

Board of Selectmen
Special Meeting
March 17, 2020 – 10:00 AM
Fire Safety Complex Training Hall
MINUTES

Members Present: First Selectman Kevin Cwikla, Selectmen Kathleen Smith and Glen Coutu

Others Present: Local Emergency Planning Team members: Emergency Management Director Mike Licata, Superintendent Robert Angeli, Highway Foreman Jay Tuttle, Resident State Trooper Collin Konow, Fire Marshal Scott Schuett; Director of Health at Uncas Health Patrick McCormick, 48th District State Representative Brian Smith, Senior Center Director Darcy Battye, Library Director Matt Earls, Social Services Administrator Shelly Ashcom, members of the Lebanon Volunteer Fire Department, Administrative Assistant Bernard Dennler

1.0 Call to Order

First Selectman Kevin Cwikla called the meeting to order at 10:05 AM. All stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

2.0 Meet with Local Emergency Planning Team

The meeting of the Local Emergency Planning Team was convened in accordance with the Town Charter to discuss the COVID19 pandemic.

Uncas DOH Patrick McCormick thanked everyone for coming out. He said Uncas Health has been preparing for several weeks and provided his cell number to attendees. He asked everything go through the First Selectman's Office when possible, but said he is available if they need him urgently. Uncas staff will be closing satellite offices and lobby to the public but staff is still available and working on priority issues.

Regarding COVID19, he said there is no vaccine and therefore no need for distribution sites for that purpose. He discussed the closure of bars, restaurants, and movie theaters as ordered by the governor. So far, there is no police enforcement of these orders, according to C. Konow. So far there have been 41 positive tests in Connecticut. These number of confirmed positives seems to be doubling approximately every two days. Daycares are remaining open as the state does not want kids who may be carrying asymptotically to be left with grandparents that are vulnerable while parents work. P. McCormick asked that Uncas be notified if a daycare is open and children there are sick.

He said that social distancing must be a rule that we promote. Uncas assumes there are cases in this area of the state that just have yet to be identified. He noted that people move freely about the state. It is not isolated to certain regions or towns. Assume it is already here and act accordingly. If someone suspects they are infected, the most important thing is to contact or see a doctor. Testing is secondary as there is a slow turnaround. Everyone should treat all illness as if it is COVID19 or the seasonal flu.

Dispatch centers are being prepared to guide EMS to deal with possible cases. B. Petrie of the LVFD said Willimantic 911 dispatch will be doing screening questions. P. McCormick said Lebanon has the benefit of a robust volunteer fire department, but not all towns are in that situation. He cautioned that members can expect to be infected. He also noted that there will be a boom in the positive numbers as testing expands. The state is looking for volunteers for the Medical Reserve Corp to staff things like drive thru clinics as they become established. He noted there may be a need for school nurses to serve as they are available due to the building closures. Superintendent R. Angeli said he would contact the nurses.

B. Petrie asked about the procedure for reporting COVID19 cases when the department believes they have transported an infected individual. After discussing with P. McCormick, she stated they would report locally and let the hospital report.

P. McCormick stated it is likely that 40 to 70 percent of the US population will be infected in the next 12-18 months. He said we are past the containment phase of this virus and must move to mitigating its spread to avoid overwhelming the hospitals. He said the virus is susceptible to regular cleaning and sanitization procedures. The mortality rate varies but is believed to be between 10 and 15 percent for those over 80, due to comorbidities and susceptibility to pneumonia. He said we need herd immunity to eventually end transmission. He cautioned that the outbreaks may slow in the summer if it is seasonal, but return in the fall and winter. The 1918 Spanish flu did this. He said people should not rely on social media for their information.

State Rep. B. Smith spoke and said the state may waive some requirements for some doctors and nurses with expired licenses to staff needed areas. He said it is unlikely closures last just two weeks and most likely will continue through the end of April. The Small Business Association will be offering low interest loans. He encouraged people to apply now. He said the Department of Labor is preparing and people should file now for unemployment if they need to. He added they are waiting to see if the feds will make changes allowing contractors to qualify even though they normally would not. The state will also be allowing waivers for budget deadlines for municipalities, providing a 30-day extension. These may be extended further as the crisis continues. He said Mohegan Sun and Foxwoods casinos would close today.

Social Services Administrator S. Ashcom said the Neighbors Helping Neighbors food pantry would be shutting down indefinitely based on what she had been told. The town is working to develop new solutions in the meantime. R. Angeli said all students and school-aged kids in homes with students are eligible to get free meals between 9AM and 10AM at the Lyman Memorial High School courtyard. He said there would be a package of two meals per child, breakfast and lunch starting tomorrow. Starting next week, there would be packages of two days' worth of meals on Monday and Wednesday and one days' worth on Friday. Residents do not need to call ahead.

Senior Center Director D. Battye asked about the senior van transportation program. P. McCormick said there had not been any guidance from the state yet on those programs. He said it is case by case, especially if they can accommodate people for medical appointments. However,

he said it varies based on the size of vans and the drivers themselves whether this is a workable solution for towns.

B. Petrie asked about town events including graduation, the Memorial Day parade, Dancefest, etc. P. McCormick advised informing groups that they may be cancelled, except graduation. He said they are not ready to signal that at this time.

K. Cwikla said he will be closing all town buildings. Employees will be working from home as possible. K. Smith, B. Dennler, and R. Angeli discussed telemeetings in line with state guidelines that have been issued for Boards and Commissions. B. Dennler said he is looking at Zoom as a possible platform.

M. Licata spoke about the need to take precautions and advised declaring a state of emergency. He said there needs to be a unified daily command. C. Konow warned of possible second and third order effects as the economy struggles which can lead to an increase in crime, although he said that is less likely to be a significant problem in small communities.

Library Director M. Earls said some library services are continuing online. People can call and leave voicemails if needed and staff will call back.

3.0 Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 11:17 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

Bernard W. Dennler III

Administrative Assistant