

Middle-Brook Regional Health Commission  
Meeting (Bridgewater Township Municipal Building)  
April 3, 2023

1. Call to Order

The meeting called to order at 7:00 pm by the President, Mr. G. Riley, with the following statement: "This meeting being held in compliance with the Open Public Meeting Law in that the requirements of the Law have been met by the Annual Meeting Notice being forwarded to the Courier News, Home News, Echoes Sentinel, Star Ledger, and posted in the Municipal Buildings of the towns of the Commission on March 22, 2023."

2. Roll Call

- Ms. Christine Madrid, Bridgewater - Present
- Mr. Wells Winegar, Bridgewater - Present
- Mr. Atul Shah, Green Brook – Present
- Ms. Deborah Catapano, Green Brook – Absent
- Ms. Lisa Couch, Green Brook - Absent
- Mr. Greg Riley, Warren - Present
- Ms. Angela Valerio, Warren - Present
- Mr. Mal Plager, Warren - Present
- Dr. Bruce Ruck, Watchung – Absent
- Ms. Louise Lindenmeier, Watchung – Absent
- Ms. Francesca Escaleira, Watchung – Absent

3. Meeting Opened to the Public – public recognized - public portion of meeting closed

Warren Township Committeewoman and Board of Health member, Lisa Lontai, was present.

4. Acceptance of the Minutes of February 6, 2023's Meeting

W. Winegar moved to adopt proposed minutes with minor change, second by A. Shah. All in favor

5. Treasurer's Reports – February 2023, March 2023

W. Winegar moved to adopt the February 2023 Treasurer's Reports, second by C. Madrid. All in favor

A. Shah moved to adopt the March 2023 Treasurer's Reports, second by M. Plager. All in favor

## 6. Unfinished Business

### A. COVID-19 Update

Although numbers are still low for schools and the general public, long term care and skilled nursing facilities are continuing to experience outbreaks. Throughout the Commission we are seeing 40-50 cases per week.

The federal public health emergency ends in May and the biggest impact will be on the role of insurance companies.

Currently, mandatory mask wearing is no longer required in healthcare facilities within Somerset County. This is dependent on the community transmission level, which describes the amount of COVID-19 spread within a county.

### B. Commission 2022 Audit – Summary Letter

Along with the completed 2021 audit, the Commission received a summary letter from its accountant, Suplee, Clooney & Company, that stated they thought it would be beneficial to have electronic imaging of checks on monthly bank statements. The Commission would like a summary letter to be included with each audit.

### C. 2023 Commission Meeting days/dates – Locations added

The Commission Meeting locations for the remainder of the year are as follows: Monday, June 5<sup>th</sup> in Warren, Monday, October 2<sup>nd</sup> in Watchung, and Monday, December 4<sup>th</sup> in Green Brook.

### D. Strike Team – Infection Control Training

Utilizing a grant funded by NJACCHO, K. Sumner has created a Strike Team consisting of two Commission employees, Eze Udensi, MD, Local Health Outreach Coordinator, and Megan Romanovich, Infectious Disease Preparedness Generalist. Their purpose, as it relates to this grant, is to conduct infection control training sessions for staff members, including those in food and custodial departments, of long term care and skilled nursing facilities in our area. Currently, there are two facilities in Bridgewater who have requested training.

## 7. New Business

### A. Vector-borne Diseases

The number of mosquito and tick-related diseases in our area decreased as of 2022.

B. Candida auris

Candida auris is an emerging species of Candida which causes a fungal disease that is very transmissible in congregate care facilities such as long term care and prisons, and has shown to be resistant to anti-fungal medications.

C. Massage Therapy

There has been a lot of recent activity throughout the community concerning massage therapy businesses. Investigations conducted by the health and police departments found multiple businesses and therapists to be operating without licenses, evidence of personal belongings and sleeping quarters on the premises, as well as items suggesting illegal activity such as prostitution.

D. Animal and Rabies Control

The Commission manages the rabies vaccine inventory for Somerset County through the Bridgewater office.

There was a dog bite incident that occurred in Warren. Animal Control seized the dog and the court found in favor of the Animal Control Officer, deeming the dog a potentially dangerous dog. The animal was returned to the owner but licensed as a potentially dangerous dog with extra precautions in place.

The Commission will hold a rabies clinic at the Washington Valley Firehouse in Warren on May 6<sup>th</sup>.

E. 2022 Audit Engagement Letter

The Commission members would prefer that the audit engagement letter be completed every 2-3 years rather than annually due to the cost of \$5,000 per letter. However, state law currently requires an annual audit as do the State grants received by the Commission.

F. 2022 State mandated Annual Reports

Annual reports must be completed and sent to the New Jersey Department of Health. Copies of the reports were provided to members.

G. Legal Case re: financial responsibility of public health intervention

G. Riley reported on a recent case decided by the Superior Court, Appellate Division. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Rockleigh Country Club in Bergen County, NJ, was forced to close down due to Gov. Murphy's Executive Orders dated March 21, 2020,

and June 9, 2020. Seeking compensation due to its loss of revenue, the Club sued the State of New Jersey. The Court held that the Plaintiff did not suffer a loss which was compensable under the constitution, and decided the appeal in favor of the State. G. Riley felt that the claim had some merit since the shutdown was the result of an executive order of the governor, rather than duly enacted legislation, but given the nature of the emergency, the court was never going to rule in favor of the Plaintiff. The Plaintiff could possibly appeal to the NJ Supreme Court.

#### 8. Addendum to Agenda

April 3<sup>rd</sup> marked the start of National Public Health Week. The 28<sup>th</sup> Annual Public Health symposium, celebrating this week, was hosted at Rutgers University with presentations on environmental justice. The topics highlighted by American Public Health Association who sponsors National Public Health Week are: community, violence prevention, accessibility, reproductive and sexual health, mental health, rural health, accessibility, and food and nutrition.

G. Riley reported that the Borough of Bound Brook was previously a member of the Commission. In approximately 2016, due to a significant decrease in tax revenue resulting from damage from multiple floods and from Hurricane Sandy, the Commission and the Borough came to an understanding that the Commission would scale back on some services to reduce the amount to be paid by the Borough to the Commission. Thereafter, in August 2018, the Borough notified the Commission that it would be withdrawing from the Commission effective February 28, 2019. The Borough subsequently entered into a contract with the County for public health services. The Commission continued to provide essential public health services to the Borough through February 2019. However, the Borough has never paid the Commission the balance due for the last quarter of 2018 and the two months of 2019. The balance owed is over \$41,000. G. Riley advised that we need to either consult with counsel to pursue Bound Brook for the balance due, or write off the debt on our books. W. Winegar wishes to pursue this matter informally and stated he would contact the Borough Administrator, Hector Herrera, to discuss the balance due. All agreed with this approach. G. Riley will forward W. Winegar the necessary documents and the Commission will make a final decision at their next meeting.

New Jersey Association of County and City Health Officials and PHACE (Public Health Associations Collaborative Effort), representing all the state's public health associations, are advocating for the return of public health priority funding from the State. Boards of Health are encouraged to participate in this effort. Local health departments have not received state funding since 2011, and federal grant and COVID-19 funding will likely end in June 2024. Resolution 2023-07 supports legislation reinstating Public Health Priority Funding for an amount of at least \$10 million annually so that local health departments may do the necessary public health work that is needed in our communities.

A. Shah moved to adopt the Resolution advocating for the reinstatement of Public Health Priority Funding to local health departments, second by W. Winegar. All in favor

9. Adjournment

There being no further business, W. Winegar made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:25 pm, seconded by A. Shah. Vote: All in favor.

NOTE: After the meeting, the Commission members voted and agreed electronically on the revision and addition of a clause to the Resolution. The clause declared that the elimination of Public Health Priority Funding by the State has limited the ability to invest in programs and policies that are required to address the needs of marginalized populations.

A. Shah moved to rescind the original Resolution and revise the Resolution with the addition of the clause regarding equity, second by A. Valerio. All in favor

Respectfully,

Diana Swiderski, Administrative Assistant