

## CRTF HEALTH SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING NOTES 15DECEMBER2020

**Present (members and City staff):** Kathie Lynch, Ann Birner, Bianca Monteiro, Kim McNamara, Stephanie Seacord, Kristin Shaw. **Members of the public:** Rich DiPentima, Andrew Bagley

The City Council met last night and voted to have the CRTF continue into 2021 in a new format. Two “blue ribbon” committees will form, with a non-voting City Councilor member, reporting regularly to the Mayor and Council. One committee will be “Health”, in support of the City Health Department. The other will be named “Reopen Portsmouth 2021.”. The Mayor said membership will be discussed with the TF co-chairs, and that members of Health will also be members of the larger Reopen committee. Details remain to be determined and/or clarified.

Kim believes the HSC role will be essentially unchanged. Public messaging and reinforcing the role of the “3Cs” and “3Ws” in support of public health will continue to be of utmost importance. Data from NYC suggest that small, e.g. in-home, gatherings are now a big factor in transmission. Public awareness of this risk has been a goal of Public Information’s regular updates, particularly around Thanksgiving time. Stephanie reminded members she is open to suggestions and ideas regarding how to disseminate pandemic-related information (whether or not it is via the HSC). Laura Brown has a good understanding of social media, has been supportive of Task Force efforts and managed the Holiday Lights Contest social media campaign, so may be willing to support the COVID-19 precautions messaging on social media. Brinn Sullivan distributes a weekly newsletter to senior citizens. **Stephanie** will reach out to both individuals.

The weekly dashboard was reviewed. Positivity, cases, and hospitalizations are up in NH, Rockingham Co, and Portsmouth. Community transmission remains “substantial” statewide. NH/MA/ME are all in a state of “uncontrolled spread” with NH and ME positivity and cases continuing to rise; MA may be showing signs of leveling off. In the bottom left corner, a caption quotes the DHSS to explain the shading on the ‘blue’ NH map. A short evident drop in the case graph seems to be common on our weekly dashboard and may be attributed to a downturn in testing results over the weekends. Increased demand for testing overall may be overwhelming sites and leading to a backlog.

The Daily Life FAQ has been updated as approved at last week’s CRTF, and suggested timing for testing after a possible exposure has been added to the Testing FAQ. There was a discussion on whether and how to disseminate the information in “Small data, Big Implications” as discussed by this group via email last week, and subsequently during the CRTF meeting. The HSC suggests adding this information in summary to the Ventilation and Daily Life FAQs pending approval by the CRTF. Indoor restaurant dining presents a risk, being largely indoors at this time and a situation where one must unmask in order to partake, as does in-home dining events that include people from outside of the household. Restaurants need financial support to get them through this time of reduced patronage. Support may come from the Economic Development Committee, the federal government, or Main Street grants. Valerie Rochon may know more; **Ann** will ask on the CRTF call.

Kim reinforced the need for public messaging to keep up the precautions, as vaccine distribution to the full population will take several months. There is no statewide DHHS public information campaign about vaccinations yet and it is also important to provide Portsmouth-specific information. In addition to the media channels already in place, there were suggestions to simplify the links identified on the Channel 22 bulletins and to add takeout/curbside/online ordering message. Also suggested a flyer that would be mailed to all residents. Kristen will investigate if it is still possible to include Health messages in the Water bills. Stephanie will identify costs for a mailer.

While the Portsmouth vaccination protocols are being developed the City will begin work on the public information components so the campaign is ready to go when appropriate. Kathy will draft, with Bianca’s review, a Vaccination FAQs document. Stephanie sending the USA Today Vaccination FAQs as background.