant. At the time of adopting this ordinance there were no Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regulations.
- This regulation is no longer in effect or enforceable. Congress created the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in 1970 and in the same year passed a revised Clean Air Act.
- Through the creation of the EPA, the Federal government was authorized to take the lead in cleaning up air pollution in the U.S. Later in the 1970’s Connecticut formed the Department of

Environmental Protection (DEP), now known as the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP). This arm of Connecticut’s government is commissioned to carry out EPA’s regulations on air pollution.

- The Cos Cob Power Plant was decommissioned in 1986 and in 1989 the Town of Greenwich (TOG) purchased the plant, which included the Mianus Pond.
- Because of stringent land development regulations and the contamination of the plant and surrounding land, the TOG was restricted in developing the property.
- The Town of Greenwich was considered a “hot spot” for pollution in Fairfield County, Connecticut when the Cos Cob Power Plant was operating. In the late 1990’s the deterioration of the Plant began to release asbestos fibers into the air and surrounding neighborhoods. This condition created an immediate health hazard. The Board of Health, the Director of Health and the EPA declared the Plant as a public health hazard and in 1999 the Plant underwent an asbestos remediation. The Plant was demolished in 2000, leaving only a small token of its legacy behind.
- The State DEEP’s air monitoring program includes an air monitoring station in Greenwich, along with other towns/cities in Connecticut, mainly along the coastline. The DEEP’s Air Quality Index (AQI) analyzes air quality conditions for all towns/cities in Connecticut on a daily basis. This allows residents to make educated decisions for themselves and their families as they set out into the environment.
- In May 2023, the American Lung Association reported that Fairfield County was the most polluted area in the entire New York and Newark metro area. As a result, the State DEEP obtained a mobile air quality monitoring vehicle which is equipped with air pollution analyzers. The primary purpose of this vehicle is to ensure that on a community-based level, pollutant emissions and the air people breathe in their communities are meeting state standards.
- The Director stated that according to EPA standards, non-road equipment engines which are used in lawn and garden equipment and a wide range of other residential and commercial equipment will put in place a set of more stringent exhaust standards and establish new evaporative emission standards for fuel tanks and fuel lines. This action is believed to have been delayed in getting started. The EPA has recognized the problem of the incomplete combustion process of simple engines and is committed to working toward remediating the problem.
- The Director noted that pollution and noise come from a variety of equipment. It is not just gas blowers, it is gas powered everything used in both the lawn care industry and the construction industry, automobile industry, aviation, etc.!

- The Director cited industry categories that release the same pollutants as the lawn/garden operations within Fairfield County. It turns out these pollutants are being released at higher levels within the transportation, construction, aviation and residential sectors.

**Subcommittee Recommendation on Gasoline Operated Leaf Blowers: Dr. Sarah Gamble, Subcommittee Chair**

- The Chair of the Subcommittee gave an overview of the Board's action to create a subcommittee in the fall of 2022, in an effort to review Quiet Yard Greenwich's (QYG) white paper proposal to change the Town's existing Noise Ordinance under the purview of the Board of Health. This document, along with other submitted material and slides presented by guest speakers for QYG at the Board's February 2023 meeting was all taken into consideration as proof that gasoline operated leaf blowers were an immediate health hazard to residents from the noise and air pollutants they produce. The proposed changes also include replacing gas blowers with e-blowers. The Chair recited the existing restrictions and allowances in the Noise Ordinance for using gas blowers:
  1. Gas blowers can only be used Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.; Saturdays, Sundays and holidays from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.
  2. All year only one gas blower can be used on properties ¼ acre in size or less.
  3. From Memorial Day to Labor Day, on all lot sizes only one gas blower can be used.
  4. Gas blowers can be used during a storm recovery operation.
  5. Gas blower hourly allowances outlined in the Noise Ordinance are made possible through an exemption in the Noise Ordinance. There are also hourly and day allowances for domestic power tools and construction equipment. Without these exemptions, these pieces of equipment would not be able to be used during the day.
- In May 2023, the landscaping community was invited to the Board's scheduled meeting and was asked to give comments to QYG's proposal. Some pertinent statements were made about the leaf collection season starting on November 1<sup>st</sup> and lasting for 6 to 8 weeks. However, the weather does affect the leaf collection season and at this point the weather cannot be predicted. Other points made were pertaining to commercial technology for e-blowers and the batteries

(lithium) that they run on. They provide power for short periods of time and they are a fire hazard. Storage of batteries and new equipment needed was also commented on.

The number of complaints received on gas blowers was limited in 2022 and are low so far this year.

The Chair noted that noise, especially loud noise, can be harmful. Length of time exposed to noise and how high the decibel level of the noise is will basically determine noise exposure levels. Intensity, sound pressure and frequency also play roles in exposure.

Gas operated leaf blowers are loud, can produce low frequency noise and noise can travel long distances however, penetrating through windows and structures depend on the construction of these items.

The complicated issue of using a noise exposure tool that is applied to workers (occupational) and then applied to the general public's exposure was explained without too much detail, however in the end when this is done it does not give an accurate result.

The Subcommittee's recommendation to the Board was to reject QYG's general proposal which included a draft Noise Ordinance they had prepared for the Board. The Chair of the Subcommittee stated that this recommendation is based upon QYG's claim that the use of gas operated leaf blowers are an immediate health hazard. However, the proposal is allowing gas blowers to be used several months out of the year. We do not recognize a health hazard on a part time basis. The Chair indicated however, that changes to the existing Noise Ordinance should be done in an effort to control the overall level of noise in the community. Other items for the Board to vote on include:

- A Registration Program: Administered through the Department of Health for all yard, lawn, tree, property maintenance and other professional operators that use gas powered leaf blowers. The program will have a fee and details will be available for the Board's review/passage at a scheduled meeting in the fall of 2023. This program will assist with enforcement activities and will allow for a re-education of restrictions and allowances for members of the industry and homeowners.
  
- Subcommittee's Further Review of All Noise Control Ordinances in Fairfield County: This activity will also include review of the State DEEP Noise Control Regulations that are a model for local Noise Ordinances. The review process will give insight to the Subcommittee in making a recommendation to the Board for further changes to the existing Greenwich Noise Ordinance.

The Chair noted that the two items outlined are a solid approach toward reducing the overall noise level in the community. In addition, these items will allow for a re-education program outlining the restrictions and allowances of the Noise Ordinance. It will also stress the importance of the homeowner knowing the rules and taking responsibility for making sure that lawn and home maintenance professionals abide by them.

The Chair of the Board reviewed the items the Subcommittee recommended for a vote by the full Board.

1. The Subcommittee recommends that the Board reject QYG's overall proposal.
2. The Subcommittee recommends that the Board vote to implement a Registration Program for all Lawn, Yard, Tree, Property Maintenance and other professionals that use gasoline operated leaf blowers. The program will assist with enforcement activities and provide a structured re-education program to both industry and homeowners.
3. The Subcommittee recommends that the Board vote to allow the Subcommittee to continue their work on reviewing all Noise Ordinances that are in effect within cities/towns in Fairfield County and to review the State DEEP's Noise Control Regulations, which serve as a template for all Noise Ordinances within the State. Enforcement activities will be conducted by the Greenwich Police Department.

The Chair asked for a motion to accept all 3 items outlined.

**Board Vote:**

Three items to approve:

1. QYG's Proposal is denied.
2. Implementation of a Registration Program which includes an educational component for all Lawn, Yard, Tree, Property Maintenance and other professional operations that use gas leaf blowers and an education program for homeowners. This program will be managed by the Department of Health.
3. Acceptance of the Subcommittee's continued work to review all Noise Control Ordinances in Fairfield County and the State DEEP Noise Control Regulation. This action will lead to the Sub-

committee making a recommendation to the Board on changes to the existing Noise Control Ordinance in an effort to reduce noise in the community.

**Vote: Motion to Accept: Ramos/ Accepted: O'Keefe  
Unanimous: 6 in favor, 0 opposed/1 absent)**

**Motion to adjourn requested at 7:46 pm by Joel Muhlbaum, Esq. (Motion: Ramos/ Second: O'Keefe)**

Minutes prepared by Caroline C. Baisley, Director of Health 7/3/2023