

APPROVED HEALTH BLUE RIBBON COMMITTEE (BRC) MEETING MINUTES 27APRIL2021

Voting members present: Kathie Lynch (Chair), Kim McNamara, Richard DiPentima, James Petersen
Non-voting city staff present: Kristin Shaw, Toni McClellan, Stephanie Seacord (minutes)

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 April 20th was made by Rich, seconded by James. The minutes as circulated on April 20th were approved without comment or discussion.

The dashboard was reviewed by Kathie. Key points include a continued promising downward trend in cases in the City and County, and a reduction in the severity color-code for Rockingham County but the State is still at risk of substantial community spread with a positivity still over 5%. Positive note continues to be the NH vaccine program. There were noticeable changes because the CDC stopped providing a Variants of Concern US map on April 12. In its place, the dashboard will now include the weekly update of vaccine distribution by age. The US map of vaccinations was moved adjacent to that table and the CovidActNow state travel risk was returned to the top of the page. The dashboard will be posted by **Stephanie**.

The Committee then discussed ongoing edits to the FAQs. Stephanie updated the Vaccination FAQs. Kathie added details on the in-home testing products to the Testing FAQs. However, Rich expressed concern that positive results are probably not being reported to the state tracking and that the directions may not include what to do (i.e. isolation, health care provider contact regarding potential monoclonal antibody treatment, etc.) Kristin suggested that some of the in-home tests report results via smartphone and may therefore track/report results. The Ventilation FAQs were updated with the information on ionization products but need, per James, more emphasis on the greater reduction of risk by exposure in outdoor settings vs. indoor. "Outdoors is safer" is not enough – other factors include exposure times and how contaminants such as the virus are diffused. Additional information from the CDC masking guidelines may support further emphasis in both the FAQs and general messaging. Kim also recommended that the FAQs and other messaging offer people guidance on safer choice options while giving businesses enough traffic to sustain them through next fall and winter. Rich, Kathie and Kim also discussed the BRC Arts & Nonprofits survey that found that Portsmouth performing arts audiences are not ready to come back inside without precautions such as masking and "pods." The new Dartmouth study on "Long COVID-19" was added to the Post-COVID FAQs. Subsequent to the meeting the Governor released the new "Best Practices" guidelines that go into effect on May 7. **Ann and Kathie** are reviewing that document to determine what should be updated in the Daily Life FAQs.

Kim reported that the Health Department continues to focus on vaccine clinic work, with clinics scheduled almost every day, along with efforts to vaccinate homebound individuals. She shared her concern that the Portsmouth Health Department has now taken on the work that the Seacoast Public Health Network used to do – without any increase in resources. After discussion **the Committee** agreed to support Kim in suggesting a pilot program that returned to collaborative coverage of Portsmouth's five mutual aid towns. Eventually, as Rich suggested, this might lead to legislation creating public health Districts in NH along the lines of those in CT.

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