



Executive Committee Meeting

April 22, 2024

3:30 pm to 5:00 pm

Zoom Meeting

Attendance

Tim McDonald (Needham); Joanne Belanger (Lexington); Natasha Waden (Arlington); Nancy Porter (Cambridge); Kelly Pawluczzonek (Weston); 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 3:40 pm.

I. Approval of the February 26th and April 1st PHEP EC Meeting Minutes

- Kelly (Weston) made a motion, seconded by Joanne (Lexington), to accept the February 26th and April 1st EC meeting minutes– motion passed.

II. HMCC Updates

- Kerry (HMCC) updated the committee that he spent the morning reviewing the budget with MDPH. The task at hand is populating funding decisions into the state budget template. QER 3 and budget modification 4 are due Friday, 4/26. The budgeting process can be complicated because MRC funding is intertwined with the PHEP budget. The HMCC will work with Regina Villa on a day-long back-to-basics training, which will cost about \$54,000. Funding will also be distributed for the pocket talks, accounting for about \$64,000. Overall, we are in decent shape for end-of-year spend down.
- The next stakeholder meeting will be on April 23rd in Needham at the Rosemary Recreation Complex. The agenda will be centered around presentations from JSI on the extreme temperatures project and hearing from Chelsea about their special needs registry.
- There will be an HPP tabletop exercise on May 2nd.

III. DPH Updates

- MDPH continues to monitor the situation with Steward hospitals and the high need for behavioral health services in hospitals. Region 4AB hospitals have de-escalated the frequency of load-balancing calls and are now meeting every other week. OPEM expects to file for the next PHEP grant cycle this week; no information has been shared from ASPR about the Hospital Preparedness Program (HPP). Liz also said that OPEM is restructuring and eliminating the regional coordinator position in favor of program-specific coordinators. No staff will be lost, but Liz is being reassigned to the MRCs and HPP statewide. A new PHEP coordinator will replace Liz and oversee PHEP in all regions. Support for all programs will still be there; it just may look different.

IV. Planner Updates

- Registration for Workshop 2 of the Extreme Temperatures Project is open. This workshop will examine the possible mitigation strategies, their effectiveness for populations, and how we can strengthen their effectiveness as mitigation measures. We have also started developing the template health action plan for extreme temperature events. This week, Steven and Garrett will work with JSI to conduct a focus group with nurses from MetroWest.
- For the next budget period, the coalition needs to submit proposed focus areas and a budget by May 10th. The planners distilled the requirements and priority areas into six categories: risk assessment, response framework, training needs assessment, hazard planning, drills and exercises, and MCM readiness.
- The key community-level requirement addresses work around updating or developing a public health emergency response framework that can be used to guide a response to public health incidents or events. At the coalition level, a training needs assessment should be conducted and connect back to public health roles and responsibilities in the emergency response framework. Also, at the coalition level, one of the top risks from the regional HVA should be selected for additional preparedness planning. Top hazards include pandemic influenza, major hurricane, tornado, cyber attack with cascading infrastructure failures, emerging infectious disease, and anthrax. For UASI communities, requirements include collaborating with the state to maintain capacity and capability for MCM dispensing.
- To address the requirement for a response framework, the planners propose conducting a multi-step process starting with a review of the literature and existing plans risk to identify model practices for the response framework and identify required elements of the framework. Planners would conduct an HSEEP-compliant planning workshop to develop the framework and provide training for the coalition community on using the framework. Additionally, planners will provide technical assistance to communities on updating local plans and integrating the response framework. Natasha (Arlington) raised concerns over community buy-in and the receptiveness to continue to plan without any sense of agency within the municipal government. Garrett responded, acknowledging that a lot has changed since EDS work began years ago and that the planning environment is a lot different now. One way that we believe we can build buy-in is through hazard-specific planning that is tailored to community needs.
- In the next budget period, one requirement is to build plans based on a top hazard in the HMCC HVA. The cyberattack infrastructure scenario is centered around power disruption and provides the opportunity to leverage work done by Cambridge on water, sanitation, and hygiene-related hazards. The planners are proposing projects beginning with a regional risk assessment of WASH and/or power infrastructure hazard impacts. After conducting background research, the planners propose further developing the specific emergency response framework elements for the hazard(s), conducting a seminar on hazard impacts, and working as a coalition to document planning assumptions, planning environments, and disproportionate impacts for the hazard(s). Finally, an integrated preparedness planning workshop will be held to develop a multi-year integrated preparedness plan (IPP) for the impacts of the hazard. The IPP is much more than a list of training and exercises; it addresses questions like what plans do we need to develop, what training do we need to offer for staff,



what sorts of drills and exercises do we want to conduct, what resources do we need to mitigate the impacts locally or within shared services, and what policies or policy changes are needed at a local/regional level. Nancy (Cambridge) reminded the committee how many resources Cambridge has developed and how much could be shared with the coalition and built upon. Garrett (PHEP) elaborated that WASH and power disruptions are being proposed as hazards to focus on because they are interconnected to other top hazards, such as major hurricanes and tornadoes. Other top hazards (pandemic influenza, EID, anthrax) will be well suited for work around medical countermeasures (MCM).

- Garrett opened the slide on MCM Readiness by advocating that the work be done for the range of medical countermeasure hazards that exist and could occur throughout the region, not just in the UASI communities. Outbreaks of foodborne illness, measles in a school, pandemic influenza, and others are risks region-wide. The proposed work on MCM Readiness is structured similarly to the hazard planning work. This includes working with MDPH to update the MCM response framework, including planning assumptions at the local and state levels.
- Potential budget items for the year include contractor(s) for project seminars and exercises, which include the response framework planning workshop and training on the framework, hazard impact seminars, an MCM hazards seminar, and an Integrated Preparedness Planning Workshop. Funding could also be spent on support for local and regional hazard data analysis, similar to what JSI has created in BP5, as could equipment such as sanitation and hygiene kits or battery packs to support power-dependent medical equipment. Direct community support could be funded to enhance emergency notification systems and access and functional needs registries. In BP5, a need for training on building trust between populations/communities and local health departments has been documented and could be an area for spending. Lastly, line items for MRCs, travel, and NACCHO will be included.
- When asked if the committee would rather focus on power disruptions or WASH hazards, Nancy (Cambridge) commented she could go either way. On the one hand, some communities might find it comforting to know work has already begun on WASH, while other communities might find power more interesting because it is a new subject. Natasha (Arlington) added that power failure is something that everyone can relate to and has experienced, even if it was only a short period of time. Kerry (HMCC) added that perhaps the two could tie together. Garrett (PHEP) concluded that the planners will pursue a hazard scenario that combines power failure and a WASH incident for the next General Coalition meeting.

V. New Business

- No new business.

VI. Vote/Adjourn

- Kelly made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Joanne - motion approved.