HEALTH BLUE RIBBON COMMITTEE (BRC) MEETING MINUTES
16MARCH2021

Voting members present: Kathie Lynch (Chair), Ann Birner (Minutes), Kim McNamara, Richard DiPentima
Absent: James Petersen
Non-voting city staff present: Stephanie Seacord, Toni McLellan

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 March 9th was made Ann and seconded by Rich. The minutes were approved without comment or discussion.

The dashboard shows cases in a plateau and hospitalizations trending down. Cheshire County and Manchester are current hotspots; otherwise, the state data were described as “stable”. Discussion centered around the question of why we seem unable to steadily trend in the right direction? The Governor has lifted some restrictions, and community transmission at a recent wrestling match was mentioned in this context. People may be losing enthusiasm for safe behaviors due to “pandemic fatigue” and/or vaccination status. There are personal and societal consequences to unsafe behaviors, regardless of the reasons behind those behaviors. Vaccines are declined by some individuals for valid reasons but in many cases, refusal is based on misinformation and/or mistrust. Variant evolution is encouraged by vaccine refusals and may hamper recovery. This committee must strive to consistently provide reliable information, and public health officials must continue efforts to vaccinate vulnerable populations as the vaccination program broadens. Vaccination progress in City congregant housing was questioned and **Stephanie** will look for data in this setting. A proposal to sponsor a public session enabling citizens to get answers to their questions about COVID-19 vaccines was deferred until late spring, when a broader proportion of the population will be vaccine eligible. **Stephanie** will update the dashboard with NH vaccine data today and **Kathie** will present to the Reopen BRC tomorrow.

Vaccine FAQ will be updated with the new VINI website for vaccine appointments and phases open **(Kathie).** The "I've been vaccinated, now what?" FAQ has been posted. “Long COVID” is included in this FAQ but as further information emerges updates may be necessary **(Kathie).**

Emerging evidence suggests “long COVID” can be an issue even for individuals who were asymptomatic and/or undiagnosed during initial infection. **Kathie** will include this in her Reopen presentation.

Several sources of information on the impact of COVID-19 on children were circulated to members prior to this meeting. There may be long term clinical implications beyond what the documented infection rate in children would suggest, and children under 16 years of age are not eligible for any of the 3 vaccines authorized by the FDA. A “Kids and COVID” FAQ was proposed. We can begin to assemble what we know and publish the FAQ at some point in the future. **All** are asked to submit to **Kathie** appropriate questions for this FAQ.

The “Daily Life” FAQ may have content relevant to other FAQs including “Kids and COVID” and “"I've been vaccinated, now what?". Also vice versa. **Ann** will review “Daily Life” FAQ for possible revision if indicated. As an example, questions are increasing as to whether and how to safely gather in groups after full vaccination, for reasons beyond small interhousehold social events. Reversal of restrictions post vaccination may encourage some vaccine hesitant individuals toward vaccine acceptance but could also compromise positive recovery trends if not undertaken judiciously. The committee will revisit the topic of safe gatherings again in early April when, we hope, a steady decline in cases may justify loosening of restrictions.

There were no public comments. Ann made a motion to close the meeting, seconded by Kim, all agreed.