



## **MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF THE BOSTON PUBLIC HEALTH COMMISSION**

A meeting of the Board of the Boston Public Health Commission (“Commission”) was held on March 4, 2020 in the Hayes Conference Room, 2nd floor, 1010 Massachusetts Avenue, Boston, MA 02118.

### **Board Members Present**

Manny Lopes, Chair, Phillomin Laptiste, Jennifer Childs-Roshak, Rebecca Gutman

### **Also Present**

Tom Lane, Gerry Thomas, Lucia Brugger, Anne McHugh, Sheila Lee, Steve Simmons, Priyal Gupta, Theodore Faust, Leon Bethune, Johnna Murphy, Puneet Sharma, Shaun O’Brien, Moira Crowley, Suiki Liao, Kara Auger, Yvonne Hall, Paula McManus, Anesia Brown, PJ McCann, Taylor Jolly, Helen Ayanian, Andrea Dettore, Neelesh Batra, Dan Dooley, Brad Cohen, Shaina Aubourg, Sunday Taylor, Marie Lortigue, Debra Paul, Nestor Rijo-Figeroa, Tierney Flaherty, Stacey Kokoram, Derrick Young, Magdala Lacombe, Tameka Bennett

### **Proceedings**

#### **Chairperson’s Comments**

At approximately 4:10 p.m., Chairperson Lopes welcomed Board members, staff, and members of the public and gave an overview of the agenda. Chair Lopes thanked Commission staff for their efforts to prepare for and better understand COVID-19.

#### **Acceptance and Approval of the November 2019 Meeting Minutes**

A motion was made, seconded, and taken unanimously to approve the minutes for the January meeting.

#### **FY 2021 Budget:**

#### **Grace Connolly, Director of Administration and**

Ms. Connolly delivered the posted presentation.

Chair Lopes asked if staff anticipate any significant cuts or changes after the budget is sent to City Hall. Ms. Connolly said that he thought that would be unlikely.

Hearing no further discussion, Dr. Childs-Roshak moved to submit the budget to the Mayor's Office in accordance with the Commission's enabling legislation. The motion was seconded by Ms. Laptiste and approved unanimously.

**Executive Office Report: Rita Nieves, Interim Executive Director**

Ms. Nieves delivered the following remarks:

I will also be doing things a little differently today, I'd like to start by asking our Intergovernmental Relations Director Tierney Flaherty for an IGR Update:

Ms. Flaherty delivered the following remarks: At the state level, the legislative deadline for bills to receive a report from committee, was February 5th. We're excited that two of our priority bills that were still being held in committee received favorable reports and are continuing to advance in the legislative process:

H.1971/H.1907/H.1915, "An Act relative to conducting fetal and infant mortality review": This is exciting, particularly for our Community Action Network which has been championing the bill. You may recall that this bill made substantial progress last session.

H.1949/S.1334, "An Act to reduce racial disparities in maternal health": The amended text that was reported out reflects the diligent work of the Maternal Mortality and Morbidity Coalition, which BPHC convenes, and which has been working to strengthen and advocate for this bill over the past year.

Rita and I joined the National Association of County and City Health Officials and Big Cities Health Coalition for Hill Day in Washington D.C. last week. We met with the offices of Senator Warren, Congressman Lynch, Congressman Kennedy, Congresswoman Pressley, and Congresswoman Clark. In addition to our expected conversations on federal funding priorities for BPHC, discussions also focused on COVID-19 response and preparedness. The delegation was very receptive to our advocacy for additional COVID-19 response funding, particularly for local health departments like Boston.

Thank you, Tierney. My Executive Office Update will focus primarily on COVID-19 previously known as the 2019 Novel Coronavirus, but before my presentation I'd like to highlight three new funding awards we have received this calendar year:

The Division of Violence Prevention has been awarded a 'Shannon Grant' of \$67,278 from Boston Police Department (federal pass-through money) to continue to build on the work of the BPHC Village in Progress (VIP) Youth Institute. The VIP Youth Institute is a peer leadership program that explores the roots of violence and ways to address them in the Dorchester, Mattapan and Roxbury neighborhoods.

The Division of Violence Prevention has also been awarded a grant from MDPH for \$189,594.00 a year for ten years. This new funding stream will help BPHC to develop and implement a sexual assault and dating violence prevention program focused on middle and high school youth of color (Black, Latino) / LGBTQ youth of color in Boston Public Schools, with the aim of

promoting healthy relationships and addressing youth dating and sexual violence, and to scale our partners' existing youth peer leadership programs.

Our Division of Ryan White Services in our Infectious Disease Bureau has received a Notice of Award for the Ending the HIV Epidemic Funding Opportunity. BPHC will receive \$1,117,069.00 annually over the next five years. We're very excited about this new funding and hope that we can continue the great work demonstrated by these programs.

Now I'll move into my presentation of BPHC's current Response to COVID-19 with opportunity for the Board to discuss at the end.

Chairperson Lopes asked how the Commission would enforce isolation of individuals who have contracted the virus. Ms. Nieves noted that most people will be able to self-isolate. We will conduct regular monitoring with cases but there is an element of trust.

Ms. Gutman asked about workers, particularly home care workers in cases where patients may be COVID-positive. It is important to ensure that workers receive appropriate sick leave time, and make sure that employers receive appropriate guidance from public health. Ms. Nieves noted that we can continue to work on this issue, but we envision that we can play a role in leading on this issue. Ms. Gutman added that attention should be paid to working conditions in the service industry more broadly.

Chair Lopes asked if staff are going into individuals' homes. Ms. Nieves noted that we do a lot of our follow-up remotely. Medical Director Dr. Jennifer Lo added that we will go a home in certain situations, including to facilitate early testing and transportation of symptomatic patients.

Dr. Childs-Roshak shared that her organization shares the challenge of anxiety for frontline staff, and the importance of having the response under control in addressing this.

Ms. Lopes thanked Ms. Nieves and the staff, and shared that she is finding that staff at her organization are concerned about childcare, and how to protect employment. Recommendations to employers should include appropriate personal protective equipment.

Interim Deputy Director Gerry Thomas added that PCA's may be added to our health care workgroup, and we appreciate the voice of the board in elevating the issue.

Chairperson Lopes noted that the Commission should also be thinking about how to advise small and medium-sized businesses. Office of Public Health Preparedness Director Stacey Kokaram noted that we are very interested in addressing this. Mr. Lopes noted that it would be helpful for the Board to know when they can be voices of support.

Dr. Childs-Roshak asked if we are doing public service announcements. Ms. Thomas noted that currently we are providing fact sheets, materials, presentations, Facebook live briefings, and are hosting specific constituencies into working groups, including homeless shelter providers.

Dr. Childs-Roshak also asked about working with the MBTA. Ms. Kokaram noted that MassDOT is working to get posters up shortly. Ms. Nieves noted that our website front page is

updated regularly with new information, and we are monitoring the channels through which people reach out to us to inform our communication efforts moving forward.

Hearing no further items, the Board adjourned at 5:20pm.

Attest:

/S/ Susan Belvis  
Board Secretary