



**MINUTES FOR THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS**  
**Thursday, June 23, 2011**

The monthly meeting of the Board of Directors (“Board”) of the Boston Public Health Commission (“Commission”) was held on Thursday, June 23, 2011 in the Hayes Conference Room at the Commission’s offices at 1010 Massachusetts Avenue, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, Boston, MA 02118.

**Board Members Present:**

Paula Johnson, MD, MPH, Chair  
Ruth Ellen Fitch, JD  
Jack Cradock  
Celia Wcislo  
Joseph Betancourt, MD, MPH (remote)

**Board Members Absent:**

Harold Cox  
Kathleen Walsh

**Also Present Were:**

Barbara Ferrer, John Townsend, Nakisha Skinner, Maia BrodyField, Chuck Gagnon, James Hooley, William Kibaja, Pam Jones, Gerry Thomas, Lisa Conley, PJ McCann, Meghan Patterson, Rebekah Gowler, Caitlin Pardue, Aliza Wasserman, Anelie Pierre, Margaret Reid, Odessa Ortiz, Nykisha Harding, Jeanne Cannata, Elizabeth Russo, Brad Cohen

**Visitors:**

David Aronstein, Boston Alliance for Community Health; Seiara White, Rashawn Nalls, Project Right; David Vo, William Li, Boston Asian YES; Rev. Dr. Bill Loesch, Codman Square Neighborhood Council/BOLD; Pat Milano, East Boston Neighborhood Against Substance Abuse; Cynthia Loesch, BACH; Briana Miller, BOLD; Katie Krizman, Lauren Antonelli-Zullo, Allston/Brighton Task Force; Michelle Molina, Merilon Astillo, Barbara Civill, Hyde Square Task Force; Maanar Thakorey, Consortium for Professional Development; Brittany Chen, Hye Won Lee, Health Resources In Action; Reyna Joint, The 84; Scott Mason, Massachusetts League of Community Health Centers; Jamiese Martin, Franklin Field Hill Healthy Boston; Ruby Fevrier, Charlestown MA; Cheryl Sbarra, Massachusetts Association of Health Boards

## **Proceedings:**

### ***Chairwoman's Comments***

*Paula Johnson, MD, MPH*

- The meeting was called to order at 4:07 P.M. The minutes of the board meetings held May 12, 2011 and June 23, 2011 were approved.

### ***Executive Director's Report***

*Barbara Ferrer, PhD, MPH, Med*

- Dr. Ferrer congratulated Board Member Fitch for being recognized as a "Diversity Hero" by Massachusetts Lawyers Weekly on June 2, 2011.
- Dr. Ferrer called attention to copies of the community meeting reports from 2010 in the board member packets.
- The Commission was chosen to be one of four sites to receive \$2 million for the Defending Childhood Initiative. There will be a presentation discussing plans for utilizing these funds in early fall of 2011.
- The Commission is in the process of applying for the community transformation grant in the amount of \$3 million each year for five years, roughly \$450 thousand of which will go to programs in Chelsea, Winthrop, and Revere. Board Member Wcislo inquired as to the difference between this amount and what has been received in previous years. This grant has decreased from \$15 million in 2010. There will be a presentation on this grant once the Commission has turned in the application.
- The Commission is closing one school based health center, is reducing hours at seven others, and may need to lay off two Nurse Practitioners who work at these health centers. Dr. Ferrer has responded to all staff and clients those who have expressed distress regarding this issue but has not received any follow up contact. Board Member Wcislo noted that there are many ways to deal with billing issues and expressed a willingness to discuss the relationship of health centers with the Commission. Dr. Ferrer agreed that adjustments need to be made to address the reliance on billing. The board will be updated in early September 2011 as to the outcomes of these potential layoffs.
- Board Member Wcislo inquired about work the Commission is doing to track follow up of students attending school based health centers. Dr. Ferrer stated that the Commission is working with clinicians at school based health centers on this. Chairwoman Johnson inquired about the navigation of reconnecting students with health centers when necessary. The Commission will be opening six to eight sites to ensure that students will be connected with health care providers at some point.

### ***FY12 Budget: Approval & Vote***

*John Townsend, Director, Administration and Finance*

- The final steps in the FY12 budget approval process were outlined. Changes that were made include a decrease in cuts to city funding in operations from 2% to 1%, an increase in pension and health insurance costs, and an elimination of thirteen vacant positions within the Commission. There have also been nine layoffs. Three of these individuals have been re-employed within the Commission so far.
- The City Council received an overview of the FY12 budget on June 3, 2011 and expressed no concerns, but expressed that they were impressed with the Commission's proposed budget.

## **VOTE**

- The board voted to approve the Commission's FY12 budget.

The votes were as follows: 5 in favor, 0 opposed, 2 absent.

### ***The Next Frontier in Tobacco Control: OTPs and Unregulated Nicotine Products***

Nikysha Harding, Program Director, Boston Tobacco Prevention and Control Program

Odessa Ortiz, Project Director, CPPW Tobacco Initiatives, Boston Tobacco Prevention and Control Program

- The FDA has approved new, graphic warning labels depicting detrimental health conditions related to smoking to be placed on cigarette packs.
- Issues relative to youth access to tobacco products were discussed. More youth are purchasing cigars as an alternative to cigarettes due to the lower prices, availability in single and double packaging, and a wide variety of flavors including candy and fruit flavors. Board Member Wcislo noted that on a chart depicting cigar and cigarette sales since 2000, an increase in cigarette taxes in 2002 and 2008 seems to reflect an increase in cigar sales around that same time. Chairwoman Johnson asked if cigars are mentholated, and whether youth were smoking cigars in several sittings or all at once. Cigars are mentholated, and the usage of cigars is dependent upon size, with smaller cigars smoked in one sitting and larger cigars often emptied and refilled with marijuana.
- The board members heard from Reyna Joint, a freshman at Brighton High School and member of The 86; a youth-centered anti-tobacco movement in Massachusetts. Ms. Joint shared a personal story with the board members about the passing of her uncle and its relation to tobacco use and outlined the results of a survey regarding youth perceptions of tobacco products. The survey indicated that 25% of youth are able to purchase tobacco products from stores, 40% use blunts to smoke, and 33% agree that the tobacco industry receives too much blame for the effects of tobacco on youth.
- Recommended policy approaches include mandating that cigars be sold with a minimum of five per package, and restriction of the sale of flavored cigars to adult only establishments. Board Member Wcislo asked if retailers have to break packages of five cigars in order to sell them individually. This is not necessary as cigars come individually wrapped. Examples were given of other cities that have established similar restrictions on tobacco products. Chairwoman Johnson expressed concern that in one of the cities mentioned, the restrictions were overturned as it was decided the city had no authority to regulate that area. This is not a concern in Boston because the Commission has broader authority.
- Chairwoman Johnson inquired as to the next tobacco product "in line behind cigars" to increase in popularity. Chewing tobacco was noted, among other products, which are not as readily available but may become more popular if the cigar prices increase. Special attention will be paid to examples of increases in product popularity in other cities. Board Member Fitch suggested that the Commission focus not only on what has been experienced in the past, but try and take steps to preempt an issue.
- Issues relative to novel nicotine products were discussed including but not limited to electronic cigarettes, nicotine gel, nicotine candy, and nicotine water. Board Member Wcislo asked about the nicotine health risks. Nicotine is a neurotoxin, a substance which is poisonous to the human body. The sale of novel nicotine products, as well as the levels of nicotine they contain, is not regulated because they do not always contain tobacco. Board Member Wcislo noted that the package for nicotine gel lists locations where smoking is prohibited, but use of the gel product is allowed such as airports, and restaurants.

- The FDA did a study on electronic cigarettes. They found the vapor emitted to be toxic and prohibited them from being marketed as smoking cessation products. The FDA also attempted to ban electronic cigarettes, and plans to regulate them as tobacco products in 2012.
- Comprehensive novel nicotine product regulation was recommended, prohibiting its sale to youth, banning sale where the sale of tobacco products is also banned, and prohibiting use where smoking is also prohibited. Dr. Ferrer stated that staff would come before the board with a drafted policy. Board Member Fitch asked if the Commission has thought about banning nicotine products as a whole. Dr Ferrer stated that this may be difficult because while electronic cigarettes emit a vapor that is harmful to those around it, the same cannot be said for all nicotine products.
- Chairwoman Johnson asked if there was data of poisoning cases related to the novel nicotine products, such as the gel. Dr. Ferrer stated that a thorough review of novel nicotine products and adverse effects of their use will be in the board member packets next month. Board Member Wcislo asked if there was a way to test different brands of novel nicotine products, such as the gel, to see if there is a consistent level of nicotine. Dr. Ferrer stated that the Commission would look into whether a lab is available for this kind of testing.
- Board Betancourt asked if it is necessary to go through the full regulation process each time new nicotine or tobacco products surface. This is necessary to ensure the public's opportunity to comment.

### ***Professional Development Series***

Meghan Patterson, Director, Center for Health Equity and Racial Justice

Rebekah Gowler, Policy Analyst, Center for Health Equity and Racial Justice

- The Professional Development Series provides comprehensive internal workshops to educate staff on racial equity. The timeline for the Professional Development Series was outlined, making note of a successful pilot program on June 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup>, and plans to officially implement the series in October 2011.
- Goals include aligning the Commission with racial justice and health equity framework, and building internal capacity to ensure that staff applies principles and practices of racial justice and health equity throughout their work.
- There will be a two day mandatory core workshop followed by elective workshops, and ongoing coaching sessions and dialogues. The two day core workshop was outlined. They will be run by staff facilitators, who will receive ongoing refreshers and debriefings.
- Board Member Wcislo stated that it sounds internally focused and inquired about an action component. The Commission plans first share a definition, then learn how use it to shape programs and interact with clients. Board Member Wcislo asked about the method of education. Adult learning methods will be utilized, including some presentation, some interaction, and some discussion. Board Member Wcislo asked if participators will be tracked. There will be a system set up online that will track workshops attended by each staff member.
- Board Member Wcislo suggested that efforts be made to contact unions regarding this to ensure appropriate involvement. Dr. Ferrer agreed that this was a good point and noted that this would be researched.
- Board Member Fitch and Wcislo both expressed approval for this Series. Board Member Fitch noted that it will be interesting to see how this process translates into the budget process, and important to take note of the staff reaction and translation to Boston residents and services.

- Chairwoman Johnson asked if any other health departments are doing this kind of training. Quite a few organization either have training similar to this, or are planning to have it in the future, however for most of these organizations the training is completely voluntary. The Commission is the first to make this kind of training mandatory.

***Adjournment***

There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 5:57 P.M.

**Submitted By:**

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**Jamie L. Martin, Secretary**