

HEALTH BLUE RIBBON COMMITTEE (BRC) APPROVED MEETING MINUTES 9FEB2021

Voting members present: Kathie Lynch (Chair), Ann Birner (Minutes), Kim McNamara, Richard DiPentima

Absent: James Petersen, Bianca Monteiro

Non-voting city staff present: Stephanie Seacord, Kristin Shaw, Toni McLellan

Action items below identify name of responsible party in bold font.

Kathie read the approved waiver for remote meeting participation during the pandemic and participants identified location and any others present at that location. A motion to approve the minutes of February 2nd was made by Rich and seconded by Kim. The minutes were approved without comment or discussion.

The weekly dashboard was reviewed by **Kathie**, who will present it to the Reopen BRC tomorrow. There are positive trends in terms of cases, positivity, and vaccination. Concerns remain, including the emergence of variants and potential for surges related to gathering and/or traveling for the Superbowl, Valentine/Presidents' Day holidays, and school vacations. Emphasis will be placed on the need for the public to remain vigilant. Kim noted that 14 days is still the most protective timeframe for quarantines based on the period of infectiousness, and a reduction to 10 days should only be undertaken if all other precautions are in place. The public should be encouraged to do everything possible to stay safe including no unnecessary travel or activities.

Mask messaging needs to be strengthened with more detailed info on materials, double masking, and proper fit. **Ann and Stephanie** will update the FAQ accordingly and will add links to information on the most effective types of masks available to the general public, e.g. Envo, carefully sourced KN95, and cloth masks that have pockets for filter layer insertion.

Kathie reminded all that the Post-COVID-19, Vaccination, and Daily Life FAQs have been updated and posted.

The Health Department led an informational discussion on outdoor dining structures such as "igloos". The City aims to begin the permitting process soon, perhaps this week. Many safety features will be required by the Health Department and others e.g. the Fire Department. Flammability, anchoring for stability, wiring, and safe location will all be considered along with measures to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission. Each structure will have limited seating for members of a single household at a time, with sanitation between seatings. Risk reduction methods will include air exchange, surface cleaning, and interior spraying. Kim voiced confidence in area restaurateurs who are committed to making this work. Timing of this new approach is intentionally coincident with improvements in the pandemic outlook as noted during the dashboard discussion.

The probability of COVID-19 becoming endemic has been in the news lately. How can the Health Department and Health BRC help the City and the public make this transition? A recent survey showed that 70% of respondents plan to continue with at least one safety measure indefinitely beyond the end of the pandemic. The nature of the endemic will depend largely on the successful adaptation of vaccines in the context of emerging variants. Clinically relevant outcomes such as lessening severity may differ from scientific goals such as overall reduction in case numbers. The BRC needs to develop messages and have them ready for release when the timing is right. **All members** should be thinking about this and how/what we need to have prepared.

Kristin proposed an immediately critical message: the need to mask and follow other general precautions post-vaccination. Ideally this would be emphasized at the point of vaccination, perhaps with email follow up immediately post. **Kathie** will draft language with this suggestion for Kim to send to state epidemiologist Benjamin Chan and for Stephanie to send to NH DHHS Director of Communications Jake Leon (*after the meeting, Kim and Stephanie agreed that **Stephanie** would send to both Dr. Chan and Mr. Leon.*)

There were no public comments. Kim made a motion to close the meeting, seconded by Rich, all agreed.