

Executive Committee Meeting

October 30, 2023

3:00 pm to 5:00 pm

Zoom Meeting

Attendance

Tim McDonald (Needham); Joanne Belanger and Alicia McCartin (Lexington); Melissa Ranieri (Walpole); Natasha Waden (Arlington); Nancy Porter (Cambridge); Kerry Clark, Terri Clover (MRPC/HMCC); Garrett Simonsen, Steven Mauzy (Regional Planners); Liz Foley (MDPH OPEM)

Meeting Minutes

- Tim McDonald (Needham) opened the meeting at 3:06 pm.

I. Approval of the September 25th PHEP EC Meeting Minutes

- Nancy made a motion, seconded by Melissa, to accept the September EC meeting minutes—motion approved.

II. PHEP Funding for Emergency Family Sheltering

- Tim (Needham) opened the discussion by summarizing the status of contracted technical assistance related to community emergency shelters. At the last General Coalition (GC) meeting, communities expressed interest in direct funding, which the Executive Committee (EC) and staff expected would be challenging. At the September meeting, the coalition voted to trust the EC and staff to develop a plan to meet community needs within the parameters of PHEP funding. As a result, staff developed a plan for technical assistance. However, after a conversation with MDPH, funds may not be used to support shelter operations directly or to complete an after-action review of local emergency assistance sheltering. Tim questioned what other categories PHEP funding can be used for; Garrett responded that the short answer is there aren't other ways for PHEP funding to be used to support emergency assistance sheltering. Natasha (Arlington) said she didn't think it was wise to push the issue, as it is likely to be extremely frustrating if the coalition can't support communities in the ways that are needed or if there is a conversation about PHEP-approved funds being available, but every suggestion for use is denied. Nancy (Cambridge) agreed that to continue down this path would be a disservice to communities. Tim agreed, stating he would still like to spend down the money and that it is important to discuss the RFP and efforts by staff at the next General Coalition meeting. Tim asked the EC if returning the money to its original line items would be best. Kerry stated that the budget modification is not due yet, and funds have not officially been reallocated. Most funds can be returned, but some unspent salary needs to be reallocated. Garrett proposed that some of the unspent salary funds could be used to explore a broader approach to extreme heat planning and the BP5 project.

III. HMCC Updates

- Teri said the next HMCC stakeholder meeting will be on Wednesday, 12/6, in Needham. The focus of the meeting will be introducing the disciplines to each other.
- Teri also provided a hospital update; there is an uptick in influenza-like illness, and hospital capacity reflects that.
- Garrett added that contracts are in place for most MRC units, MetroWest has a vacancy that will be addressed.

IV. MDPH Updates

- Liz reported that she is getting back up to speed after parental leave. The budget modification is due November 17th. Liz reported that MDPH OPEM staff returned from a national meeting of the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials last week and reported many conversations about the next cooperative agreement. Federal partners are working to streamline the PHEP application, and while deliverables will not be directly aligned with the Hospital Preparedness Program, priorities and capabilities will hopefully dovetail together. The notice of funding opportunity will likely come out in February.
- Liz touched on the multidisciplinary webinar from the Governor's office last week addressing Emergency Assistance Sheltering. MDPH has worked on developing a health and safety prioritization method to identify those who are most at-risk or vulnerable and ensure needs are being met despite capacity constraints.
- Liz said a new dashboard for cold and flu season this year will track more than just COVID-19. <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/viral-respiratory-illness-reporting>

V. Planner Updates

- Garrett updated that in Budget Period 5, key deliverables for local public health are focused on understanding public health mass care capability and integrating health equity into whole community planning. The planners reviewed publicly available local hazard mitigation plans to inform the project for this budget period. In the review, the planners sought to identify common hazards that could require a public health mass care response and to determine one or two hazards for focused public health and disproportionate impact mitigation planning. This project is an opportunity to develop a hazard-focused health action plan for hazards with a mass care associated response using a whole community approach and applying a health equity lens.
- Planners found that 75% of community hazard mitigation plans were available online. In reviewing plans for hazards that lend themselves towards a mass care response, and specifically, those with public health response roles, extreme temperatures or extreme heat rose to the top. All but one plan documented extreme temperatures or heat; the outlier only documented cold weather events. From there, the planners examined mitigation measures related to extreme temperatures or heat. Most mitigation measures addressed the physical environment or infrastructure (e.g., tree canopy to address heat island effect). Very few plans addressed the health impacts or the disproportionate impacts of extreme heat. Also,

plans were more likely to mitigate the probability of risk and community impacts than to mitigate human impacts. After review, extreme temperatures or extreme heat would lend themselves as hazards to additional work around public health mitigation planning and health action planning. The planners also searched for information on municipal websites about extreme temperatures or extreme heat; only 10 (16.7%) of towns had a dedicated page with information about how to plan for extreme temperatures and how to respond as an individual or as someone who is at higher risk and who may be disproportionately impacted by the hazard.

- Garrett introduced a proposed scope of work to engage a contractor to work with the coalition on extreme temperatures action planning. The first step is conducting an extreme temperatures/heat action planning survey to gather information on the extent to which municipalities have done dedicated preparedness work on the hazard. The way the RFP is currently written will allow the opportunity to pursue either the broader option of extreme temperature planning or a more focused look at extreme heat. The second component of the RFP is the creation of community profiles that document higher-risk and disproportionately impacted populations to provide communities with access to good data on these populations. The third element of the RFP is for the contractor to deliver training and education on the hazard(s) to communities. Next, the contractor will conduct a mitigation planning workshop to document the public health mitigation strategies used to reduce the health effects for higher risk and disproportionately impacted populations. Another component of the scope of work is to create a template health action plan that communities can customize and for the contractor to hold an action planning workshop with agencies that serve local populations to evaluate the extent to which strategies reach the whole community. This workshop will go through the process of using and customizing the template, especially regarding using the community profiles in conjunction with the template.
- In discussion, there was an interest in focused work on heat, given the severity of effects and lack of plans region-wide, but also an acknowledgment that both extreme heat and cold require more robust plans. The executive committee supported the dual approach, and the planners will bring that approach to the general coalition. As part of that meeting, reallocating some of the unspent salary funds into this project was approved.

VI. New Business

- The executive committee discussed possible replacements for the vacant EC seat.

VII. Adjourn

- Natasha made a motion, seconded by Nancy, to adjourn at 3:55 – motions approved.