

HEALTH BLUE RIBBON COMMITTEE (BRC) MEETING MINUTES DATE 23 FEBRUARY 2021

Voting members present: Kathie Lynch (Chair), Ann Birner (Minutes), Kim McNamara, Richard DiPentima 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 17February was made by Ann, seconded by James, and approved without comment or discussion.

The dashboard was reviewed and discussed. **Stephanie** will replace the NYT U.S. map showing risk level by county with a COVID Act Now U.S. map showing risk level by state. The influence of the UNH outbreak may have caused the high-risk level but might also be waning. Presentation to the Reopen BRC by **Kathie** will include the generally favorable trend of the data, accompanied by acknowledgement that the absolute number of cases and percent positivity remain unsatisfactory.

Kristin investigated a report that NH is near the bottom in a comparison of state vaccination activity. She was assured this is a reporting issue; also that the state is NOT withholding or shelving doses. Mobile sites run by the Strafford and Seacoast Public Health Networks are doing particularly well. Authorization for use of the Johnson and Johnson vaccine is anticipated this week or early next week. Monoclonal antibody treatment is available but public awareness may be low (information was added to FAQs during the past week).

COVID-19 is not a food borne illness and food borne transmission should not be a concern. Is there a role for this BRC to disseminate this information in support of local restaurants/take out businesses? Not at this time.

Re-opening is a prominent point of discussion in the news media recently, how can Health BRC best guide local reopening plans? Weather will change soon and emphasis should be on outdoor activities including dining. Business models should be built with this in mind. The question was posed about Economic Development Commission and Chamber Collaborative efforts to encourage resiliency and continuity planning. The NH Small Business Development Center is presenting a series of webinars on continuity planning in conjunction with the UNH CO-operative extension.

The NH DHHS is pursuing genomic testing of cases who test positive and have specific profiles to determine the relevance of variants to the timeline for herd immunity. Memorial Day is on the Governor's radar screen as an important timepoint in the reopening process, but the bottom line is that we need a low positivity in order to "reopen" safely (1% and declining).

How to address the behavior of people who have been fully vaccinated? The vaccine does not eliminate 100% of the risk of infection although it does also reduce severity in the relatively few cases seen post vaccination. Transmission to others is a possibility and the responsibility to protect others remains. Small groups of fully vaccinated individuals should be able to meet with precautions. Keep emphasis on personal protection and favoring outdoors over indoors as restrictions are gradually lifted. **Kathie** will begin a draft FAQ "I've been vaccinated, now what?." We need to have a plan prepared in case a vaccine-resistant variant arises locally.

Health Dept. has fielded a question about the use of barriers for outdoor dining. The benefit of outdoor dining is air exchange, which could be compromised by installing barriers, particularly on warm/calm days. Igloo-like structures should be permitted only during cold weather. In warm weather protection from the elements by a tent should be roof only and feature open sides.

There were no public comments, and the meeting closed.