

HEALTH BLUE RIBBON COMMITTEE (BRC) MEETING MINUTES 04MAY2021

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

Absent: James Petersen

Non-voting city staff present: Stephanie Seacord

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 27April was made Rich and seconded by Kim. The minutes were approved without comment or discussion.

The dashboard was reviewed by **Kathie**. Positivity and cases are down, and vaccinated population is up. **Stephanie** will update the dashboard with new vaccine data later today and **Kathie** will distribute to Reopen BRC members. Across the MA/NH/MA graphs the curves seem to approach green status. Rockingham County now has lower case numbers than counties to the north. Kim noted that some of those remaining unvaccinated are homebound and they are currently being scheduling out to the third week in May. Patients may prefer a certain brand but not for scientifically sound reasons. It remains to be seen whether NH school vacation last week will impact case numbers. Kim expressed a need for metrics to guide decisions on a local level once the State no longer provides data; however, it is not clear whether some level of emergency order (including data collection and release) might continue beyond implementation of the Universal Best Practices document on May 7th. FEMA payments may be tied to emergency status. DHHS calls suggest COVID-19 tracking, including variants and vaccines, remains a priority. Indications are that the Governor's press conferences will continue into summer.

FAQs should be updated not only with new information but with deletion of outdated information. After May 7th much of the content may simply refer to the Universal Best Practices document. Ann has updated Daily Life and Mask FAQs but committee review is on hold until after that date. **Kathie** will review FAQs she authored, starting with Vaccine FAQ. Referral to PCP is preferable to specific recommendations for patient management. Long COVID-19 is perhaps an underappreciated problem and can occur post cases even if symptoms were mild or absent. Kids who are too young to be vaccine eligible remain vulnerable and need to be protected as adults become able to "loosen up". Some parents may be reluctant to have their children vaccinated. Children without typical symptoms and not being routinely tested could prove to be a "silent pandemic" of cases.

Reopening guidance should aim to balance these issues. How to best guide the Reopening BRC? Track several metrics, including the presence of community transmission, and make decisions based on the worst of the dataset. Kathie reviewed area communities described as the "greater Portsmouth" area, meaning those that seem to have the most traffic/exposure/exchange with respect to our City. Recent 14-day data show significant transmission continues. There was a lengthy discussion of which to include, whether or how to include UNH students, and how to set a denominator for data (most likely a 14-day track) such as area case numbers. **Kathie** will ask **Stephanie** for help determining data sources for Kittery and Eliot, or perhaps York County, and then create a sample report including Stratham, Portsmouth, Rye, New Castle, Dover, Greenland, Newington, Durham, Newburyport, and Newmarket. **Kathie** will seek comments from Nancy Carmer and Valerie Rochon and, once we agree on what to include for the denominator, present to Reopen BRC members. We should be prepared to defend any divergence from State recommendations based on local circumstances and presenting with methodological transparency.

Health Department update: outdoor seating now requires 3 feet between parties; 6 feet is recommended for parties with children below vaccine eligibility age.

Kim made a motion to close the meeting, seconded by Ann, all agreed.