

BOROUGH OF WATCHUNG
BOARD OF HEALTH
MINUTES

September 22nd, 2021

7:00pm Virtual Meeting

Phone Number: 1 -646- 558- 8656

Conference Code: 507843

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:22pm.

President's Statement

Under the provisions of N.J.S.A 10:4-6 et seq., notice of time and place of this meeting has been posted and sent to the official newspapers.

Roll Call

Present: Bruce Ruck (President), Julia Gunther (Vice President), Fran Ellis, and Diana Logan.

Absent: Francesca Escaleira, Meghana Anandarangam, Charlene Virgilio, Kimberly Brown.

Also present is Middle-Brook Regional Health Commission, Health Officer Kevin Sumner, Council Liaison Ronald Jubin was not present due to his conflict with a Borough Council Meeting starting at 7:30 P.M.

Consent Agenda

Approval of Meeting Minutes – May 19th, 2021

Julia Gunther moved and Bruce Ruck second, motion to approve the minutes for the May 19th, 2021 Meeting. All unanimously approved.

Old Business

COVID-19

Bruce Ruck gave a few COVID-19 related updates. He said many COVID-19 restrictions have been removed. He advised everyone that the fishing derby and movie night were cancelled not for health reasons stated by the Borough but due to the bridge to Philips Field still being closed and a portion of the lake awaiting inspection for safety reasons.

New Business

Ida Flood Update

Bruce Ruck said the town is still recovering from damages caused by the flood.

Kevin Sumner said from the public health perspective Watchung fared well. He mentioned that the storm did not cause many power outages in Watchung. He also advised all food establishments in town were inspected the next day and did not incur any significant flood waters. Bruce Ruck added that the circle in Watchung was closed due to heavy flooding.

Julia Gunther commented on the flooding in town by Watchung circle being the highest ever seen. She commended the Rescue Squad for doing a great job being a safe haven environment for people to take cover and the Fire Department for keeping everyone safe. She also asked if the Police Department could work on bettering their lines of communication with more Nixle alerts out to the residents for the future.

Meghana Anandarangam joined the meeting at 7:30 P.M.

Kevin Sumner mentioned this flash flooding event was not like anything this area is used to. He also believes we could see more incidents of progressive flash flooding and we need to be more educated in order to prepare for it.

Sewer/Septic Issues

Kevin Sumner discussed a home having their sewer discharge into the storm lines on Ridge Road. He said the connection was about a 20 year old connection to the storm sewer as opposed to the sewer system however, the property has since connected to sewers. Bruce Ruck questioned how this sewer connection has been overlooked for so many years. Kevin Sumner said this was an oversight long before there were any records of it. Kevin Sumner stated there was a lot of confusion on which department takes action to correct a sewer overflow. Kevin Sumner advised no action from the Board of Health is necessary at this time he just wanted to make the Board aware of the resolution the Council approved designating the Health Department as their sewer and septic issue authority under the Borough Ordinance. Bruce Ruck said in conclusion there are minimal health issues relating to sewer/septic issues and the remaining issues are being rectified.

Commission Items 2019 Audit

Kevin Sumner stated the 2019 audit for the commission is finally complete.

Staffing

Kevin Sumner advised the Board another registered environmental health specialist was hired. He said this individual spends 50 percent of their time in Watchung, Green Brook and Warren and the other 50 percent in Bridgewater. He said he is also looking to hire a full time health educator but having a hard time finding one. He said this person would be responsible for vaccination clinic planning, education promotion, and advertising, etc. He added another position he is looking to hire for is a part time COVID-19 vaccine coordinator to help coordinate

the clinics.

Community Health Assessment

Kevin Sumner advised all that Somerset Hospital is doing their required community health needs assessment and once it's completed they will use that data to develop a County health improvement plan. He mentioned these reports should be available by the end of the year.

Monthly Reports

Kevin Sumner said that as of yet the COVID-19 virus has not really impacted the Watchung school system. He also mentioned more recently the age bracket with a slightly larger uptick in cases are individuals ages 44 and younger.

Kevin Sumner advised everyone that the Commissions next scheduled meeting is October 7th.

Public Portion

No Public Present.

Bruce Ruck mentioned there was no new news regarding the Marijuana topic.

Kevin Sumner mentioned another option relating to his search to fill the health educator position would be a public health nurse. He asked the board to advise him if they knew anyone interested.

Diana Logan responded she will ask around in Seton Hall if anyone is interested in applying for the position. She also advised everyone there have been a lot of COVID-19 cases occurring in fully vaccinated students. She reminded everyone to continue to please wear their masks.

Diana Logan questioned if the Board of Health is discussing booster shots. Bruce Ruck responded that right now the people who meet the immuno compromised definition are the only ones who qualify. He also said boosters in individuals 65 and older has not been approved yet by the FDA as they are waiting for the vaccine committee to meet to make that final determination. Kevin Sumner believes we will get approval toward the end of this week by the FDA but at this point there are no booster shots, there are just third doses for amino compromised individuals.

Bruce Ruck mentioned that a lot of chain drug stores who were doing free COVID-19 testing have lost their funding to do so. He also believes that sooner or later showing your COVID-19 vaccine card will not be enough proof of anything due to the high amount of fraudulent COVID-19 vaccine cards created. Bruce Ruck thinks soon individuals will have to download the state docket app as proof of vaccination or get documentation from the facility where the shot was administered. He advised everyone the docket app could potentially be a problem if the account is linked under the wrong phone number. He asked Kevin Sumner if the Middle-Brook Health Commission has the ability to go into the State vaccine records and make a phone number change. Kevin Sumner said he is unsure but he would look into the request.

Adjournment

Bruce Ruck moved and Julia Gunther second, motion to adjourn at 7:57 pm. The next scheduled Board of Health meeting will be held on November 17th 2021 at 7:00 pm. In order to comply with all NJ Executive Orders and to protect members of the public, current meetings will be held virtually for all parties until such time when in-person meetings can safely resume while complying with all NJ Executive Orders. When in-person meetings resume, they shall be held at Borough Hall, 15 Mountain Boulevard, Watchung, New Jersey.

Respectfully submitted,

Regina Angelo

Accepted: 11/17/2021