

Minutes
Special Meeting
Advisory Board of Health
December 11, 2013
7:00pm – Town Hall Room 213

Attendance – Knauf, Cunningham, Patrick, Cara, Matthiesen

1. Approve September, 2013 meeting minutes - Approved
2. Darien Health Department Update

Flu Prevention Program

The department offered three flu clinics for the public and also has an on-line scheduler for flu shots providing residents with the convenience of choice. In 2012-13, we administered 309 vaccinations, 142 were done by appointment via the on-line scheduler. Demand was strong after the Holidays due to significant media attention to flu rates.

Food Service Program

Currently, there are 141 permitted establishments in Darien ranging from elegant banquet facilities, to seasonal “snack bars”. In 2012-13, the Department conducted over 400 inspections of these facilities. The Department issues a rating of “good”, “fair” or “poor” at each inspection. The Rating program, which is intended to inform the public about observed conditions and food handling practices within the establishment, takes into account the establishment’s inspection history as well as most current observations. This information is available on our website (<http://darienhealth.com>) and in a visible location in the facility.

Darien is a desirable location for food service establishments. This year, nineteen (19) new facilities opened their doors to patrons once plan reviews and the pre-opening inspection process were completed.

The Department offers a Food Handler Training Program which provides basic food safety knowledge to anyone interested. This is a half day class designed to provide food safety guidance those who work in food preparation and service in Darien.

HeartSafe Community Designation

Thanks to the mutual efforts of our Public Health Nurse Molly Larson and Post 53, the State Health Department has renewed the designation of Darien as being a “HEARTSafe” community. This was a renewal of the award from three years ago. This means that Darien continues to be a proactive community in maintaining, promoting, and expanding the goals of the HEARTSafe Community Program which include early access to emergency care, early CPR, early defibrillation and early advanced care.

Lyme Disease and Ticks

The Health Department continues to accept ticks from residents and have them tested to address concerns of Lyme Disease and its serious health impacts. In 2012-13, 100 “ticks” were submitted by residents and seven (7) were found to be positive. Many of the specimens submitted were not tested because they were either not deer ticks or did not meet the guidelines established for testing since only those ticks that have been engorged are tested. If the lab determines the tick has not been engorged, testing is not done because Lyme Disease transmission could not have occurred. The percentage of positive ticks found in Darien is consistent with that found in neighboring communities. No specific “hot spots” of positive ticks were identified in town. Free tick removal kits are available in Health Department offices.

Public Beaches and Pools

The Department continues the policy of collecting water samples at least once a week at Darien beaches from Memorial Day through Labor Day. With the exception of three days in June after heavy rains, the water quality levels did not exceed State standards. The good news is - that for the fourth year in a row - Darien beaches were never closed to elevated bacteria counts.

The Health Department website and the telephone HOTLINE (203-656-7323) continue to provide information regarding the status of our beaches.

Twelve different locations in Darien have what are considered to be “public pools.” State laws consider private clubs and condominium associations with pools to be “public” and are therefore subject to permits and inspection by the Health Department. A key component of the permit program is the requirement that someone knowledgeable in pool water chemistry and filtration is available at each facility at all times that the pool is open. All facilities were checked weekly from Memorial Day through Labor Day and were found to be safe, met water quality standards and in excellent condition during the inspection season.

Public Health and Emergency Preparedness

The Department continues to refine our approach to emergency response and preparedness by evaluating and testing mass dispensing methods and improving cooperative public health plans with surrounding communities. The success of this cooperative approach is demonstrated by the fact that the Region 1 planning area, which includes Darien, received recognition as being “Public Health Ready” from the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) and the CDC. This achievement represents a cooperative regional approach among local health departments illustrating we can work together to protect public health!

Rabies

The Health Department and Animal Control work together to submit animals to the Connecticut State Department of Public Health Laboratory for testing if rabies is suspected. In 2012-13, 18 animals were tested and one (1) was found to be positive for rabies. Testing the animal is important since an individual experiencing a positive rabies exposure should have immediate medical attention since rapid treatment is completely effective in preventing an otherwise fatal illness.

Radon

Free Radon test kits were distributed to Darien residents with advisory information. Test results do not indicate “hotspots” or areas of concern in town.

Recreational Shellfishing

The Health Department issued 51 Annual Permits to individuals for recreational shellfishing in 2012-2013 as compared to 40 issued the previous year. Shellfishing rules and guidelines together with maps of approved shellfishing areas are provided to permit holders. The telephone HOTLINE (203-838-9807) provides information regarding any shellfish bed closures due to contaminated waters or excessive precipitation.

Reportable Illnesses

Reports from doctors’ offices and laboratories are submitted to the Health Director and follow-ups are conducted as needed. This is to evaluate trends in reportable diseases that may be occurring in the community. While there has been considerable publicity given to West Nile Virus, there have never been any cases reported in Darien. Our Medical Advisor periodically issues press releases to inform residents of timely health concerns, such as the need for Pertussis booster shots.

Salons

Due to the evolving nature of this service industry, the Department initiated the formation of a committee (including industry representatives) to review and update previous health regulations pertaining to these facilities. This was completed in 2012-13 and the updated salon regulations have been implemented as approved by the BOS. There are currently 25 permitted facilities in Town which will be inspected at least twice a year by Health Department personnel.

Septic Systems and Private Wells

Many properties in Darien have on-site wastewater disposal and potable water systems. To ensure that these systems adequately protect ground and surface waters, the Health Department follows a detailed plan review and inspection process whenever homes are built, remodeled or reconstructed. In the past year, the Health Department performed soil testing at 33 sites, reviewed plans and issued permits for the installation of 46 septic systems, reviewed house plans and site septic system suitability for 63 locations and issued 22 well drilling permits, many of which were for geothermal wells.

Unwanted Prescription Drug Disposal Program

Due to the success of the unwanted drug collection days, the Department purchased a special drop-box for the collection of unwanted drugs which is now available to the public in the lobby of the Darien Police Station. No household waste or sharps may be placed into the box. The Police Department monitors the box and transports the contents to Bridgeport to be incinerated periodically. This is an important effort to provide for the safe disposal of unwanted drugs and help keep them out of the hands of those who may misuse them.

Website

The Health Department website <http://darienhealth.com> continues to be revised and updated to serve as more of an informational resource for our residents. The website houses information regarding health issues, emergency preparedness and application forms for permits as well as the schedule for flu prevention clinics sponsored by the Department. Updates are continually added as events warrant. All restaurant inspection Ratings are available for viewing and we feature an on-line scheduler to enable residents to make appointments for flu vaccinations.

Complaint Investigation

The Health Department continues to respond to complaints involving restaurants, housing, heating, mold and mildew problems, noise, insects, rodent infestations, trash, drinking water concerns, drainage, blighted properties, neighborhood odors, pollution concerns of all kinds and general nuisance situations.

3. Personnel Update – None