

MINUTES OF MEETING

COMMUNITY ADVISORY BOARD HAVEN WELL CONTAMINATION

City Hall – Conference Room A

8:00 a.m.

July 28, 2015

ATTENDEES:

Community Advisory Board

Rich DiPentima, Chairman

Councilor Stefany Shaheen

Deputy Portsmouth Fire Chief James Heinz

Andrea Amico, Resident

Shelly Vetter, Owner of Discovery Child Enrichment Center

City Staff

David Allen, Deputy City Manager

Brian Goetz, Deputy Director, Department of Public Works

Absent

Mayor Robert J. Lister

Kim McNamara, Portsmouth Health Officer

John Stowell, Newington Health Officer

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Rich DiPentima called the meeting to order at 8:06 a.m.

Dr. Benjamin Chan, NH DHHS State Epidemiologist, joined the meeting by conference call and Jennifer Schirmer, NH DHHS Disaster Behavioral Health Coordinator, was present.

2. ADDITIONAL BLOOD TESTING

Chairman DiPentima presented the first agenda item. The discussion centered on the planning for release of the pediatric blood test results, and the tentatively scheduled community meeting for August 19, 2015.

Dr. Chan thanked the committee for inviting him to the discussion and apologized for not being at the meeting in person.

The issue posed was how to structure the upcoming community meeting after consulting some partners, including Jennifer Schirmer. Dr. Chan stated that the meeting does not have to be done as initially proposed. The purpose of the meeting really dictates the structure. The question is if the meeting is to discuss individual results or to provide interpretation and context. The goal is to give people the ability to interpret their individual results.

Dr. Chan and partners are leaning toward a meeting structure of providing interpretation and context. One reason for this is they have established mechanisms that work fairly well. These include connecting with Dr. Alan Woolf at Boston Children's Hospital and the Northern New England Poison Center. The Poison Center can answer questions about individual results. They are trying to communicate information about PFCs to primary care providers so the providers can answer individual questions as well.

Some issues with having a meeting after people have their individual results are the possibility of individual personal questions and health concerns being presented. Also, there are HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996) concerns. Dr. Chan stated when the meeting for the first 100 adult test results were given, there did not seem to be a lot of concerns about how the meeting was structured (from their perspective). The Northern New England Poison Center did take some calls, but it was not a large number.

Dr. Chan stated they were planning to conduct the pediatrics community meeting in a similar manner to the first adult meeting. The pediatric test results would be mailed the same day as the meeting. People would know the results were in the mail, but would not have them in hand. At the community meeting a summary of the results would be presented and displayed in histograms, which show the distribution.

He asked for feedback from the members of the committee.

Jennifer Schirmer focused her discussion on trying to take the most thoughtful approach about providing information in a way that is beneficial. She stated that if individualized results were discussed, it seems like there would be a loss of context on everything else, because it is solely focused on the individual results. Questions would be geared toward the individual without the context of his/her history. She also stressed the need to balance the meeting and remember privacy issues.

Councilor Shaheen asked when the results would be ready? How soon could parents have results?

Dr. Chan stated that waiting for the pediatric tests to be mailed may or may not push back the meeting date. Another possibility is that if people get the results, and have them in hand when the community meeting isn't for another week, people may not understand the report or what the numbers mean. Dr. Chan and partners are seeking to find a balance.

Dr. Chan stated there are no pediatric results back from the CDC. They are expecting to get some this week and don't know the exact timeline. The process involves taking the individual results and matching them with people's names and addresses. Then they will create individual reports

and mail them out. The lab has requested a couple of weeks to get this process accomplished. If they get the results back at the end of this week, it will take two weeks to mail them, on or about August 14th. This is right around the time of the August 19th meeting.

Councilor Shaheen expressed two points about a decision: it is a timing issue instead of a withholding of the results issue. She does not support withholding information or results from parents who have been waiting. The committee needs to frame expectations: the meeting is about providing broader contextual information and letting the public know that the committee is not in a position to interpret individual results, but there are resources to help them with their questions.

Councilor Shaheen believes more information coming into the meeting, rather than less, is more helpful to people. She stated it is especially problematic if results are being withheld that are otherwise ready.

Chairman DiPentima stated that the issue is not to create false expectations for people when they do get results. It is important that the meeting is clearly defined and people know that individual results will not be addressed at the meeting. Second, people need to know where to go and where to research information about the test results. They can be directed to view the presentation that Dr. Alan Woolf made on July 15, 2015, that is posted on the city website. Chairman DiPentima is very concerned about creating more anxiety, frustration, and concern among parents through the structure of the meeting.

Dr. Chan added that he agrees with all the concerns expressed and the comments about not wanting to withhold results while waiting for a meeting.

Ms. Amico's perspective as a parent is that she has been waiting four months for her children's results and would like them as soon as they are available.

Ms. Amico believes that many parents may have similar questions as she does. Having the test results and report beforehand, and being ready to ask appropriate questions at the meeting, will allow the committee to target audience questions all at once. There will be a platform where all parents hear the same information and receive the same answers. This is a more streamlined and consistent way to deliver information.

Dr. Chan asked Ms. Amico what questions or concerns she has heard, and what the appropriate forum for a community meeting would be versus an individual discussion with a primary care physician or poison control. He is interested in the type of questions that they could get at the next meeting.

Ms. Amico stated it is hard to say what the questions will be until the results are distributed. She would be interested in where her children are on the aggregate: are they high, average, or low? She feels that without the data, she cannot formulate the appropriate questions for the meeting.

The most frequent question she has received is: when am I getting the results? Getting information out is important. Any information the public can get ahead of time prepares them to

ask better questions. Additionally, the meeting is videotaped. The committee can, therefore, refer people to the televised presentation for more thorough explanations.

Chairman DiPentima and Ms. Vetter asked if the pediatric data would be managed and/or presented in the same epidemiological way as the adult results?

Dr. Chan stated that they would, however, there isn't a national data set to compare the results of children under 12. A recent study out of Texas contained 300 results of children. Some of the measures are different, and they do not report on the mean or an average. They report median, which is a totally different way of summarizing the data set. Dr. Chan stated that in the report forms they try to explain the data, but it is more difficult to write it out than to explain what this means in person.

Councilor Shaheen asked how the agency is getting results? Are they batched and then sent back to the agency or are they coming in sporadically and the agency is building an inventory of results?

Dr. Chan stated they do not withhold any results. They are trying to avoid doing this. They test in batches of 40-60 test results. He doesn't know how the CDC processes them, but believes they keep them together and report back in much larger batches. Dr. Chan does not have any results at this time. He believes the CDC has analyzed a large number of them, but the exact number is unknown.

Chairman DiPentima stated that he does not want to have two or three meetings. He urged the committee to have only one pediatric meeting.

Dr. Chan stated again that the purpose of the meeting is not to discuss individual results, but to provide some amount of context and interpretation of what the report means. If people get reports back about their initial results, they can go through one of the several mechanisms available, and ask questions about individual results. If they have questions about how they fit into the broader picture, they can go to the website or call for answers.

Councilor Shaheen asked when it is likely that all the parents could have their results.

Dr. Chan explained that the CDC's testing machines were nonoperational. When the machines are up and running, they can proceed with testing and possibly have all results back within the next few weeks. He is not in direct communication with the CDC. He is estimating the timeline.

Dr. Chan believes that there are 115 or 120 pediatric tests in total. He stated he doesn't believe that there will be a long delay in getting the results back. He confirmed that they will releasing the results when they are ready to mail.

Chairman DiPentima sought consensus from the committee and clarification on what it means to say that the blood tests are ready. He and the committee agreed that the test results are ready when the data is analyzed, and put into a context of what the individual results mean in terms of

the broader population. Parents can then look at the data and determine their individual test results. A complete analysis will be enclosed when the test results are mailed out.

Ms. Amico asked how many other test results have been mailed since the first set of 98 were mailed in June.

Dr. Chan stated they have not mailed any because they have not received any. In the weekly update, he mentioned that the CDC has approximately 365 blood samples.

Ms. Amico asked if Dr. Alan Woolf would be at the pediatric meeting?

Dr. Chan will invite Dr. Woolf if it is determined that his attendance is needed. He will also extend an invitation to the Poison Control representatives. Chairman DiPentima stated he would like to have a behavioral health person at the meeting to answer questions regarding the emotional aspects.

There was a discussion about providing childcare during the meeting. Depending on when and where the meeting is scheduled, it will be discussed at a later time.

Chairman DiPentima summarized that the committee consensus is that the meeting will be clearly defined to the public. The public will know what the meeting is about and what it is not about. Additionally, the parents will get the test results when they are “ready”, as described above.

If the meeting on the 19th needs to be postponed, it can be moved to August 26th, at which time it will be televised.

Dr. Chan stated that he understands the committee consensus and will plan accordingly.

Chairman DiPentima asked if there was a final date for people to sign-up for testing, if and when the testing will be done, and an anticipation of any future rounds of testing beyond the second round of testing? He also asked how long this could continue?

Dr. Chan stated that the public can get tested as long as testing is open. There are some issues in keeping it open. The agency needs to submit a final report and conduct a final community meeting. The standard is that these bio-monitoring programs are conducted with very defined parameters. As long as the testing remains open, it will delay the final report and meeting. Additionally, there are limited resources. He is looking to the committee for direction on this issue.

Chairman DiPentima asked about the CDC continued availability for testing.

Dr. Chan stated the CDC will support the next round of testing while the State contracts with a secondary laboratory. He confirmed testing through the CDC could continue through the summer.

Chairman DiPentima asked that providers be notified so they can prepare for calls and refer callers to the appropriate resources. Dr. Chan confirmed that providers would be notified.

Deputy Fire Chief Heinz stated that it will be important for the meeting narrator to monitor the meeting and to be sensitive to HIPAA issues.

3. SECOND ROUND TESTING

Chairman DiPentima asked the committee their thoughts on how long the testing should continue.

Ms. Vetter expressed concern that people are not being notified and that some of the larger companies have not been telling employees about the testing.

Ms. Amico stated that she had also heard that people have not been notified through their employers. There is concern that the information was not disseminated. There are satellite offices on Pease that have headquarters elsewhere. These offices are not being notified.

Deputy City Manager Allen confirmed that press releases and information are sent to the Pease Development Authority and Tenants Association.

Chairman DiPentima suggested that the committee wait until a later time to make a determination on when testing should end. He stated that there are over 100 people on the waiting list and it is growing. The committee discussed that some people are choosing not to participate because of individual preference. The number of people being tested should not be seen as an indicator of information dissemination.

4. AUGUST MEETING WITH AIR FORCE BRAC, PFC TEAM

Chairman DiPentima communicated to the committee that the Air Force has requested that questions be sent in advance of the meeting date. Committee members were instructed to send questions to Deputy Director Goetz and copy all members. The questions must be sent one week in advance of the meeting date. The Air Force will address the questions at the meeting.

Chairman DiPentima stated that some questions he has are: the treatment of the wells, the order the EPA has given the Air Force, the timeframe, the capabilities and treatments for reducing the chemicals, the containment facility, how it is being managed, and how effective it is against future contamination.

5. OTHER ITEMS

Chairman DiPentima informed the committee that a Right to Know request has been submitted for emails by certain committee members. The City Legal Department will be the point of contact on the request.

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Councilor Shaheen expressed interest in exploring treatment options on the Smith and Harrison wells. The Air Force may be addressing this at the upcoming meeting. Deputy Director Goetz stated that the City has engaged the services of their engineering consultant to summarize the available treatment options. The City will receive this information in a technical memorandum and this information can be shared with the committee.

6. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 9:29 a.m.

Amy Chastain
Administrative Clerk, City of Portsmouth