

Blackstone Valley Partnership for Public Health

MINUTES

April 3, 2024 – 2 pm

THESE MINUTES WERE APPROVED BY THE BVPPH ON MAY 1, 2024.

Attendees: Connor Robichaud, CMRPC; Jeanne Gniadek – Northbridge; Diane Tiernan – Upton; Erin Hightower – Uxbridge; Agnieszka Podstawka and Kristin Harris– Douglas; Jack McKlellan – Mendon; Colleen Strapponi – Blackstone; Jack Sullivan, Deb Vescera, Dan Markman, Jenna Gouin - BVPPH

1. Approval of Minutes

Jeanne made a motion, seconded by Erin, to approve the minutes of the March 12th BVPPH meeting. The motion minutes passed unanimously.

2. Hiring of Regional Health Inspector

Jeanne motioned to hire Emily Whittaker-Smith within the posted salary range, seconded by Diane. The motion passed unanimously.

3. Community Health Worker - Focus on creating relationships with Police, fire EMS, food pantries, and churches. Writing an article introducing the position for the free mailers in the communities, including info on the Public Health Nurse: Uxbridge Times, Mendon and Upton Free Press. Meeting with School Resource Officers, Police, Fire.

4. Shared Services Coordinator Updates

a. IMA

A memo was shared along with the IMA renewal, which is the same as the original IMA with the inclusion of the new PHN, Epi and CHW positions.

b. Year-end spending

The group expressed the following spending priorities for year-end:

- Hiring a consultant to help develop an SSA-level communication plan and templates, including social media, website, printed media, and outreach activities. Presentation for local cable channels, YouTube, Facebook, and printed media
- American Red Cross CPR and Choke-saver courses - estimating \$20-120 per person.
- iPad with a flash
- Inspection equipment
- Printing a Community Resource Guide, reference the Tri-Valley resource website and the Milford Hospital Resource Guide.

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- Program for handwashing, glow germ gel.

5. Inspection Staff Updates

While we are short and inspector, Dan is working hard to keep up with inspections. Most towns are caught up or close to it. Lots of interest in the ServSafe course across the BVPPH Region.

6. Public Health Nurse Updates

Deb has developed a new program on depression, isolation, and anxiety, and will share with the group. She now has an evaluation form to get input from participants. There are now 97 cases of Measles in the US, and has moved closer, now in New York. The disease stays in the environment for 2 hours and can travel up to 10 miles in the air. Starting to see tick diseases begin – 2 cases of lymes this week. Using the bite lab at Uxbridge High School and also at the Whitin Community Center. Influenza severity is in the moderate range for our region, with COVID down significantly. Avian bird flu in Texas cattle and has now been noted in eggs/poultry. She may develop public informational materials to share or find materials from the Dept of Agriculture. MMR Vaccine recommended for those travelling to a country with measles.

7. Epidemiologist Updates

Jack also noted the concern with H5N1 (avian flu). Areas of concern in New England are mostly in dairy production.

Wastewater levels for COVID-19 are down. Biobot has been analyzing RSV, flu, and substances for Douglas. Two significant trends seem to be nicotine use and the presence of fentanyl. The flu also appears to be receding. There was a recent report on Chronic absenteeism in schools – it seems that bullying and anxiety are significant reasons for absenteeism, in addition to illness. The state has adopted CDC guidelines for COVID-19 – worth sharing on social media, schools, and websites.

With tick-borne diseases, the season seems to be getting earlier and earlier, with cases now in mid-March.

Deb would like to administer flu vaccine, but the Contact Tracing grant does not allow for vaccination activities.

8. Unanticipated business

- a. The next meeting is May 1 at 12:30 pm, to be held in Northbridge at the Fire Station.

9. Adjourn

- a. Adjourned 3:15 pm