

Advisory Board of Health Meeting Minutes

A regularly scheduled meeting of the Advisory Board of Health (ABH) was held on Wednesday, November 17, 2010 at 7:00 pm in room 213 of Town Hall.

Members present: Kevin Cunningham, Chair and Mary Guimond, Clerk
Members absent: Dr. Jose Cara, Vice Chair and Jennifer Geddes
Guest: David Knauf, Director of Darien Health Department

The meeting was called to order at 7:10 pm. Since no quorum was present, minutes could not be approved. Mr. Knauf provided additional comments to the Health Department Annual Report dated October 25, 2010 (copy attached to minutes and incorporated herein):

Lyme Disease and Ticks – Mr. Knauf will prepare a letter to the newspapers regarding Lyme disease prevention. His staff is preparing a survey of local doctors regarding their reporting of Lyme disease to the State.

Rabies – Raccoons are the most frequent animals found to carry rabies.

Flu – Demand for vaccinations is down from last year as is the incidence of flu.

Emergency Preparedness – Mr. Knauf and Chair Cunningham continue working in this effort with a consultant. Excellent progress in this area.

Beaches – One closure of beaches was necessary this summer due to rainfall. Darien is joining a collaboration of Westport, Fairfield and Norwalk to do DNA typing of coastal waters next year.

Food Service – Everything is continuing on track and running smoothly. Darien Patch may film a demonstration of a restaurant inspection for public viewing.

Septic/Wells – While this is a very time consuming process due to our soil conditions, Mr. Knauf reports no problems with either the public or with engineers in completing the testing.

Shellfishing Ordinance – Still in Town Counsel's hands.

Communicable Diseases – The Health Department is receiving a rising number of reports of pertussis. Dr. Caleb Moore intends to write an article for local newspapers about this topic.

Miscellaneous – Unwanted Prescription Day was successful as was "Vote and Vax" (vaccination for flu). The Health Department has declined an opportunity to obtain a grant from the State for the Healthy Home Assessment. Mr. Knauf felt the assessment

required was invasive and upon review, both Chair Cunningham and Ms. Guimond agreed with Mr. Knauf.

Under new business, Chair Cunningham suggested that next year's ABH schedule mirror the 2010 schedule – third Wednesday at 7:00 pm of every other month. Ms. Guimond agreed and will make arrangements for such schedule for 2011.

Ms. Guimond mentioned that she has been asked to participate in a Post Road Pedestrian Safety Committee. More details to follow on this.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted on November 19, 2010:

Mary Guimond, Clerk

Health Department Annual Report 2009 – 2010

This has been a very busy year for the Health Department and it also represents the first complete year for the existing staff. We are looking forward to the implementation of the “digital health department” this year which will increase staff efficiency, enable residents to view restaurant inspection reports on-line and enable remote access to records. Some highlights from the past year include:

Lyme Disease and Ticks

The Health Department encourages residents to submit ticks for testing that they find on themselves or family members. In the event that a tick is found to contain the causative agent of Lyme Disease, the physician could then determine what treatment is necessary. Ticks are collected at the Health Department offices and sent to the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station where the testing is done at no charge. Last year, 166 “ticks” were submitted, 65 were tested and 24 or 37% were found to be positive. Only those ticks which carry Lyme Disease and contain human blood are tested which accounts for the difference between the number of ticks collected and those tested. If you submit a tick and it is not tested, you are NOT at risk for Lyme Disease *from that tick*.

The percentage of positive ticks found in Darien is consistent with that found in neighboring communities.

Rabies

The Department works with Animal Control and will submit animals to the Connecticut Department of Health Laboratory for testing if rabies is suspected. Last year, 18 animals were submitted and one (1) was found to be positive for rabies. This is important since an individual experiencing a positive rabies exposure should have immediate medical

attention since rapid treatment is completely effective in preventing an otherwise fatal illness.

Flu Vaccination Clinics

Last year saw the emergence of the H1N1 Swine Flu. The Department held 18 clinics and administered 1349 doses of H1N1 vaccine in addition to administering 400 regular seasonal flu shots. We managed the challenge of not having an adequate supply H1N1 vaccine when the demand was greatest by scheduling vaccination by appointment and then adding clinics as the supply increased. Upon receiving increased amounts of H1N1 vaccine, the demand for vaccine evaporated! However, it is worth noting the positive level of understanding and cooperation we had with the public and other Town Departments, especially with the Superintendent of Schools.

Public Health and Emergency Preparedness

A detailed public health component for the Town's Emergency Preparedness Plan was completed. A key part of the plan was the finalization of a "Memorandum of Understanding" with the Board of Education that would enable the Town to utilize the High School in the event of the need to provide mass inoculations or vaccinations to the public.

Public Beaches

In the summer of 2008, our two public beaches, Weed and Pear Tree Point, were frequently closed to swimming due to elevated bacteria levels. As a result, the Department increased the frequency of testing and expanded the areas tested in an effort to determine the source of the bacterial contamination. Water samples were collected for 31 days from Memorial Day to Labor Day. The influence of tides and precipitation was evaluated and it was found that the water quality of Long Island Sound continually met EPA standards for bathing waters regardless of whether it was high or low tide. A key finding was that upstream water quality appeared to be a contributing factor to elevated bacteria levels, especially after a precipitation event. Consequently the existing policy of "preemptive" closure of beaches after rain will remain in effect. The Health Department website and the telephone HOTLINE provides information regarding the status of our beaches.

Our water testing program was supported in part through our participation in the Darien High School intern program. Our assigned intern, a senior at the High School collected samples and conducted the laboratory testing at the Stamford Health Department Laboratory under laboratory staff supervision. We will continue our comprehensive water testing program through continued participation in the intern program. Going forward, our focus will be on gaining a better understanding of upstream water quality and its effect on our beaches.

Food Service

This year saw the implementation of the food service establishment "RATINGS" program. Every food service facility defined as "Class 3" or "Class 4" now has to post a certificate summarizing conditions noted at the time of inspection. This certificate is

issued in conjunction with every inspection the Department performs and must be posted in a location visible to the public. This is a program unique to Darien and is intended to inform the public about observed conditions and food handling practices within the establishment.

Another innovation made this year was the development and implementation of a Food Handler Training Program. This is a half day class designed to provide basic food safety guidance to individuals who work in food preparation and service in Darien. Five sessions were held reaching over 50 individuals.

Darien is a desirable location for food service facilities. This year, ten (10) new facilities opened their doors to patrons once complete plan reviews and pre-opening inspections process were performed by the Health Department.

There are 114 permitted facilities in Darien and during the year, the Department conducted 370 inspections of these facilities. There is a wide variety of establishments in town, from elegant banquet facilities, to seasonal “snack bars” and “temporary events,” all of which are inspected and permitted.

Septic Systems and Private Wells

A large segment of properties in Darien are not served by municipal sewers or public water. These areas rely upon on-site means of waste water disposal and obtaining drinking water. It is imperative that proper methods of disposing sewage are provided to protect the ground water we drink and surface water we swim in. To accomplish this, there is a detailed plan review and inspection process to ensure that whenever homes are built, remodeled or reconstructed, adequate sewage disposal systems are installed. In the past year, the Health Department performed the following activities:

- Soil test observations: 32 sites
- Septic system repair permits: 15
- New septic system permits: 6
- Building plan reviews(additions & reconstruction) 55
- Evaluation of septic system for house teardown & replacement: 9
- Well drilling permits: 19 (includes geothermal wells)

Recreational Shellfishing

The Health Department issued forty eight (48) Annual Permits to individuals for recreational shellfishing in 2009-2010. Guidelines and maps of approved shellfishing areas are provided with the permits. The website and telephone HOTLINE provides information regarding any shellfish bed closures due to contaminated waters or excessive precipitation.

Public Pools

There are twelve different locations in Darien that have what are considered to be “public pools.” A public pool is defined as any pool serving more than a single family. As a result, State law considers private clubs and condominium associations with pools to be

“public.” Since some locations have more than one pool, there are a total of 18 public pools in town, all of which are inspected and permitted by the Health Department. A key component of the permit program is that it ensures that someone knowledgeable in pool water chemistry and filtration is available at the facility at all times.

Communicable Disease

Reports from doctors’ offices and laboratories are submitted to the Health Director and follow-ups are conducted as needed. This is to evaluate trends in reportable diseases that may be occurring in the community.

Ordinance and Regulation Review

Existing Health Department Ordinances relating to food service facilities, septic system plan review and approvals, well water permits, public pool operation, as well as hair and nail salons were repealed and new regulations were adopted to replace and update those ordinances. This was the first review and revision to the food, septic and well water regulations since the early 1970’s which now brings Darien into compliance with Connecticut Public Health Code requirements. Additionally, new regulations were adopted for lead poisoning prevention. All regulations can now be found on the Health Department website.

Website

Over the last year, the Health Department website has been revised and updated to serve as more of an informational resource for our residents. The website houses information regarding health issues, events and clinics sponsored by the Department and application forms for permits. Updates are continually added as events warrant. Soon all restaurant inspection reports will be available for viewing.

Respectfully Submitted by David Knauf, Director of Health
October 25, 2010