

**Board of Health Meeting
October 10, 2002**

PRESENT: David Osler, M.D., Chairman
Donald Norton, Member
Arnold Duclersaint, Member
Jack Vondras, Director
Karen Hacker, MD, MPH, Institute for Community Health
Lise Fried, Institute for Community Health
Enkhbolor Myagmarjav, Institute for Community Health
Noreen Burke, Somerville Health Agenda
Anjali Nata, The Medical Foundation
Nick Lorenzen, The Strategy Group
Sara Reese, Tobacco Control Program
Michelle Cremmins, Tobacco Control Program
Cheryl Sbarra, Massachusetts Association of Health Boards
Good Times Emporium, Representative
Mt. Vernon, Representative

The meeting was called to order 4:50 PM.

Mr. Norton made a motion to approve the minutes from the September 12, 2002 meeting. Dr. Osler seconded the motion. Mr. Duclersaint was not present for the vote. Vote was two – zero.

Somerville Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey

Mr. Jack Vondras introduced Karen Hacker, Executive Director, from the Institute for Community Health. Ms. Hacker explained that the Institute for Community Health was a collaboration of the Cambridge Health Alliance, Care Group and Mass General Partners. This organization looks at health needs and concerns in Cambridge and Somerville. Ms. Hacker introduced Lise Fried who conducted a slide presentation regarding Somerville Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey 2002. Handout packages (see attached) concerning the presentation were given out to everyone in attendance. Copies of the slide presentation included broad health status, and specific data on tobacco were presented for Somerville.

Dr. Osler was interested in knowing how the people who answered the questions on the survey were selected. Ms. Fried explained that information gathered for the survey is done by phone through process called random digital dial, this system is used nationally as well as statewide. Ms. Fried stated that more females than males answered the survey in Somerville. Ms. Hacker stated that the Somerville community has a large population of younger people. Dr. Osler questioned if numbers are significant on health care coverage, and Ms. Hacker stated that numbers are on target. Dr. Osler asked why home stool testing goal was only 50%, and Ms. Hacker stated that the program targeted reasonable goals not unobtainable goals. Mr. Vondras asked a question with regards to the high percentage Somerville had on the Behavioral Risk Factor Survey concerning

binge drinking survey, he also wanted to know if the question pertained to people that have had a drink in 30 days or the use of illicit drugs. Ms. Hacker again stated that Somerville has a fairly large population of younger people, and this could have a result in the percentage being so high. At the conclusion of the presentation, Ms. Hacker explained that this was a brief overview of the survey. There are over seventy questions on the survey, and the Institute for Community Health chose the important areas for the presentation. Dr. Osler requested a complete copy of the questions on survey, and wanted to know what was the response from other groups regarding the survey. Ms. Hacker explained this was the first week the survey was out, and thus far was receiving positive feedback. Ms. Hacker stated she would send a complete survey to Mr. Vondras to give to the Board. Dr. Osler and Mr. Vondras feel it's a great tool, and thanked Ms. Hacker and Ms. Fried for the presentation.

Massachusetts Association of Health Boards

Mr. Vondras introduced Cheryl Sbarra, Senior Staff Attorney for the Massachusetts Association of Health Boards, Tobacco Control Program. Ms. Sbarra explained that she provides technical assistance and legal education to local tobacco control programs. She stated there is confusion as to what the Tobacco Control Program is. The Federal Government delegates Public Health Law to the States for policing, and States delegate to the Health Departments. In the State of Massachusetts the delegation of power was given to the Local Boards of Health, who have the authority to regulate and enforce regulations. Any local Public Health policy can be local or state. The Massachusetts Tobacco Control Program is funded through two revenue systems. The first is the Health Protection Funds. A 1992 ballot question that was passed overwhelmingly, established this fund with a \$.25 excise tax on packages of cigarettes and smokeless tobacco. The money is intended to fund comprehensive tobacco control and prevention programs.

The second revenue stream started in 1999 with proceeds from the 1998 settlement of the medical cost reimbursement lawsuit brought by Massachusetts against cigarette manufacturers (The Tobacco Settlement). The Massachusetts Tobacco Control Program does not take any money from the Massachusetts general fund.

The money goes to the local communities for youth access. Each Tobacco Control Program would write a grant based on poverty levels, population, etc. The Tobacco Control Program would work towards policies and control for community service. The Tobacco Control Program answers to the Board of Health. Mr. Vondras asked why some cities have Commissions vs. Boards of Health. Ms. Sbarra stated that each community is different. Local Boards of Health have an incredible amount of power and Public Health Commissions can enact a regulation without a hearing. Mr. Vondras also asked why the regulations are not implemented on a State level. Ms. Sbarra explained that there was a statewide ban proposed to go 100% smoke fee in all worksites. The only opposition was a letter written by the Massachusetts Restaurant Association stating there was no need for a statewide bill. Passing local laws should be done community by community. She explained that it is very difficult to get a bill passed through both the Senate and the House. It is very rare to have a statewide bill. The Board thanked Ms. Sbarra for coming.

Vote for David Osler as Chairman of the Board

Mr. Norton made a motion to elect Dr. David Osler, Chairman of the Board of Health. Mr. Duclersaint seconded the motion. Vote unanimous.

Staffing Update

Mr. Vondras stated the Personnel Department is reviewing and will be making a decision for the Sanitary Inspector. There were twelve internal candidates interviewed for the position, and they are currently researching the status of Civil Service candidates. This position should hopefully be filled within the next month. The union and city came to an agreement on the Public Health Nurse position. The position has been upgraded to a Manager position and the salary has been increased by \$11,000/year. This position will be posted and advertised soon. Recently, the Health Department hired a Temporary Public Health Nurse (Isa Sanchez), to help us through the extremely hectic flu clinic season. Part-time hearing and vision positions were advertised, and several candidates have applied for both positions.

Old Business

Dr. Osler stated that the Board is not going forward on any resolutions on Clean Air Works. They will wait for Cambridge and Boston. There is no public hearing scheduled for Somerville. The Boston hearing will be held next Wednesday, October 16, 2002, 6pm – 9 pm, concerning 100% ban in all work places. Mr. Norton asked if the Board could receive a copy of Cambridge regulations. Mr. Vondras will get a copy for the Board.

New Business

Mr. Vondras attended a Regional Meeting of Health Departments, and was given a response plus an article in Boston Business Paper (see attached) this date of a recent editorial “No ifs, ands or butts”. Mr. Vondras was asked to bring this before the Board to get their support, and include Somerville’s signature for encouragement of Clean Air Works. Mr. Norton explained that he was uncomfortable supporting a letter he was just handed, and needed time to thoroughly read the material before he could support it. Dr. Osler did not want to sign the letter. Dr. Osler stated the fact remains that even if they do not sign, the letter will still go out. He also reminded everyone that at the last meeting they agreed not to push forward until we see what Cambridge does. The article was tabled until further notice.

Meeting was adjourned at 6:00 PM.

Next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, November 14, 2002 @ 4:45 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth Roche
Administrative Assistant