



JUSTIN ELICKER  
MAYOR

**CITY OF NEW HAVEN**  
**COMMUNITY SERVICES ADMINISTRATION**  
**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH**

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MARITZA BOND, MPH  
DIRECTOR OF HEALTH

**Board of Health Commissioners**

Meeting Minutes  
May 13, 2020

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**Present:** Dr. James Hadler, Chair; Dr. Frank Mongillo, Heather Reynolds, Dr. Darnell Young

**Staff:** Maritza Bond, Director of Health

**Absent:** Reid Davis

**Guest:** Dr. Mehul Dalal, Community Services Administrator

Before the meeting was called to order, Director Bond informed the Commissioners that today's meeting is being recorded for the purpose of transcribing the minutes.

**Call to Order:**

Dr. Hadler called the meeting to order at 5:33 p.m.

**Public Comment:**

No one from the public was present at the meeting. However, Commissioner Reynolds shared her neighbor's concerns about appropriate PPE at dialysis treatment facilities. It wasn't clear if the issue was with staff or patients not having the proper PPE, but she was concerned about nursing home residents being treated at dialysis facilities. Director Bond noted that this is under the State's jurisdiction, and it's important to file a complaint with the State of CT. There was a question about guidance specifically for dialysis centers. Director Bond and the Commissioners agreed this is worth investigating.

**Approval of Minutes:**

Commissioner Hadler moved to approve the April 8, 2020 minutes with the revision to the time; it was seconded by Commissioners Reynolds and Mongillo. The minutes from the April 2020 meeting were approved unanimously.

## **Presentation on Human Services Needs During COVID-19 Pandemic:**

Dr. Mehul Dalal, Community Services Administrator, introduced himself to the Board and gave a brief description of his background.

Before his PowerPoint presentation, Dr. Dalal acknowledged CSA staff and volunteers who have worked diligently to contribute to the initiatives, which are ongoing.

### ***Protecting the Vulnerable and High-Risk***

#### ***Homeless Population:***

There is a substantial homeless population in New Haven. In a federally-coordinated effort, data for 2019 shows 500 homeless individuals; 2020 data not yet available. This number includes those who sleep in the streets, rough encampments, those who use shelters and families.

Before State gave guidance, City took initiatives to decompress homeless facilities to control outbreaks. Approximately 40 individuals were identified as high-risk in the first round and moved to local hotels that were empty. Focused on two major sheltering facilities that housed adults. Also, warming centers, which are not shelters, were decompressed (typically 50-70 people).

State piggybacked on City's program, and approximately 200 individuals were moved to hotels in New Haven and West Haven. Staff from congregate shelters were moved over to help hotel staff with homeless population. Efforts were made to ramp up placements into permanent housing. To date over 60 individuals have been placed from both the hotels and a previously identified list.

Efforts are underway to establish a COVID-positive respite facility for the homeless. Public health rationale is to keep those with COVID in a safe place to isolate and not spread the virus. Humanitarian rationale is if general public needs to isolate, homeless persons need to be able to do so as well. Decompression rationale is to partner with healthcare system and Yale-New Haven Hospital to identify and place individuals appropriate for the facility.

Physicians and trainees volunteered to develop an extensive clinical protocol based on the medical respite program. Transitioned to hybrid model partly staffed by volunteers and partnership with MRC in East Haven. Director Bond was instrumental in setting up the partnership. It was difficult to rely on 24/7 volunteer staff, so now there's a paid 24/7 staff to support volunteers.

There is a significant number of unsheltered homeless who either cannot or will not be amenable to entering a facility. Established a pop-up drop in testing center at Blake Field (East Rock Neighborhood) for those persons. Tremendously utilized – over the past few days, between 20-30 individuals came. Shower facilities are available two days a week at the East Rock Magnet School across the street from the testing site. Wrap-around

services, harm reduction offered at site, also. Plan is to keep site open until the end of the month but will assess need for that to be extended.

The other vulnerable group, which has overlap with the homeless, is those persons using drugs. Engaged with harm reduction and patient maintenance treatment providers. They are now allowed to supply 14 up to 28 days methadone treatment to individuals who meet certain criteria.

Commissioner Reynolds noted that many of the homeless are not from New Haven, but because they have drug issues, the APT Foundation is a source for them. She asked if there are other towns collaborating with New Haven. Dr. Dalal indicated that about half of those individuals are at the West Haven hotel, and the City is working with the West Haven Health Department. Director Bond said New Haven provided technical support. A regional model is needed to share resources.

#### Elderly Population:

The Elderly Services Department closed all senior centers in early March. Staff were redeployed to do outreach, education and needs assessments in particular with seniors who frequent the centers.

There were over 100,000 bags of groceries delivered to those seniors who cook. LifeBridge delivered over 1,000 meals to seniors unable to cook for themselves.

#### Food Systems:

Huge undertaking to coordinate organizations and individuals who want to help. Had to follow new and enhanced public safety and public health protocols (avoid overcrowding of distribution sites, physical distancing, PPE). Food Systems Director worked closely with the Health Department.

A web-based resource page was launched with information on where food is available throughout the City. There are over 70 locations, many in high-needs neighborhoods identified by SNAP utilization.

Launched Square Meals Program with restaurants that had shut down and are now providing meals to first responders and the homeless population. Thousands of meals were delivered.

Worked with coordinated food access network in New Haven to launch a pantry support program. Seeking to expand funding.

There were over 500 coordinated food drops by Vertical Church to high-needs areas on May 6<sup>th</sup>. Planning another food drop in other neighborhoods in the upcoming weeks.

#### Faith-Based Community:

For the past month, worked with ambassadors and champions in the faith community (200 faith leaders). Information is shared between the leaders and the City. City has been helpful in setting up technology for faith community including livestream services and

donation pages for smaller churches. City provided faith community specific guidelines and a Q&A sheet for distribution.

Faith community has stepped up in terms of volunteering, supporting pantries and the homeless.

Financial Empowerment:

Maximizing resources for residents at Financial Empowerment Center. There are six financial counselors on staff. Over 90 constituents have been served with questions including housing, rental and tax filing.

Next Steps:

Statewide effort to get all homeless individuals into permanent housing

Will continue communication with faith leaders and nonprofits around safe opening practices

Establish new protocols for Youth Services Department as well as youth camps. It is anticipated the State will announce youth camps will operate during the summer. Guidance from State will come out tomorrow.

Food and financial needs will be forecast over the next several months and programs adjusted accordingly. Money from CARES Act will be invested in the appropriate programs.

There are active discussions to explore and test new models of harm reduction that reduce the amount of direct contact that are less face-to-face based (needle syringe exchange programs).

Work closely with contact tracing team to set up supportive quarantine and isolation. Going forward, everyone should have a safe space to quarantine.

After Dr. Dalal's presentation, there were a couple of questions from Commissioners.

Dr. Hadler asked about persons who are identified as COVID positive and are not comfortable posing a potential risk to others in their home but don't have the resources to shelter elsewhere. Dr. Dalal said something is being planned to address the situation, but there are logistical and administrative issues that need to be worked through. Potentially, on a case-by-case basis, people who are willing to do so could enter the homeless respite facility.

Dr. Mongillo asked if facilitating opening youth camps is similar to reopening schools in the fall. Dr. Dalal noted these are two separate issues with overlapping considerations. Youth camps are a more imminent issue and anticipate moving forward. Working on different approaches to safely open camps (masking, physical distancing and screening protocols). Youth camps director has been directly engaged with the Health Department.

Commissioner Reynolds commented that Dr. Dalal and his team have done incredible work and appreciates the foresight in anticipating issues that need to be dealt with to

ameliorate the potential for harm. Commissioner Hadler is pleased with all the areas in which the City is involved in thinking through things sensitively and comprehensively.

### **Updates from Director of Health:**

Director Bond noted that the Health Department facilitates one of the youth camps. She has provided some guidance in addition to interim guidance from the committee, and official guidance will come from the State tomorrow. Hopefully, she'll be able to provide more clarity on it.

Department is looking at pool and beach testing again, which is in the works by the Environmental Health Division.

A COVID-19 situational awareness report was presented to the Commissioners. Currently, there are 2,100 cases of which 84 are probable, meaning they have clinical symptoms awaiting positive results. There are 83 case fatalities. Department has been monitoring daily testing and the percentage of the daily change by test date. The graph provides a better way to tell if there's been a drop in cases and the differences per day. As talk continues about reopening the City, this is another metric to view and continuously monitor.

Department is heavily focused on testing. Have had conversations with nursing homes. A couple of weeks ago, it was highly recommended that they start testing staff and residents. There was some progress with Fair Haven Community Health Clinic partnering with Mary Wade. They were able to test all staff and residents.

Advanced Nursing and Regal Care, in collaboration with the State Department of Public Health, were able to get Dr. Murphy at Chapel testing site. Testing will be conducted tomorrow, and the State Department of Public Health will provide PPE and testing swabs for the site.

Director Bond noted that the Governor is ambitiously trying to get to a 200,000 testing goal by the end of the month, or at least 5,000 per day testing. There's been a scaling up testing across a number of different sectors in both hospitals and community health centers. We, as local health, provided support through our private/public partnership with Dr. Murphy. Tomorrow, Fair Haven Community Health Clinic will have access to two Abbott rapid testing kits, so they'll be able to test every 15 minutes, seeing four patients. Testing scheduled from 8 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. in conjunction with the National Guard.

The State Department of Public Health has been supportive of New Haven's efforts with nursing homes. Now trying to focus on prevalence survey. State and New Haven Health Department are on the same page addressing this population.

Point Prevalence Survey testing is happening across Connecticut. Health departments are directly partnering with either public/private partnerships or the National Guard to do testing. New Haven has identified three sites to expand testing through the public/private partnership with Dr. Murphy: the Hill, Westville (Housing Authority complex on Valley Street) and Newhallville.

Contact tracing being done to gauge needs of community. Some of the pre-existing conditions noted are high blood pressure, cardiac and some respiratory conditions. Some people did not want to disclose conditions. Contact tracing was broken down by neighborhoods. Over 2,558 calls were made, reaching predominantly persons 25-49 years

old. Breakdown of additional support needed includes shelter, personal care, mental health support, someone to talk to, medical supplies, home care and insurance. The two greatest needs are for food and financial support.

Health Department is part of Reopening Committee, which is gearing up for the Governor's proposed reopening. Director Bond is working with the Environmental Health Division to scale up for inspections for outdoor restaurants. Has outlined tiers of priority for inspections. Also, they'll be conducting inspections of barbershops, hair salons, and working with permitting department regarding food trucks.

Also, Health and Safety Committee looking at protocols for bring Health Department employees back to work safely.

Director Bond reported that earlier in the week, Yale University epidemiologists and laboratory experts made a presentation on sewage surveillance and COVID-19. They were able to predict five days in advance when there'll be another spike. There will be a partnership with WPCA, Engineering Department and Environmental Health staff. Ongoing data will be helpful.

Commissioner Hadler had question about COVID trends in New Haven. Director Bond noted there's a downward trend in hospitalizations. Director Bond will have an update for Board next Wednesday. Dr. Mongillo noted the current number is at 327. He received an email with the information that he'll forward to the Commissioners.

This week, Director Bond sent a memo to pediatricians to encourage they monitor symptoms in children and testing. The modified immunization schedule published by the CDC was included with the memo. Also, she informed the Board about Upcoming "Mask it Up" campaign to encourage proper use of face masks.

There was a brief discussion on mosquito testing. Environmental Health has reached out to the WPCA. Trying to get WPCA to fund majority of testing.

### **Agenda Items for Next Meeting**

- COVID-19 Update
- Lead Program Update
- Yale University Sewage Surveillance

### **Other Business**

The next meeting is scheduled for June 10, 2020 at 6:00 p.m.

### **Meeting adjourned at 6:56 p.m.**

Attest:

*Brenda Pantelis*

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Brenda Pantelis, Executive Administrative Assistant

6/3/20

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Date

Approved:

*James Hadler*

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James Hadler, Chair

6/3/20

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Date