

Minutes

Board of Health Minutes

June 28, 2021 via ZOOM

Present: Robert Carangelo, Esq., Chairman; Anne Fountain; Dr. Danielle Goodwin, DDS; Dr. Sarah Gamble; Joel Muhlbaum, Esq.; Lauren O'Keefe, APRN, FNP-BC; Maryann Ramos, MPH, PA-C Emeritus

Staff: Caroline Baisley, Director of Health; Kristin Donlin, Interim Operations Administrator/Environmental Health Supervisor

Presenters: Tracy Schietinger, GEMS Executive Director; Tom Miserendino, Greenwich Emergency Medical Services (GEMS) Director of Finance; Deb Travers, Director of Family Health; Linda Conti, Public Health Dental Hygienist

The ZOOM Meeting was called to order by Board Chairman, Robert Carangelo, Esq. at 6:30 pm

Minutes

The minutes of the April 26, 2021 meeting were presented. Lauren O'Keefe, APRN, FNP-BC requested two revisions for spelling and typographical errors. Motion to accept revisions to the minutes were approved and accepted. **(Motion: O'Keefe / Second: Muhlbaum / Vote: 5 in favor – 0 opposed, 2 abstained)**

Robert welcomed and introduced Dr. Danielle Goodwin, DDS to the Board of Health. She received her Doctor of Dental Surgery (DDS) from New York University (NYU) College of Dentistry and was a dentist on Wall Street for 10 years before opening her own family dentist practice in town. Dr. Goodwin is a member of the American Dental Association, the Greenwich Study Club and the Greenwich Dental Society. Dr. Goodwin keeps up with all the newest and safest dental technology and will be a tremendous asset to the Board.

Robert thanked Dr. Andrew Bronin for his 8 years on the Board of Health serving as Vice Chairman. Dr. Bronin provided exceptional insight, guidance and advice and he will be missed.

GEMS Quarterly Report:

GEMS Director of Finance, Tom Miserendino:

- The fiscal year ended on April 30, 2021. An audit is ongoing
- The Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loan that was forgiven is on the grant revenue line
- GEMS ended the year with a positive change in net operating assets
- Total year revenue was 7.2 million
- Decrease in patient revenue
- Four hundred twenty-eight (428) fewer transports than in 2020, which is a 11% decrease
- Standby and overtime revenue ended year below budget due to cancelation of events because of the pandemic
- Received grants from the United States Department of Health and Human Services and from the Inner-City Fund
- Operating expenses were under budget
- Lower Workers Compensation premium due to lower claims
- Fundraising expenses were lower. The Gala in February was a virtual event, which was significantly less expensive

Questions:

- Dr. Gamble noted that there was a high number of canceled calls on the report. She asked who cancels those calls and whether calls where care and treatment are provided, but the patient refuses transport if it is billable. Executive Director, Tracy Schietinger responded that police, fire or the patient themselves can cancel the call. Legislation has been passed that would provide GEMS the ability to bill for what's called treat and release starting July 1, 2021
- Joel Muhlbaum asked to clarify the line item that says training salaries. Tom replied that there is one full-time person who is head of training and other trainings may be contracted out

GEMS Executive Director, Tracy Schietinger:

- Charlie Kaufman, a GEMS Board Member for over 20 years who worked closely with the Board of Health with securing contracts, passed away on May 24, 2021
- COVID-19 positive patients in the last quarter went down to 6.2%. Since the last week in April, there has not been any COVID-19 positive patient transported
- Ninety percent (90%) of GEMS staff is fully vaccinated
- Call volume is down
- GEMS worked closely with the Greenwich Health Department with vaccinations and participated in the Department's vaccine clinic
- Stand-by activity is picking up. Bike team and boat paramedic are operating on the weekends through the summer. GEMS is preparing for the two sets of fireworks and working closely with the town. It will be two full scale operations which are only two days apart

- A bill was recently passed to include paramedics as first responders that would cover Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) under Workers Compensation. Previously, only police and the fire department were considered first responders
- GEMS has been working on applying for grant funding with the assistance of the Department of Health for Station 4 to offset some of the construction costs through Congressman Jim Himes Office. Notification was received that there were over 50 applicants and GEMS did not receive the funding.
- An application for a federal grant for funding of an ambulance has been filed and a response should be received by September. GEMS will continue to keep searching for grants and other opportunities to help offset costs
- Construction on Station 4 anticipated to begin in August or September
- Accreditation of ambulance services is in the final review for GEMS to be an accredited ambulance agency. GEMS would be only the second accredited service in the state

Questions:

- The Chairman asked what is expected the timeframe of construction for Station 4. Tracy responded that it is 8 months; however, she expects it to be 12-14 months
- Anne Fountain stated that grant funding can be very competitive and the Board can help with letters of support
- Dr. Danielle Goodwin asked about billing for palliative care without transport. Tracy said that as of July 1, 2021, legislation will go into effect that would allow GEMS to bill for treat and release without transport. Anne Fountain said that this may discourage patients from seeking help
- Joel Muhlbaum asked if it is a legislation issue or is it a legal statute that is prohibiting GEMS from billing. Tracy responded that the billing abilities are state regulated. Rates are issued each January. This will be an addendum
- Dr. Gamble volunteered to help GEMS with billing and coding as she has many years of experience with it

Dental Health Division Update: Linda Conti, Public Health Dental Hygienist:

- The objective of the Dental Health Program is to prevent oral diseases in persons of all ages and to identify those individuals who do not appear to have access to quality oral health care. This is achieved through the efforts of two public health dental hygienists who provide dental screenings for early detection of dental health problems and, by offering comprehensive oral health care and services to persons of all ages
- The goal of the program is to recognize the early stages of dental disease and make necessary recommendations to treat these problems. Dental problems in school-aged children can lead to difficulty in concentrating, difficulty eating, decreased school performance and poor social relationships, as well as school absenteeism
- The program is provided to 11 elementary, 3 middle schools, the Head start program, school-based preschools, the Women Infant and Children (WIC) Program, plus several town preschools, seniors, expectant mothers and special needs groups

- Oral health screenings as well as health education, consistent with the age of the students is provided for all children. The educational content includes disease prevention, human growth and nutrition, good oral habits, substance abuse, oral piercing, safety and accident prevention and tobacco use. In addition, we coordinate an appropriate referral mechanism for treatment, provide program in various community settings and counsel the public in the prevention of oral disease. The dental team works with local dentists and orthodontists, school speech therapists, social workers, teachers, school nurses and the school's administrators to guarantee that every student receive necessary dental treatment. It also provides dental consultation to the Greenwich School District, before and after school programs as well as to the Head Start and Family Centers Programs, the Bible Street Playgroup, as well as many town wide preschool programs. Throughout the year, the dental team was available to provide guidance and necessary information when dental emergencies or concerns were presented regarding a student
- Oral health screenings and classroom education were not able to be conducted in the school environment due the COVID-19 pandemic. The decision to defer oral health screenings and in person education in the school setting was made by Governor Lamont. In addition, the state recommendation for a dental screening for every new student entering the school for the first time as well as all third grade, sixth grade and ninth grade students was deferred by the Governor until December of 2021. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, many students could not receive a dental examination from their own dental provider. Some students did not receive a dental screening or oral health education in the 2019-2020 school year due to schools being closed. The program screens approximately 6000 students each school year. For the 2019-2020 school year 2727 students, which is 69%, received a dental screening. Four hundred eighty-seven (487) written referrals were made for treatment, which is 13%. Fifty-four (54) treatments were completed, which is 11%.
- An alternative approach to education was provided during the pandemic. The dental team created age appropriate videos for each grade level, including preschool. Each student received a toothbrush, dental floss and handouts on dental sealants, a toothbrush chart or a diagram on the correct use of dental floss and orthodontic care. There were 250 classes, pre-school through elementary school that received virtual oral health education. This included the Head Start Program, Armstrong Court Preschool, Grauer Preschool, The Gateway School for Young Children, and the Bible Street Playgroup. In addition, there were 30 remote classes who received oral health education
- Also due to COVID restrictions the annual "Children's Dental Health Month" celebration did not take place. However, the dental team contributed over a hundred apples that had been donated by the local Acme grocery store to the Greenwich Boys and Girls Club
- The dental team performed contact tracing since the fall of 2020 and assisted with the Health Department's COVID-19 vaccination clinics
- The Operational goal for this year was to create a power-point for the expectant mothers at the Greenwich Hospital pregnancy clinic. We created a program called "Oral Health Care during Pregnancy" and "How to Care for Your Newborn's Teeth." This narrated presentation provided information on good oral health care during all stages of pregnancy as well as information on healthy behaviors for mothers and their babies

- The Customer Service goal for 2020-2021 is to inform students at Greenwich High School’s “College and Career Night” about a career in Dental Hygiene. A video was created and filmed by the dental team and sent to the school to be used as a resource for students interested in a career in dental hygiene

Questions:

- The Chairman asked how many dental emergencies the team handled during the pandemic. Linda replied that there were 3 requests, but only 2 were referred to local dentists. In non-COVID-19 times, over 6000 children get screened annually and about 18% of them are referred to dentist or clinics for follow-up. The fluoride rinse program is provided from Grades 1-5 with 80% compliance. Resuming the rinse program will need to be evaluated
- Dr. Goodwin said that she has been working along with Public Health Dental Hygienists Linda and Jeannie Schnakenberg for many years and herself plus many other local dentists work with families that have been referred, especially when it comes to payment
- Dr. Gamble asked about providing services and presentations to elderly. In the past, the dental team has gone to the Senior Center and local nursing homes for screening and programs. Anne Fountain agreed that the senior population is in need of dentistry and that many providers may not be providing the same payment flexibility as the younger patients. Linda said that Greenwich Hospital closed their dental clinic, but Family Centers opened one at Wilbur Peck Court Apartment Complex that uses a sliding scale for payment.

COVID-19 Vaccination Clinic Update: Deb Travers, Director of Family Health:

- A detailed description of the clinic operations was provided (reception/greeting, check-in, technical support, vaccination, post vaccination monitoring and scheduling of second doses)
- Department has held flu clinics for years and the COVID-19 vaccination clinic was set up similarly, but tweaked to meet the needs of the current pandemic, including the use of computers
- Clinics were held 3 times a week since the end of January through May on the ground floor of Town Hall. Fifty-eight (58) clinics were held with the last one moved to Family Health on June 17th. It utilized Family Health nurses, Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) volunteers and other Department Staff. Clinics provided the Moderna vaccine. Over 6000 vaccinations were given by the Department. Less than 10 doses total were discarded or wasted
- No shot recipients needed emergency medical assistance
- Dr. Fauci stand-up and selfie station was setup for photo opportunities. Stickers and buttons were provided to shot recipients
- Homebound patients received either Moderna or Johnson & Johnson (J&J) vaccines. Homebound visits were made by Family Health nurses, primarily on the days of clinics

Questions:

- The Chairman asked whether there was any talk about booster shots. Maryann Ramos said that she had heard that the National Institute for Health (NIH) has recently stated that they would not be needed sooner than 12-18 months.

COVID-19 Update: Caroline Baisley, Director of Health:

- A convenient pharmacy list was made for individuals looking for vaccines. It has been posted on the Department's webpage
- The Delta variant is a concern here and worldwide. It is still not known how effective the vaccines are against this variant
- As of 4:00 PM on June 28, 2021, there have been 5134 confirmed COVID-19 positive residents and 89 deaths. There have only been a couple cases each week. There have been over 600,000 deaths in the United States and over 3 million worldwide.
- A fourth wave of COVID-19 is a probability with the timeframe being in the fall
- Breakthrough cases continue to be reported

Business: Reported by Robert Carangelo, Esq., Board Chairman:

- Dr. Goodwin has offered to help in the fall or future with whatever may be needed
- Unless necessary, there will not be meetings in July or August. Meetings will reconvene in September

Motion to adjourn requested at 7:53 pm by Robert Carangelo, Esq. (Motion: O'Keefe / Second: Fountain)

Minutes prepared by, Kristin Donlin, Interim Operations Administrator/Environmental Health Supervisor
06/29/21

Respectfully submitted by, Maryann Ramos, MPH, PA-C Emeritus, Secretary 07/01/21