

Harvard Board of Health Emergency Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, August 27, 2019
Approved: September 10, 2019

BoH Members present: Tom Philippou, Chair; Libby Levison; Sharon McCarthy, by phone;
Select Board members present: Alice von Loesecke, Rich Maiore, Kara Minar, Stu Sklar, Lucy Wallace.
Public present: Joan Eliyesil, the Harvard Press; Andrea Juchartz, Tom Monath MD, Mark Tracey

PUBLIC COMMENT

Ms. Juchartz spoke to the combined Boards stating her opposition to spraying. She stated her belief that spraying is ineffective in Harvard based on the lay of the land, that she is concerned about the impact on pollinators, and that she believes that the BoH should focus attention on educating the public. She offered to help with outreach, and suggested sending information home to families with students. She concluded by stating that she believes that Harvard should not join the Central Mass Mosquito Control Program (CMMCP).

Dr Tom Monath, Finn Road, introduced himself; he is an emeritus professor at Harvard University, and used to run the CDC Arbovirus lab.

Joan Eliyesil, Harvard Press, informed the group that while historically the Department of Public Works (DPW) treated catch basins in town with Mosquito Dunks®, they are not currently doing so.

NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Philippou read the EEE Briefing note prepared by the BoH, and the group discussed the various points. A question was asked about the number of mosquitoes that DPH tests each year; Dr Monath explained that it is not 5,921 mosquitoes but 5,921 samples, with a variable number of mosquitoes in each sample. Ms. Minar asked whether the BoH knows how many mosquitoes were sampled; Mr. Philippou reported that he had asked DPH that question but wasn't provided with an answer.

The group discussed who should be informed. Ms Wallace asked if the sports groups had been notified; Ms Levison reported that the BoH had contacted the schools, HAA, Camp Green Eyrie, Fruitlands, the orchards, Friendly Crossways, and several other groups in town.

The group also discussed whether spraying was called for. Ms Levison reminded the group that DPH's advice for towns at Moderate does not include spraying. Mr. Philippou reminded the group that roadside spraying – the only spraying that the town can arrange for – only reaches 100' from the road; Ms McCarthy reminded the group that the spray reaches 100' if there is a clear line of site. The group concluded that in Harvard, with so many hammerhead lots and lots set back from the road, it is not possible to reach many private homes and yards.

Dr Monath asked to speak, and said that there is little evidence that spraying has an impact on the transmission cycle, and that it takes the larvae one week to emerge, and that the spray only kills the adult mosquitoes. For towns at “Moderate” level, as Harvard is, spraying is not required and is considered “a feel good measure.” Dr Monath was asked if he could provide a citation that spraying limited impact on transmission and he said he would.

Ms. Minar asked whether an intervention in a targeted area made sense. Ms Levison pointed out that the one positive mosquito was found on the west side of Harvard, but that roadside spraying couldn't reach many areas there.

Ms. Wallace said “so the bottom line is ‘Use repellents’.” Mr Philippou reminded the group that repellents are also good against ticks, and added that personal protection must be the foundation of the intervention, with or without spraying.

Ms Wallace suggested that the BoH put very clear factoids in the paper. Ms Minar suggested that the BoH draw up an FAQ (frequently asked questions list) that could be posted online. Ms Levison told the Select Board members that she hoped that the assembled group could convert the briefing document, and a handout that the city of Methuen is distributing, into a handout for Harvard.

Ms Wallace asked if the COA was informed; Ms Levison confirmed yes. Ms Wallace suggested that the COA put something in an email. Ms von Loesecke suggested that when the Board of Health posts something to their website, they also post to NextDoor instructing residents to see the information on the Town website. Ms. Wallace suggested contacting the Sudbury Valley Trustees and agreed to send them the information.

Ms Levison told the group that the Flea Market had been in touch about EEE. She said that her inclination was that the Flea Market is a daytime event, and that if EEE is still a threat at that point in time, the organizers could contact vendors by email to ask them to wear repellent, as well as provide repellent at the gates. The group agreed. The group then discussed the Lions' Fall Fest on Sept 14. That event extends into the evening and the Boards thought that EEE should be brought to the Lions' attention. Ms von Loesecke said that she is a member of the Lions and she will speak to them.

Three of the Select Board departed around 3pm. Ms von Loesecke, Mr. Sklar and the Board of Health continued the meeting. Ms Levison reminded the group that the general discussion on NextDoor has been “what is the town going to do?” Ms McCarthy told the group that the DPH 2019 Arbovirus Surveillance Plan spells out in detail DPH's monitoring and response plan. The remaining meeting members reworked the two handouts into one draft document. Mr. Philippou agreed to revise it and have it posted on the Board of Health website.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting ended at 3:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Libby Levison

Documents referenced:

- EEE Briefing note
- Board of Health EEE Press Release Aug 21, 2019
- Mosquitoreport.com Risk categories and actions
- Methuen Resident's Guide to EEE
- Draft EEE Information sheet for Harvard residents