



MINUTES FOR THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS
Thursday, March 10, 2011

The monthly meeting of the Board of Directors (Board) of the Boston Public Health Commission (Commission) was held on Thursday, March 10, 2011 in the Hayes Conference Room at the offices of the Boston Public Health Commission, 1010 Massachusetts Avenue, Boston, MA 02118.

Board Members Present:

Jack Cradock
Harold Cox
Celia Wcislo
Kathleen Walsh

Board Members Absent:

Paula Johnson, MD, MPH, Chair
Ruth Ellen Fitch, JD
Joseph Betancourt, MD, MPH

Also Present Were:

Barbara Ferrer, PhD, MPH, MEd, John Townsend, Nakisha Skinner, Maia Brodyfield, Chuck Gagnon, James Hooley, Jeanne Cannata, Ann Scales, Gerry Thomas, Sandra Vasquez, David Pia, Brendan Kearney, Cindy Engler, Gerry Byrne, Sharyn Imonti, Dave Susich, William Kibaja, Beth L'Heureux, Lourdes Ordinola

Visitors:

Mary Beth Sweeney, Resident; Ellen Hatch, City of Boston; Scott Mason, Massachusetts League of Community Health Centers

Proceedings:

Chair's Comments

Jack Cradock

- The meeting was called to order by Jack Cradock, Acting Chair, at 4:07 P.M. The minutes of the board meeting held January 13, 2011 and February 10, 2011 were approved.

Executive Director's Report

Barbara Ferrer, PhD, MPH, Med

- John Christian, Homeless Services Administrator, resigned. Mr. Christian's resignation resulted in a second Fox 25 News story. Dr. Ferrer asserted that throughout the Homeless Services kitchen investigation the shelter has continued to provide client services. Security measures at the Long Island Shelter (Shelter) have been improved. Dr. Ferrer expressed gratitude to the staff at the Shelter for their continued services throughout the investigation.
- Dr. Ferrer reported that measles have been confirmed in Boston. The Infectious Disease Bureau (IDB) implemented a quick response, gaining access to the office building where the first confirmed case was located and organizing two clinics to provide vaccinations. Dr. Ferrer thanked IDB and Dr. Anita Barry, IDB Director, for their services.
- Trinity Financial's application for funding for Phase 5A of the Mattapan Redevelopment Project was denied. Trinity Financial plans to re-file at the end of March or beginning of April. Board Member Cradock asked if the Mattapan Redevelopment Project is based on state funding. John Townsend responded that the project is based on tax credit.
- Two tenant meetings have been held at Northampton Square (NHS). Over 100 individuals were in attendance and feedback has been positive. The tenants must provide an application at the end of the month to ensure that each of them qualifies to continue residency at NHS. Board Member Cradock asked how many tenants are likely to be displaced. John Townsend responded that most likely all of the tenants would qualify to remain at NHS.
- A letter to the Majority and Minority Leaders of the House of Representatives expressing opposition to the proposed federal cuts to public health spending was included in the board packets. Dr. Ferrer noted that there may be opportunities in the future for the Board to assist with legislative advocacy pertaining to these cuts.

Oral Health is Health – Making the Connection

Sandra Vasquez, Sr. Program Manager, Office of Oral Health

- Ms. Vasquez stated that the oral health of Boston residents of all ages has been improved due, in part, to the fluoridated water supply. Ms. Vasquez also stated that oral health decline is almost entirely preventable with routine dental care.
- While oral health is linked to other health risks, there is a disconnect between access to dental and health insurance and, according to the Health of Boston Report, Boston residents do not typically view oral health as a high priority. The Office of Oral Health (OOH) plans to look into the most influential forms of advertising to reach Boston residents and change both understanding of and behavior towards oral health.
- OOH collaborated with Better Oral Health for Massachusetts Coalition to facilitate focus groups to better understand how Boston Residents view oral health. Among information learned was that elderly residents are lacking in insurance coverage while younger residents are lacking in knowledge of where to go for services and what services are covered under their insurance plan. It was realized that sources of information for younger residents are their mothers, their barbers, and the Metro newspaper.
- In an effort to improve communication and address problems facing oral health, OOH created the Boston Oral Health Improvement Project. Subsequently, the Boston Oral Health Improvement

Coalition (Coalition) was created. The Coalition, consisting of internal and external partners, implemented a workplan with a focus on health equity. The Coalition provided training to Commission employees to provide more information about what is covered under the dental insurance plan offered by the Commission. Board Member Wcislo asked if this was done for City of Boston employees as well. Ms. Vasquez replied that it was not.

- Board Member Wcislo noted that the financial pressure surrounding the recent oral health cuts in dental coverage for MassHealth participants is extreme and community health centers have taken a “hit”. Board Member Cradock agreed that the budget cuts have been difficult for community health centers, especially with many adults on Medicaid.
- Board Member Cradock asked if the Commission is working with the state to provide sealants and fluoride varnish in primary health care settings and in schools. Ms. Vasquez stated that they are working on getting more involved in schools, training home based health care providers, and providing education about oral cancer screenings. Board Member Cradock asked if there was anything the Commission could do to support work with Boston Public Schools (BPS) and the provision of fluoride varnish. Gerry Thomas noted that the Commission used to have a program for this and would like to pursue an agenda with BPS to help create self sustaining initiatives. Board Member Wcislo commented that certain neighborhoods could be targeted. Dr. Ferrer suggested that the OOH team sit down with Board Member Cradock’s team to discuss collaboration with Boston Public Schools.
- Ms. Vasquez noted that the Board could find Coalition membership forms in their packets, along with a resource brochure that is currently available in English, Spanish, and Chinese and will soon be available in Haitian Creole.

Update: Budget FY12

John Townsend, Director of Administration and Finance

William Kibaja, Budget Director, Administration and Finance

- Mr. Townsend presented the FY12 budget for the board’s approval to submit to the Mayor. Core principles of the implementation of the budget included the preservation of essential services, minimization of impact on staff members, training, and data management.
- Mr. Townsend outlined the budget timeline. Pending the board’s approval the FY12 budget will be presented to the Mayor on March 14th and will come before the board again in June for final approval.
- Mr. Townsend noted that 50 Homeless Services shelter beds have been cut. Beth Grand-L’Heureux, Co-Bureau Director of Homeless Services, stated that while transitional beds were being cut, emergency shelter beds were being added. Board Member Cradock inquired as to the net loss of shelter beds. Dr. Ferrer stated that the dramatic cuts in shelter beds can be attributed to the shifting of funding to Housing First programs. Board Member Cradock requested that Homeless Services come before the board to present and discuss housing units and shelter beds.
- The FY12 budget is \$168,010,922. Although this amount is higher than the previous year’s budget, Mr. Kibaja explained that it does not indicate an increase in funding. Although cuts were made, fringe benefits and certain other types of funding are not subject to cuts.
- The allocation of funds was outlined and it was noted that a large amount is allocated to employee pensions. Board Member Wcislo requested more information regarding the amount of money coming out of employee paychecks to finance the Commission’s pension benefits. Dr. Ferrer stated that a representative from the City of Boston will be asked to come before the board to present and explain pension liabilities.

- Mr. Townsend outlined the budgets associated with each bureau of the Commission and noted that many services formerly provided by the Boston Medical Center have been assumed by the Commission. Board Member Wcislo noted that while there was a large increase in federal grants, there was not a large increase in the number of full time employees. Dr. Ferrer responded that a large number of dollars from the budget are redistributed throughout communities.
- Board Member Cradock asked about the anticipated impact of the proposed federal budget on the Commission and asked whether we had a list of proposals if the federal budget is passed. Dr. Ferrer responded that we do have a list and promised to provide it.
- Board Member Walsh asked if this budget will “work” for the Mayor’s Office. Dr. Ferrer responded that the Mayor’s office has already been consulted. The Commission has cooperated with the Mayor’s requests. Board Member Cradock expressed approval and gratitude to the Commission for working hard to do more work with less funding.

VOTE

- The Board voted to approve the FY12 public health services budget for submission to the Mayor of the City of Boston.

The votes were as follows: 4 in favor, 0 opposed, 3 absent.

Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 5:37 P.M.

Submitted By:

Jamie L. Martin, Secretary