



Town of Darien

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Health Department

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Quarterly Report to the Board of Selectmen

Autumn brings several additional responsibilities to our list of normal activities. In addition to inspecting restaurants, septic systems, holding training sessions for food handlers, submitting ticks for testing, issuing recreational shellfishing permits and responding to complaints and inquiries from residents, we also inspect the many special events that serve food to the public on weekends and in the evenings. September is also renewal time for the annual operating permits of the personal service cosmetology salons. Other notable programs and initiatives are as follows:

Drought Awareness Campaign

In a conference call arranged on 9/28 by the Connecticut Department of Public Health with Directors of Health from Greenwich, Stamford, New Canaan and Darien, notice was given that Aquarion continues to see declining water levels in reservoirs and has requested that the Commissioner of Health declare a water emergency for this service area. They have petitioned for approval to institute temporary measures to shift water from their Bridgeport reserves to bolster local capabilities. Of specific concern at this point is Greenwich, but all communities need to take steps to reduce water consumption. Both Greenwich and Stamford have ordinances which can provide some enforcement capabilities in times of shortages and I propose that we take a similar proactive step and plan on submitting a proposal for consideration within the next couple of weeks.

We can anticipate additional steps being taken by Aquarion and DPH if the drought persists as anticipated.

DPH Consolidation Plan for Local Health Departments

On September 17, Dr. Raul Pina, the Commissioner of the Connecticut Department of Public Health met with local health directors to “pitch” a new DPH legislative initiative to consolidate local health departments, of which there are now 73 in CT, into health eight “districts” to be organized around the counties. He did not provide any written talking points, just verbal concepts to back up the proposed attached legislation which was subsequently emailed to us only AFTER the meeting.

In reviewing the attachment, you will see it is really quite simple and presents a rather “slight” modification (some may call it simplification) of existing legislative language. Wherever health directors are mentioned, references to city, town or municipal health directors have been deleted, with only “health district” directors remaining. Municipal health directors would essentially be defined away and abolished under the new legislation. A critical component of this proposal is the intended requirement that municipalities contribute 1.0 to 1.5% of the entire municipal budget to the district department, which would represent a

significant increase to Darien. There are a LOT of details to be resolved, such as union issues, pensions, property, loss of jobs, office locations, all of which, as the Commissioner stated, could be worked out after legislation is passed. He also made it clear that district formation would be legislated, and not be a local decision.

Stamford Update & Staffing Issues

Stamford has finally hired a full-time Health Director and my interim service to the city ended August 31. However, our full time sanitarian has been out on medical leave since September 1 and scheduled to return half time on October 3rd. Hopefully, there will be a quick recovery to full time or we may need assistance to keep up with daily tasks.

Flu Prevention Program

The first flu shot clinic this year was held at the Mather Senior Center on September 22 where 50 people were vaccinated. The next clinic at the Senior Center will be on Monday, Oct. 17th, from 9:30 to 11:30 AM. Other clinics open to the public and employees will be held in the Town Hall, Room 119 on Wednesday, October 12th, 3:00 to 5:00 PM and a “Vote & Vax” clinic on Election Day, November 8th from 3:00 to 7:00 PM. For those who prefer an appointment with our nurse, they can make arrangements by utilizing the on-line scheduler on our website www.darienhealth.com.

Reportable Disease Summary F/Y 2015-16

A mandated responsibility of this department is to monitor reportable diseases. Over the years, the most frequently reported condition has always been influenza. However, in 2015-16, sexually transmitted diseases, especially Chlamydia, have become the number one reportable condition.

The top four laboratory confirmed reportable diseases for the previous three years were:

- 1) Influenza50 (2014-15); 33 (2013-14); 53 (2012-13)
- 2) Chlamydia (and other STDs) 20.....26.....13.....
- 3) Lyme (and other tick diseases)... 11..... 18.....15.....
- 4) Hepatitis C17.....1213.....

For this past year, the top four were:

- 1) Chlamydia (and other STDs).....30
- 2) Influenza.....12
- 3) Campylobacteriosis.....8
- 4) Salmonellosis.....6

The last two categories are usually food related illnesses, but since the incidents were randomly distributed over the year, illness cannot be attributed to a common source. Follow-ups conducted by our nurse indicated that many of these isolated cases were associated with travel, often to foreign countries.

Zika & West Nile Virus Update

Mosquito trapping conducted by the Connecticut Agricultural Station at two locations in Darien have found mosquitos positive for West Nile, but not for Zika virus. There have been no reported human cases of Zika or West Nile Virus locally.

Health Needs Assessment

The results of the first town-wide “Health Needs Assessment” since 2007 will be presented as a part of a three part evening series to be given at the Library in January. A tentative outline of the program is attached for your review.

Schools and Drinking Water

In response to concerns raised by recent publicity surrounding lead in drinking water in schools, water samples were collected from one fountain and one food preparation sink in each school. All test results were negative for lead. Testing was performed under the direction of BOE this past April.

Unwanted Medication Drop Box

To promote awareness of the unwanted medication drop box in the police department lobby, I met with pharmacists in each of our pharmacies and provided them with handouts and posters. Many people are unsure of how to safely dispose of unwanted meds and our intent is to have our pharmacies help inform their customers.

Beaches, Pools and Water Quality

- Water samples were collected from Pear Tree Point and Weed Beaches once a week and tested for bacteria from Memorial Day to Labor Day. This summer, there were *no* elevated bacteria levels noted in any of the samples collected from either beach. Furthermore, in accordance with our beach closure protocol, beaches were closed for only one day due to rainfall in excess of one (1) inch.
- All public pools were checked at least every other week throughout the summer to ensure proper safety equipment was available and that the water was safe for swimming. We check the filter operation, pH and chlorine levels at each pool.
- Currently, water samples are being collected once a month from Goodwives River as our bacteria DNA source tracking test program continues through December. Then the DNA which has been extracted from the bacteria will be evaluated and we should be able to ascertain the source, whether wildlife, urban runoff or human in origin.

Food Protection and Salon Inspection Programs

- A proposal to modify our restaurant Rating system to letter grades, the same as the system used in New York City, will be submitted to the Board of Selectmen this winter. The Advisory Board of Health voted unanimously to approve the concept and also authorized a proposal to assess fines for those establishments that do not post the most recent rating in the window or doorway by the entrance of each facility.
- Additionally, QR Codes will be added to rating forms to enable patrons to scan the code with smart phones to access our website to view the detailed inspection report.
- All twenty six (26) businesses offering cosmetology services in Darien (26) are inspected twice a year and inspection reports will now be posted online for public viewing.
- The Advisory Board of Health unanimously voted to recommend adoption of a policy of issuing a “pass/fail” certificate to be posted at each location in the same fashion as restaurant Ratings.

Possible Bike Trails

This idea, which began as an inquiry from the Norwalk Health Department about establishing a bike path from the Darien Train station to Norwalk Community College, has evolved to involve other communities such as New Canaan, Norwalk, Stamford and Westport in the discussion. This is an exciting opportunity to provide some needed safe bicycling routes, while also featuring some of our historic/scenic locations. Concepts regarding locations and logistics are currently being discussed.

Respectfully submitted by: David Knauf, Director of Health
September 28, 2016