

RTM Public Health and Safety Committee

March 15, 2021

Virtual Meeting via Zoom

MINUTES

Committee Members in Attendance: Jim Cameron, Christine Castles, Mia Handler, Susanne Handler, Colin Kelly, Megan Kilcourse, Thomas Moore, Mac Patrick, Lois Schneider, Brian Rayhill, Robert Werner, Penny Wilson

Committee Members Absent: Holly Giordano, Virginia Jijon-Caamano, Eric Kanigan, Jennifer Woodbury,

David Knauf, Director of the Darien Department of Health, joined the committee for the meeting to discuss state and local budget issues pertaining to the department.

PH&S Chair Mac Patrick called the meeting to order at 7 p.m.

The committee unanimously approved the minutes of the November 23, 2020 PH&S meeting.

Department of Health Director David Knauf informed the committee of the crucial need for additional funding for health departments, including Darien. He updated the committee on the need for lobbying efforts to increase long term public health funding from the state, and in the process demand that the state recognize the vital and critical role that departments of health play in protecting the public by funding them adequately. Any support or testimony from RTM and PH&S members would be important to that process, he said. Darien stands to gain no new funding from the state as level funding is projected, even as the pandemic has made needs greater and the town has been relying on volunteers during the crisis which is not sustainable. While local financing from the Board of Selectmen has helped during the pandemic, additional state funding would allow departments of health such as his to hire staff and meet other objectives, particularly given the uncertainty of how long needs will continue due to the Pandemic. He will provide PH&S members the addresses to the State appropriations and public health committees to provide testimony, and Mac Patrick requested more information to make a statement from PH&S. Jim Cameron offered help to coordinate with contacts at the State Capital, plus with local media.

Mr. Knauf also reported his department's success in administering thousands of vaccine doses to residents and teachers since January 20, including outreach efforts to homebound individuals in town.

PH&S committee member Lois Schneider updated the committee on the proposed 7-11 development and the issues pertaining to traffic and public safety. She updated committee members about the timeline of the process and shared a letter documenting the Darien LTA's negative endorsement of the proposal after considerable review of documents and a professional peer review.

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PH&S committee member Jim Cameron updated the committee on TV79's work to keep Darien government accessible during the pandemic. He stated that Channel 79 has quickly adapted to the demands placed upon it during the Pandemic, covering now over 100 meetings per week on a wide variety of topics and accessed through Vimeo. He said he has been able to post informational short videos related to public health and safety, and recently conducted a viewer survey. He also reported that the program guide, with approximately 1100 subscribers, is more accurate than the town website calendar regarding confirmed meetings and links to agendas.

Under announcements, Mac Patrick informed committee members that the BOS is considering changing town shoveling laws. Lois Schneider will send committee members more information about the proposed changes, and the PH&S committee will monitor developments if rewriting the ordinance is required.

Mac Patrick adjourned the meeting at 7:37 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Penny Wilson