Public Health
Emergency Preparedness
Massachusetts 4AB
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

General Committee Meeting
October 28, 2026
10:00 am to 12:00 pm
Zoom Meeting

Attendance
Jackie Barmashi (Bedford), Sara Schaffer (Brookline), Dawn Baxter & David Cecere (Cambridge), Jackie Cregg (Cohasset), Rachel Arsenault (Concord), Gael Varsa (Dover), Bill Murphy (Framingham), Nancy Funder (Hanover), Trish McGean (Lincoln), Paige Ferriter (Marlborough), Linda Phalen (Millis), John McVeigh (Millis), Jessica Cliff (Natick), Kristin Scoble & Amy Haelsen (Needham), Shemeka Hill (Newton), Katelyn Kirby (Quincy), Adrienne Maguire (Revere), Sarah Lapin (Sherborn), Katie Betts (Sudbury), Meaghan Ritcey (Waltham), Jailyn Bratica (Wayland), Jhana Wallace (Wellesley), Kelly Pawluczonek (Weston), Alyson Roche (Woburn), Felicia Balbi (MDPH), Eric Olsen, Jackson Lieb, Luca Miller (MRC), Kerry Clark & Teri Clover (MRPC), Garrett Simonsen & Steven Mauzy (4AB PHEP), Amanda Kwong (Public Health Communications Collaborative), Hannah Hamilton (Boston Children's Hospital), Kristen Perfetuo & Karla Ann Shakes (South Shore Health)

Meeting Minutes

I. **Release, Reuse, Respond: Press Releases for Today's Public Health Emergencies**
Amanda Kwong, Director of the Public Health Communications Collaborative (PHCC)

- Garrett (PHEP) announced that the session would begin with training on press releases before transitioning to the coalition meeting portion.
- Garrett provided an overview of the current local media environment in Massachusetts, highlighting the decline in local news capacity and emphasizing the continued relevance of press releases for journalists. Press releases are most helpful to journalists when they are locally relevant and delivered before noon. Garrett introduced Amanda Kwong, Director of the Public Health Communications Collaborative, to lead the training on press releases and their fundamentals.
- Amanda presented the Public Health Communications Collaborative (PHCC) and its resources for public health communicators, including webinar series, trending narratives monitoring, messaging resources, and online training through the PHCC Academy. She highlighted key differences between pitches and press releases, and introduced seven tips for developing effective press releases along with a template. The session concluded with an activity called "Spotting the Difference" where participants review a fictional press release draft and provide feedback on specific improvements using six key questions covering headline clarity, local relevance, facts and uncertainty, protective actions, plain language, and access information.

- Resources from this training will be emailed to the Coalition.

II. Kelly Pawluczonek (Weston) opened the meeting at 10:59 am.

III. HMCC Updates

- Kerry (HMCC) presented the budget update showing that $618,220 had been awarded with $111,000 spent, representing 18% of the budget for this fiscal year. The remaining balance, $506,000, is planned for expenditures including a contractor to work on this year's projects and exercise, and on NACCHO and MHOA conferences.
- Teri (HMCC) reported that blister agent, pandemic flu, intentional water contamination, cyber attack infrastructure, and nuclear explosion were top hazards on the recent Hazard Vulnerability Analysis.

IV. MDPH Updates

- Felicia (MDPH) provided updates on DPH initiatives, including feedback sessions on grant administration alignment, the Community Health Engagement Survey, and available COVID-19 test kits and expired PPE (for training) at the Franklin warehouse.

V. Planner Updates

- Garrett (PHEP) discussed the potential cancellation of the statewide contract for phone translation services, and distribution of Pocketalk language translators in the region. He noted that while most have been claimed, some remain in storage and can be redistributed to interested communities.
- Steven (PHEP) announced plans for the 2027 NACCHO Preparedness Summit in Atlanta next spring, with approximately 10-11 attendees planned. Look for a call for attendees by the end of the week, October 30th.
- The group also discussed upcoming emergency notification training, which will focus on developing effective emergency notification messages for local systems, though the timing has been delayed from November to a future meeting.
- Garrett and Steven presented updates on the All Hazards Public Health Emergency Response Framework (ERF) and crisis and emergency risk communication (CERC) plan requirements. They outlined two pathways for communities to meet deliverables: Pathway 1 for those who did not complete last year's deliverables, will be to complete the ERF and customize the CERC plan. Pathway 2 for the other communities includes customizing the CERC plan and making an additional improvement based on previous exercise feedback. Communities received individual emails with resources and were given until the end of January to submit their deliverables, with technical assistance meetings available upon request.
- Steven explained the updates needed for the CERC plan, including quick customizations and areas requiring further discussion or decision-making, emphasizing its importance for risk

messaging, coordination, and participation in the upcoming sub-regional exercises. Steven presented a project timeline, with pathway worksheets due November 10, 2026, ERF and CERC updates due January 29, 2027, sub-regional exercises conducted in March or April 2027, and ERF and CERC documents due to the state by April 30, 2027 and local After Action Reports and Improvement Plans (AAR/IPs) due to the state by May 30, 2027. Garrett emphasized that the pathway worksheet helps identify potential barriers to meeting deliverables and allows for specialized technical assistance.

VI. MRC Updates

- Eric (MRC) provided MRC updates, noting that all units have approved training tiers and are working on training plans due October 30th, training dates are needed for the Region's TEP.
- Jackson (NC8) shared about a successful training day that was conducted without grant funding using community partnerships.
- Eric presented on a tabletop exercise conducted with the Town of Ashland regarding their shelter plan, which involved a winter storm scenario requiring residents to stay in shelters for 36 hours. The exercise involved multiple town departments and highlighted key areas for improvement including emergency management decision-making, communication processes, and handling guests in shelters. Eric noted that several communities are developing similar shelter exercises. He is working with the Red Cross on potential regional partnerships.

VII. Approval of August 26th GC Meeting Minutes

- Jhana (Wellesley) made a motion, seconded by Adrienne (Revere), to accept the meeting minutes – motion approved.

VIII. New Business

- No new business.
- The next General Coaltion Meeting will be held on November 18th, 2026.

IX. Vote and Adjourn

- Paige (Marlborough) motioned to adjourn; Adrienne (Revere) seconded that motion. Motions to approve the minutes and to adjourn passed. The meeting adjourned at 11:55 am.