

General Committee Meeting

September 27, 2023

2:00 pm to 4:00 pm

Zoom Meeting

Attendance

Rajit Gupta (Ashland), Wesley Chin (Belmont), Sara Schaffer (Brookline), Mike Greene (Burlington), Nancy Porter (Cambridge), Linda Fantasia (Carlisle), Flor Amaya (Chelsea), Kylee Sullivan (Dedham), Sabrina Firicano & Krista Costello (Everett), Bill Murphy (Framingham), Nancy Funder (Hanover), Scott Moles (Holliston), Shaun McAuliffe, Simone Carter (Hopkinton), Lauren Antonelli (Hudson), Joanne Belanger (Lexington), John McVeigh (Millis), Caroline Kinsella (Milton), Michael Boudreau, Heidi Harper (Natick), Tim McDonald and Tiffany Zike (Needham), Shin-Yi Lao (Newton), Sopheaksosandy So (Quincy), Karen Carroll (Somerville), Taylor West (Southborough), Melissa Reniri (Walpole), Mike Delfino (Waltham), Shuang Shen (Watertown), Kelly Pawluczzonek (Weston), Jennifer Murphy (Winchester), Alyson Roche (Woburn), Shelia Dibb, Caeli Tegan Zampach (MRC), Kerry Clark, Teri Clover (MRPC), Lauren Ward (MDPH OPEM), Steven Mauzy (4AB PHEP)

Meeting Minutes

- Tim McDonald (Needham) opened the meeting at 2:03 pm.

I. Approval of April 26 GC Meeting Minutes

- Joanne (Lexington) made a motion, seconded by Shawn (Hopkinton), to accept the April 26th GC meeting minutes – motion approved.

II. HMCC Updates *(Teri Clover, Kerry Clark, MRPC)*

- Kerry Clark will join the team as the new Program Manager of the MRPC.

III. PHEP Funding for Migrant Emergency Family Sheltering *(Tim McDonald, Needham)*

- Both the CDC and MDPH have approved PHEP funding to be used to meet some of the expenses or challenges related to communities responding to the migrant sheltering emergency. Currently, there are 17 communities supporting one or more shelters. Not all shelters are supported equally, and some are not supported at all. The National Guard has been assigned to support some shelters, but there is confusion over the kind of assistance they are allowed to provide. Depending on the community, there may or may not be meals provided by the hotel or that are delivered. Food is not always culturally appropriate and may not be age-appropriate (e.g., chicken patty and pickle for a young toddler). There are many challenges regarding the placement of hotels and access to amenities and transportation. Few individuals have cold-weather clothing. There is ambiguity, in some cases, about who is coordinating. Coordination is a large part of the work - whether coordinating with local clergy for a clothing drive, working with the local food pantry, or arranging for access to a kitchen in a senior center. Other needs include reproductive health (e.g., postpartum supplies, birth control), interpreter services and

ESL- not just translations, cell phones or devices to access internet-based services (e.g., Uber, social services applications), shelter management, intake forms and procedures, and personal care (e.g., laundry, hygiene).

- In the discussion, Kylee shared there are two shelters in Dedham. Kylee said she felt very fortunate to have shelter operators - organizations the state has contracted with to provide services and be on site. Challenges have included communication over when and how many families will be arriving. Taylor (Southborough) had an unsupported shelter; Southborough has a strong emergency management department, but the municipality was otherwise responsible and relied on the community to provide donations. The shared services agreement has played a large role in supporting Southborough and neighboring Northborough, where there is an unsupported shelter. Nancy (Cambridge) brought up two meetings run by MACP, one that brings together communities struggling with emergency sheltering needs and another meeting for the Massachusetts Immigrant Support Network - anyone interested should reach out to Nancy.
- Tim shared that the Executive Committee and staff reviewed the budget for areas that could be reallocated, either areas that have been underspent or discretionary funding representing things that are “nice to have” rather than “need to have.” Areas of underspending include unspent salaries and wages; there are two unfilled positions with CHA, and Garrett’s contract was not executed until August. Including the second quarter salary for the two unfilled positions, these unspent line items total \$94,122.13. Discretionary funding that could be reallocated includes the Training Contractor (\$11,500) and travel to the NACCHO conference (\$23,000). Funding Option 1 (\$105,622.13) includes under/unspent salaries and wages and the training contractor; Option 2 (\$117,122.13) includes under/unspent salaries and wages and NACCHO travel.
- In the discussion of the two proposals, Shin-Yi (Newton) asked if a third proposal combining unspent salaries/wages, the training contract, and NACCHO travel could be introduced, given that the training funding is not currently allocated to a specific training. Shaun (Hopkinton) asked how the region can use the experience of supporting mass care sheltering as a training opportunity. Nancy (Cambridge) asked what the total would be if we combined both discretionary spending line items for reallocation, Tim responded \$128,622.13. Shin-Yi raised the question: do we potentially cause any fiscal consequences by spending this money so early in the year? Tim responded that given the amount which is usually reverted, he feels comfortable with this spending. The one caveat, however, is the possibility that more municipalities will have more shelters as the fiscal year progresses. Mike (Burlington) brought up the difficulty some municipalities are facing in keeping track of all individuals seeking services. Karen (Somerville) suggested the possibility of using funds for a regional shelter coordinator position that could help with the project management of sheltering operations. Lauren (Hudson) said

that while it would be great to have people on the ground, there are so many needs it would be hard to spread one person across all shelters. Sara (Brookline) endorsed the idea of using the funding to hire a shelter manager but was concerned about the timeline for hiring someone. Nancy seconded Sara's concern and stated that while personnel is helpful, direct financial assistance for actual necessities and needs may be more useful than "paying someone to tell us what we need." Lauren (OPEM) contributed that OPEM is still working on determining approved expenditures. PHEP funding is fairly rigid in what is and is not allowable, for example, diapers and formula are not allowable, but there may need to be consideration for nutritional support. In the discussion of cash versus personnel assistance, Lauren (Hudson) endorsed the need for cash, and Flor (Chelsea) stated in the chat that transportation is a big need. The utility of a shelter manager was brought up again, especially as a conduit between local requests and resources at the state. Joanne (Lexington) elaborated that a shelter manager would be a step towards longer-term help than consumable resources.

IV. Vote

- Tim called for a motion to vote on a budget modification to reallocate \$128,622.13 from salary savings, NACCHO conference funding, and the training allocation to be used for migrant public health needs and "trust, if it's okay, that the Executive Committee and staff will work with affected communities and figure out what we can do in a way that will be most helpful to them, but won't trip them up in financial reporting and red tape." Shin-Yi (Newton) made the motion, and Kelly (Weston) seconded the motion. Tim opened discussion for anyone who was uncomfortable with the idea of a budget modification without an exact plan on how it would be spent. Nancy (Cambridge) said that she has some trepidation, but would vote yes. All communities voted in favor of the budget modification and approved the minutes.

V. DPH Updates

- Lauren updated that Liz will be back in October. Arbovirus monitoring will continue until the first hard frost. There has been an uptick in COVID-19 cases recently, and some hospitals have reinstated masking policies. Nancy (Cambridge) asked about tick-borne disease surveillance resources; Lauren will follow up.

VI. MRC Updates

- Sara (Brookline) has been running flu clinics, stop the bleed training, and Narcan training. NC-8 hosted a training on Personal Preparedness and is supporting a couple of flu clinics. Burlington is also doing a lot of flu clinics and is hosting a training this week for seniors to adjust their vehicles to be safer and more comfortable as they age. Shelia updated that Central Middlesex has been providing flu clinic support and participating in health fairs.

VII. Planner Updates

- Steven started by providing an update on BP5 Program Goals and Objectives. The overall goal of identifying mitigation strategies and communication needs to address the public health and disproportionate impacts associated with mass care hazards remains unchanged. In the first quarter, Garrett and Steven have been working on the first two objectives for the year and will continue this fall. These objectives include assessing local readiness for whole community planning of the public health and disproportionate impacts associated with mass care hazards, assessing the status of mass care planning, and identifying public health roles in mass care response. The purpose of the assessments is not to give a grade, but rather to help target planning efforts related to mass care.
- The team has been collecting information from local emergency preparedness plans and resources that are available online. This has included reviewing local hazard mitigation plans, local emergency management and public health preparedness websites, LEPC websites, social media accounts, emergency volunteer programs, and emergency notification systems. The work done so far has allowed staff to identify extreme temperatures, and more specifically extreme heat, as a top hazard of concern in the region. In addition, the effects of this hazard are largely health-related.
- Moving into the new year, Garrett and Steven will begin tackling the third objective - workshops for mitigation planning addressing the disproportionate impacts associated with extreme heat events and the communication needs of the impacted populations. Staff will use extreme heat as a mass care scenario for planning work around mitigating public health and disproportionate impacts. Staff are targeting Q3 to begin holding those planning workshops with communities and planning partners and will deliver a Heat Health Action plan next spring before temperatures start rising. Changing the final objective to the delivery of a robust Heat Action plan instead of conducting exercises allows us to focus more intensely on assessing community needs and building quality, usable plans.
- Steven outlined details of what could be included in a heat health action plan. Possible sections include thresholds for activation, identification of at-risk populations and geographies, identification of disproportionate impacts and populations likely to experience those impacts, heat-health surveillance, power outage provisions, cooling center information, risk communications, or monitoring and evaluation of interventions.
- Tied into the development of a heat action plan are two contracts. The first contract is related to our BP5 project on whole-community mass care planning. Steven outlined that staff are looking to contract with an equity consultant on the programmatic work with communities. The second contract is aligned with a proposal to DPH for OPEM's BP5 health equity project funding. Staff have proposed developing community profiles that would include at-risk and disproportionately impacted populations, such that the community profile becomes a part of the heat plan. Data in a community profile could

include how much of the community is over 65 or over 75 and potentially include maps showing where in town there is a higher proportion of older adults. For this work, staff are looking to contract with someone with a data background. This is a continuation of equity work from the last budget period, and a proposal has been submitted to DPH.

- In discussion, Shin-Yi (Newton) suggested including work on air quality or working with schools/DESE in heat health action planning.

VIII. New Business

- No new business.

IX. Vote and Adjourn

- Nancy (Cambridge) made a motion to adjourn at 4:01 pm; Joanne (Lexington) seconded that motion.