



## **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 June 10, 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, John Fernandez, Kate Walsh

### **Also Present**

Chief James Hooley, Jim Imprescia, Darien Mather, Taylor Jolly, Velvet Butler, Melissa Littlefield, Dan Dooley, PJ McCann, Rita Nieves, Grace Connolly, Tim Harrington, Stacey Kokaram, Leon Bethune, Margaret Reid, Shaina Aubourg, Helen Ayanian, Mary Bovenzi, Brad Cohen, Jonathan DeFreese, Devin Larkin, Phil Ehresman, Tierney Flaherty, Jennifer Lo, Anne McHugh, Scott Minkin, Johnna Murphy, Debra Paul, Anissa Ray.

### **Proceedings**

#### **Chairperson’s Comments**

At approximately 4:10 p.m., Chairperson Lopes called the meeting to order and made the following remarks: Welcome to this virtual Boston Board of Health Meeting. This meeting is being conducted by remote participation as authorized by Governor Baker’s Emergency Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law.

In keeping with our usual practice, members of the public and BPHC staff will be allowed to observe the proceedings and we will use the moderating features on the Microsoft Teams application to keep all on mute other than Board members and BPHC presenters. We will have the ability to unmute if needed to allow others to answer questions or provide comment, in the Chair’s discretion. Please join me in welcoming members of the public that are joining us remotely this afternoon.

Since we are deliberating remotely, any votes will be taken by a roll call of the members.

Before we start, I want to acknowledge the demonstrations across the nation and in our city fighting for accountability and change from the systemic racism that Black people in America experience every day. We know that Racism directly effects the health outcomes of individuals, and I commend the Boston Public Health Commission on their efforts to advance to Racial

Justice and Health Equity in their day to day work. I also want to recognize how racism and health inequities continue to be evident in the wake of COVID-19. This pandemic has not proven that these inequities existed but have exacerbated them in Boston's communities of color. I hope, along with the Board, that we can support the Boston Public Health Commission in continuing to confront racism and reduce the unjust and preventable health inequities felt by Black communities and communities of color during the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Acceptance and Approval of March 2020 Meeting Minutes**

A motion was made by Mr. Fernandez, seconded by Ms. Walsh, and taken unanimously my role call to approve the minutes for the March 4<sup>th</sup> and March 17<sup>th</sup> meetings of the Board.

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

Ms. Nieves delivered the following remarks:

Thank you. I want to echo the statements that you shared about the racism that has long impacted Boston communities. These past weeks we have seen the response all over the United States, including Boston, to the systemic racism that killed George Floyd and that has resulted in Black and Brown people being inequitably impacted by COVID-19. As the health department for the City of Boston, we cannot and will not stand by as Black and Brown Bostonians die of unnatural and unfair causes. At the Boston Public Health Commission, we believe that Black Lives Matter and we are committing ourselves to policies and action steps that will continue to advance Racial Justice and Health Equity. For 20 years, BPHC has been a leader in Racial Justice and Health Equity work, including the formation of the Anti-Racism Advisory Committee in 2008 and the creation of our 2-Day Racial Justice Health Equity Core Professional Development Series trainings and our Equitable Procurement policy implemented this past year.

Last week, BPHC staff were able to attend a protest in Franklin Park to hand out face coverings, hand sanitizer and information about COVID-19 to help Bostonians exercise their first amendment right safely. It was great to see such a large turn out with everyone wearing face coverings and maintaining physical distancing as much as possible. We have a long way to go, but we are committed to combatting Racism in both our own internal policies and practices as well as advocating for policies at the local, state, and federal level that promote Racial Justice and Health Equity.

While we stand in solidarity with those who are protesting systemic racism, people of color are disproportionately suffering the physical and financial stressors of the COVID-19 pandemic. This week, BPHC and the City of Boston will partner with East Boston Neighborhood Health Center to offer free COVID-19 testing to asymptomatic individuals in communities of color in order to combat both of these public health crises.

This is one of many actions we are taking to address Racism in our communities, we will also be launching an internal working group with our Office of Health Equity to determine our next steps. As you know Racial Justice and Health Equity is our first priority in our Strategic Plan,

and this work will continue to meet this moment as we are called to create a world free of Racism and violence.

I will now turn it over to Tierney Flaherty, our Director of Intergovernmental Relations for her update.

Ms. Flaherty's update included a report on progress on maternal mortality disparity legislation at the State House as well as City Council Budget Hearings.

**FY 2021 Budget Presentation and Vote**  
**Grace Connolly, Director of Administration and Finance**

Ms. Connolly introduced BPHC Budget Director Sheila Lee and Chief Financial Officer Steve Simmons and thanked them for their instrumental work to prepare this budget and presented the posted slides then presented the posted slides detailing the FY21 Commission Budget.

Ms. Walsh asked about any sensitivities the Commission is worried about.

Ms. Connolly responded that if the state budget includes cuts, our biggest line item and risk is homeless services, though we would be surprised if this line were cut, based on guidance from the Department of Housing and Community Development.

Dr. Childs-Roshak noted the Boston Globe article re de-funding the police. One quote was that BPD receives more funding than BPHC and asked that in light of the fact that we do work in outreach, violence prevention and other community safety work, are we thinking about those needs changing and allocations within our budget changing?

Ms. Connolly noted that we are always looking at our budget to make sure what we are delivering is what city needs. We always have the opinion that we should be the most well-funded agency.

Ms. Nieves added that we welcome advocacy and those conversations. We are having meetings with new City Councilors who are very interested in our racial justice and health equity work. As far as the budget, and as we look at COVID recovery, our hope is that bureaus and programs look at what we need to realign and readjust as we enter reopening, to make sure staff safe and make sure programming reflects priorities with racial justice and health equity. The second thing, six weeks ago, the City received funding under the Cures Act for enhanced public health response. We anticipate that we could expect \$10M to address all the issues we know that have come up. We want to take advantage of this opportunity to meet the needs of our communities. Activities could include testing and care, matching resources and services with residents that need it and find new strategic ways to be involved.

Chair Lopes asked: How are you thinking about strengthening public health system and how does that change our thinking about our strategic plan? And let Board know how we can support.

Ms. Nieves said that we just stood down our Medical Intelligence Center from being fully active to being partial activation. We are ensuring that we're sustaining the level of response that is needed now, and the level that would be needed if we spike again. We intend to create internal working groups, to look at things like workforce, racial justice and health equity, escalate our response to racism. We look to draft detailed plans, and we are happy to come back and share updates on that work.

Hearing no additional questions, a motion to approve the FY2021 Boston Public Health Commission Budget was made by my Mr. Fernandez, seconded by Dr. Childs-Roshak and approved unanimously by roll call.

**COVID-19 Response Updates and Recovery Planning**  
**Rita Nieves**

Chairperson Lopes remarked: I want to really thank Rita and Gerry for stepping up to serve in these times, and also thank your staff and team for everything you've done.

Ms. Nieves said: I want to thank you all for your support and guidance, and partnership in your own organizations. I also want to thank the Mayor for his leadership and openness to take feedback and guidance that we had to offer and to Chief Martinez who worked around the clock to support and represent us.

I also thank Stacey Kokaram Office of Public Health Preparedness and the Medical Intelligence Center for the extraordinary work to maintain situational awareness throughout the pandemic. Also our Bureau Directors, Executive Office team, continued to manage our portfolio of work around the clock, as well as all of our staff, many of whom have been exposed through their work in the community and come to work to serve their city every day.

Ms. Nieves then introduced Dan Dooley, Director of Research and Evaluation to present data slides.

Interim Deputy Director Gerry Thomas delivered the slide entitled "stop the spread." She summarized efforts to stand up sites to isolate and quarantine, advise congregate housing sites, and partner with Whittier Street Community Health Center on testing van, as well as work with Age Strong, and other agencies to build a strike team to address sanitization and other prevention measures in long-term care and elder housing. Outreach involved connecting staff for technical assistance and PPE, as well as infection control practices.

Ms. Nieves introduced Ms. Kokaram to outline metrics for reopening, highlighting key metrics, including reduction in the number of new COVID-positive cases in Boston, widespread training, capacity to care for those who are sick and ability to isolate an quarantine contacts.

Steve Simmons, CFO, outlined COVID-19-related expenses, rolling up to \$4,637,079 as of June 4<sup>th</sup>, 2020. The largest line is personal protective equipment, largely for other partners. Second is overtime. Additional expenditures included costs related to telemedicine to provide services

remotely. We also spent over \$250,00 on temporary staffing for nursing homes. Mr. Simmons also outlined the funding received to date, noting that we are continuing to work through what can be used as a match for FEMA funding.

Chairperson Lopes asked if there were any questions. Hearing none, he thanked staff again for all of the hard work, and thanked the Board members and their organizations for the work they have done over these months.

Ms. Laptiste motioned to adjourn, Ms. Gutman seconded and a unanimous vote was taken to adjourn at approximately 4:05.

Attest:

/S/ Susan Belvis  
Board Secretary