



Town of Natick Board of Health

Natick 180 Steering Committee Meeting

9:00 AM Wednesday, April 1, 2020

Online Virtual Meeting via Zoom

MINUTES

MEMBERS and DESIGNEES PRESENT:

Astrid Dretler, Natick 180 / Natick Health Department
Christine Guthery, SPARK Kindness
Sarallyn Keller, First Congregational Church
Chief James Hicks, Natick Police Department
Chief Michael Lentini, Natick Fire Department
Nina Levine, Natick 180 / Natick Health Department
Cheryle Lucenta, SOAR Natick
Dr. Anna Nolin, Natick Public Schools
Sue Salamoff, Natick Board of Selectmen
Katie Sugarman, Natick 180 / Natick Health Department
James M. White, Jr., Natick Health Department
Ian Wong, Natick Board of Health

MEMBERS and DESIGNEES ABSENT:

Steven Baroletti, MetroWest Medical Center
Fr. Joseph J. Gallick, Natick Interfaith Clergy Association
Lt. Cara Rossi, Natick Police Department
Nick Loscoco, SMOC

[Slides presented at meeting available to view here.](#)

1. Citizens' Concerns: Any individual may raise an issue that is not included on the agenda and it will be taken under advisement by the Committee. There will be no opportunity for debate during this portion of the meeting. Any individual addressing the Committee during this section of the agenda shall be limited to two minutes.

None presented.

2. Vote on March 2020 Steering Committee meeting minutes

The minutes from March 2020 were approved by verbal role call.

3. Report from Substance Use Prevention & Outreach Program Manager regarding COVID-19 and local substance use prevention and intervention initiatives

- **Assistance for Residents Experiencing Addiction:** Ms. Sugarman has been in touch with Lt. Rossi from the Natick Police Department to monitor overdose rates on a weekly basis; will monitor spikes. Because COVID-19 is a virus that impacts the lungs, Ms. Sugarman reported that there is concern about the possible impact on those who have substance use disorder since opioids depress breathing. There are also concerns about people who use substances and experience homelessness. Lt. Rossi and Ms. Sugarman have started a password protected spreadsheet with Program RISE, the outreach division of JRI Health. Lt. Rossi and Jail Diversion Clinician, Sonja Wagner, have identified people who have had interactions with the Natick Police Department in the past related to substance use. Then, Program RISE can do outreach to them and offer phone-based support. They are no longer doing face-to-face meetings, but will mail items to people or drop them off at a doorstep. JRI will check off individuals as they are able to connect with them.

The Natick Health Department is still offering Narcan to people while Town Hall is closed to the public. People who are in need of Narcan can contact Natick 180 via phone or email and arrangements will be made.

The Middlesex Sheriff's office is issuing COVID-19 survival kits (which have Narcan and information on how to get assistance and support) to people who are released from incarceration and are at high risk for an overdose. Ms. Sugarman is in touch with The Framingham Community Corrections Center, which provides support to individuals involved in the court or justice system for a variety of infractions. They are not meeting face-to-face with people. Check-ins with parole or probation are being conducted mostly via phone.

The Natick 180 team is working on a number of resource lists. Ms. Dretler is currently working on some harm reduction language that is community friendly.

- **Resources for People in Recovery:** Natick 180 has put together a list of virtual meetings and phone apps. The list is available on the Natick 180 website and was sent out via Natick 180 newsletter. The resources can also be found on the Natick 180 social media pages. Ms. Dretler is working on a list of recovery podcasts that can be circulated on social media.
- **Resources for Young People:** The Natick 180 team developed some documents on "quitting vaping" that was shared with Natick Public Schools. With a less structured schedule and more time at home, young people might be vaping more. There is also concern that people are being forced to quit because they don't have access to vaping supplies as much or perhaps they are motivated to quit because of COVID-19 concerns relating to lung health. These tips and resources were shared on social media.

Natick Above the Influence had their first virtual Google Hangout on March 31st. Ms. Levine and Ms. Sugarman checked in with the students and what they were hearing from their peers relating to substance use. They were more concerned about the mental health implications of COVID-19, but did not acknowledge any new behaviors or trends. Mr. White mentioned that young adults are the most asymptomatic carriers of the COVID-19,

and that droplets in exhaled aerosol from an electronic cigarette could contain the virus.

- **Resources for families:** The Natick 180 website has a list of virtual meetings for families. Ms. Levine and Ms. Sugarman are working on moving the “Learn a Better Way” family communication skills group to an online platform. Ms. Sugarman reported that a parent of a Natick High School student called her and stated that their child was vaping more THC at home during this time. The parent was eager to join this virtual meeting. Ms. Sugarman stated that this is a unique time for parents because it may be harder to ignore or deny certain behaviors and there is also a concern that the lack of structure and the stress of the situation may lead to an increase in teen substance use. Parents could benefit from coaching on limit-setting, finding support resources. It may be a good time to utilize NHS counselors.

Ms. Sugarman reported that there also seems to be an increase in parent substance use, anecdotally based on some social media posts regarding an increase in alcohol consumption.

The Journey Bereavement Group had their first virtual meeting on March 31.

- Ms. Sugarman asked the group about other needs or concerns they are seeing in the time of COVID-19. There was some discussion around whether kids were getting together virtually and drinking, a concern brought up during a call of regional substance misuse coalitions. Mr. Wong also mentioned that many college students are back home from school and have more time on their hands. There may be an increase in substance misuse in that population.

When it comes to parent substance use, the group discussed the importance of social media messaging that emphasizes modeling behaviors and how to handle stress at home. Ms. Guthery reported that SPARK Kindness is hearing about some concerns related to substance use and wants to share Natick 180 resource documents in an upcoming newsletter. The messages must be compassionate and non-judgmental.

It was reported that groups of people in cars may be gathering in an open parking lot in Natick and possibly drinking while maintaining distance. It seemed to be a group of parents and kids. There was some discussion around social distancing at parks and playgrounds. Chief Hicks emphasized that social gatherings should be limited to 10 and people should be keeping a 6 ft. distance from others.

Ms. Sugarman brought up concerns related to COVID-19 and possible related increases in domestic violence (although the state’s reported numbers have not borne that out). She reported that Voices Against Violence is sharing really helpful resources in this domain that Natick 180 will share on their social media channels.

1. Town department reports
 - a. Natick Police and Fire Departments

Chief Hicks reported that there were 2 overdoses in March. The most recent one was over the last weekend of the month. The person had a history of benzodiazepine use and reacted to naloxone when it was administered.

Ms. Sugarman reported that the number of overdoses to date are similar to the number of overdoses from January 2019-March 2019. See slides.

No updates from Natick Fire Department.

b. Natick Public Schools

Dr. Nolin reported that Natick Public Schools are doing just about everything on an online platform. They are trying to reach and stay in touch with all students. There were a few families that are not responding to multiple attempts at reaching out. Chief Hicks reported that this can be treated in the same way it would be if a child was not showing up at schools. The school principals will reach out to the School Resource Officers.

Dr. Nolin reported that their web filter was upgraded to address this new online learning environment.

c. Natick Health Department

Mr. White reported that Natick has a Hotline available to residents in need. It's stationed at the Natick Community Senior Center and overseen by staff there. They have plenty of volunteers to help out. The Hotline number is (508) 647-6540 and is available Monday through Thursday from 8:30 am-5:00 pm and Friday from 8:30 am-12:30 pm.

Ms. Ziegler, a social worker at Natick High School, offered to assist people who are having social issues or just need to talk to someone.

Monies from the legislative Earmark are being moved around because of many changes related to COVID-19. Ms. Sugarman is trying to get in touch with the Department of Public Health about carrying over the funds and reallocation of the funds. The Board of Selectmen and the Natick Police Department may be able to help advocate on our behalf.

Leila Mercer, the public health nurse, was supposed to retire on March 31, but the Retirement Board has agreed to let her stay on until the end of April.

Mr. Wong mentioned that the Feds might be limiting funds so there is potential for the Drug-Free Communities grant monies to be reallocated away from the program in the Fall.

2. Community reports:

a. MetroWest Medical Center

There was no update from MetroWest Medical Center.

b. SOAR Natick

Ms. Lucenta reported that a lot of people in recovery are struggling right now to stay sober. Many of them have lost their jobs because they work in a restaurant or in construction. SOAR recently brought dinner to YARCM and will do that again.

SOAR has seen an uptick in applications for grants and have been able to award them.

Some are from people who are taking college courses online and some are from people who live in recovery homes and need a computer. SOAR was able to pay someone's rent. Ms. Lucenta asked for the group to refer people to SOAR if they are in need of assistance.

c. SPARK Kindness

Ms. Guthery reported that Kindness Week has begun and will run through April 5th. It will mostly be happening online.

SPARK Kindness had to rethink their Spring Resilient Parent, Resilient Child series. They have a new line-up of online programs and some new offerings. They are starting a program called "SPARK Kindness Connections" where they will be calling to check in on people. Some new Facebook groups have been created.

Jon Mattleman, who ran the anxiety workshop, reached out to all the parent participants, since the last session was cancelled.

SPARK Kindness is amplifying resources on their website. They are also looking into some virtual options to support parents.

d. Interfaith Clergy

Ms. Keller reported that Churches are switching the way that business is being done, and are trying to remain connected to their congregations. They can help share Natick 180 resources that are being put together.

3. Set next meeting date/time and adjourn

Next meeting dates are being solidified. The regularly scheduled monthly meeting will be planned for May 6th at 9 am. If the Steering Committee feels that another more recent check in is needed, we may schedule a meeting for April 22nd at 9 am.