

City of Portsmouth, New Hampshire
Portsmouth Citizen Response Task Force
Remote meeting via Zoom
Meeting Minutes for Tuesday, December 9, 2020, 2:00 P.M.

Call to Order

Co-Chair James Petersen called the meeting to order at 2:00. City Manager Karen Conard represented the City staff and was the moderator. Patience Horton took minutes. This 27th 2020 Citizen Response Task Force meeting lasted 45 minutes. Votes were taken with a show of hands.

Task Force present:

1. James Petersen, Petersen Engineering, Co-Chair
2. Bianca Monteiro, York Pulmonary Associates (Health Care Professional)
3. Karen Conard, City Manager
4. John Golumb, POCO's Bow Street Cantina (Restaurant)
5. Deborah Anthony, Gather Pantry Market (Non-profit)
6. Alan Gold, Economic Development Commission
7. Ann Birner, PharmD (Health Care Professional)
8. Jim Lee, REMAX Shoreline (Real Estate)
9. Russ Grazier, PMAC (Non-profit)
10. Kathryn Lynch, (Non-profit Health-care Organization)
11. Martha Fuller Clark, NH State Senate District 21
12. Valerie Rochon, President, Chamber Collaborative of Greater Portsmouth

Task Force absent:

13. Karen Bouffard, The Real Estate Market, Inc. (Real Estate)
14. Mark Stebbins, ProCon Construction, Co-Chair
15. Kim McNamara, Health Officer
16. Sarah Lachance, Economic Development Commission
17. Jeffrey Goss, The Clipper Tavern (Restaurant)
18. Joe Scarlotto (Restaurant)

City Staff present:

1. Stephanie Seacord, Public Information Officer
2. Joe Almeida, Facilities Manager
3. Patrick Howe, Deputy Fire Chief
4. Kristin Shaw, Deputy Health Officer
5. Nancy Carmer, Economic Development Director
6. Mark Newport, Police Chief
7. Peter Rice, DPW Director

Also present were:

1. Anne Weidman
2. Andrew Bagley
3. Rich DiPentima

I. Welcome & Approval of December 2, 2020 Minutes

- Motion: Martha Fuller Clark moved to approve the December 2, 2020, Minutes as amended. The secretary made proofreading errors. Russ Grazier seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Karen Conard: The City Council will most likely continue the Task Force’s presentation during the December 14 meeting.

James Petersen: In the survey of who’s going to continue on if the Task Force is reauthorized, Ann Birner has changed her “no” to a “yes.” The Health Subcommittee will be looking for a new chair.

I. Health Subcommittee Report

CRTF HEALTH SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING NOTES December 9, 2020 By Ann Birner, Health Subcommittee Chair

The weekly dashboard looks dismal, with rising cases in the state, county, city and rising hospitalizations. Community transmission is categorized as “substantial” statewide. NH, MA and ME are all categorized as having “uncontrolled spread”. Data may continue to be influenced by the holiday and post-holiday process variations, but trending is clearly in the wrong direction. The NH map showing new cases that usually appears at the bottom of the dashboard has been blanked out due to problems with the data. It will be reinserted next week or whenever the problem is resolved.

Question from James: “Is uncontrolled spread” the worst category for the tri-state data shown? Answer (delayed for fact check at covidexitstrategy.com): Yes.

Revisions to the Daily Life FAQ were reviewed. Most of the proposed revisions are necessary based on changed recommendations from the CDC and NH DHHS regarding quarantining. In addition, there were a few changes to verbiage in the version presented. Discussion points and comments included:

- Change “Stay at Home” to “Safer at Home” (correct title of NH guidance document)
- When is the best time to get tested if exposed? Quarantine immediately and get tested ideally around day 5 or if symptomatic.
- Use of rapid antigen tests is generally limited to symptomatic individuals.
- Testing of all contacts may overwhelm the system given the high volume of cases at this time.

- Contacts of contacts of a positive case do not need to quarantine or be tested.
- Why did the CDC make these changes? Will include the majority but not all of the contagious period. May alleviate system stresses such as time off from work and testing capacity. Workers who do not benefit from paid time off may struggle with 14 days not working.

The revisions were approved (following a motion by Alan, seconded by Valerie), with a suggestion to add details to the Daily Life and/or Testing FAQ as to ideal timing post exposure.

The HSC circulated an on-line (<https://zeynep.substack.com/p/small-data-big-implications>) article this morning and Bianca summarized for the Task Force. A recent study described the spread of SARS-CoV-2, the virus causing COVID-19 infections, from an asymptomatic case to 3 other patrons in a South Korean restaurant (indoor dining). This index case infected not only the person across the table, but also two other people at a distance of 6.5 meters (~21 feet) and 4.8m (~15 feet), including one whose stay at the restaurant overlapped with the index case for only 5 minutes. After determining transmission most likely occurred in this restaurant, the authors carefully recreated the seating on site and studied airflow, which seemed to be a key factor. The 3 cases apparently infected while at the restaurant were “downstream” from the index case in terms of airflow, whereas other patrons (including some at much closer proximity) who were not in the airstream were not infected. The fact that diners are generally unmasked and speaking as well as eating may also contribute to such cases. These findings add to two previously published studies on airflow-based transmission, one in a Chinese restaurant and another from a choir practice in Washington State. The piece will be circulated to the Task Force membership and consideration will be given as to whether wider circulation is merited.

*Submitted by Ann Birner
Health Subcommittee Chair*

There was detailed discussion about the FAQ report

- Motion: Alan Gold moved to ratify the report as official work of the Task Force. Valerie Rochon seconded. In discussion, **Senator Fuller Clark** asked what changed CDC guidelines from 14 to 10 days of quarantine. Answer: Possibly, they are going on the idea that 90% of spread happens within 10 days of exposure.

Kathie Lynch: If you have been exposed, and you are asymptomatic, the preference is that you quarantine via the quarantine requirements. If you are exposed and you become symptomatic, then you should seek testing. **Kristin Shaw:** The optimal time if you have actually had an exposure is Day 5. That is the timeframe most likely for true positivity. **Bianca Monteiro:** Ideally everybody should get tested, but we don't

have availability of the right tests at the moment. You should initiate quarantine and then get the test on Day 5, wait for the test results, and most likely complete the quarantine. **James Petersen:** That clarity about testing should be reflected in the FAQ. He recommended everyone on the Task Force read the FAQ.

Vote: The motion passed unanimously.

Kathy Lynch: This is the conundrum that we have. We need to find a way to protect individuals from being infected with the virus--knowing that while many people have mild cases, there are a small subset that become severely ill--and at the same time keeping our economy going. At this point in time, that is a very difficult path to follow.

In Other Business

1. **Valerie Rochon:** Things do not look good from restaurants and bars, and they are aware of that. Many are considering hibernating through January and February—some have already committed to it. They need to know that the Task Force is helping them get back out on the streets in March. We need to get ahead of it. The City Council has to come up with a date. **James Petersen:** In ways, March 1 is not that far off.
2. **Valerie Rochon:** Now that the barriers are all going, we need to reinstate 15-minute parking spots. I have a list of where and when they should be. **Peter Rice:** 15-minute parking spots can be excessive. The number and locations are being analyzed, as is the window of time declared on the signs. They are in the highest revenue area of the City. A balance needs to be struck.
3. **Karen Conard:** The mask mandate might be extended to June 30, 2021 if City Council approves it.

Adjourn

- Motion: Russ Grazier moved to adjourn. Alan Gold seconded. The motion passed unanimously. The time was 2:45.

Respectfully submitted,
Patience G. Horton,
Recording Secretary