

**Region II Public Health Emergency Preparedness Coalition**  
**Steering Committee / Minutes**  
Thursday, May 18, 2006

**In attendance:** *Howard Ziff\* (New Braintree), Roger Mallet\* (Orange), Jana Ferguson (MDPH), Ed Wirtanen\* (Pepperell), Sandra Knipe\* (Hubbardston), Phil Leger\* (Athol), Jared Woods (Consultant), Walter DePaolo (Consultant), Trisha Parent (Upton), Barbara Mard (West Boylston), Andrew Pelletier (Auburn), Darlene O'Connor (Auburn), Bernie Sullivan (Gardner), Lee Jarvis (Spencer), Jeanne Gniadek (Northbridge), Mike Graf (Bellingham / Millville), Jim Garreffo\* (Nashoba)*

**Absent:** all other Region II communities not listed above.

*\* Denotes Executive Committee Members*

**Continued from Executive Committee Meeting:** *Discussion concerning the participation of the Region II Coalition in two table-top exercises sponsored by DPH. The focus of the exercises are for the hospitals in the region. One exercise would be a plague scenario and the other would be a pandemic influenza scenario. If the coalition wishes to participate, there is an \$18,500 fee for each scenario.*

Roger discussed his concerns with paying to participate in such an exercise, since attendance is dwindling on many Coalition activities, including the Steering committee meetings. Howard said we do need to find out what is wrong. Walter DePaolo suggested that by holding all meetings and trainings in the middle of the day, on week days, they're not going to appeal to the members of boards of health who generally have other full-time jobs. Howard suggested that the staff prepare recommendations for how to enhance attendance. Sandi said that there has been a lot going on lately too; trainings every week.

**MOTION:** Howard Ziff made a motion that the Coalition Staff prepare a report as to why attendance is low for Steering Committee meetings and trainings. There was a second by Roger Mallet.

Jana suggested that the staff should be focusing on getting more involvement. Howard asked if Peter MacDonald had asked the staff to inquire why the towns don't participate in meetings and trainings. Walter explained that recently we've been trying to make contact with the communities that have not done anything in terms of deliverables, and will not meet with us.

**AMENDED MOTION:** Howard Ziff announced that he wanted to modify his motion to make the report specific: The report should address the following: What are the experiences of the community with the coalition; the level of involvement, and why? And last, what can we do to get them more involved; what are the barriers? The findings of this report should be presented by the next Executive Committee meeting. The amendment was seconded by Roger Mallet, and passed unanimous vote.

**Approval of April 13, 2006 Minutes:** Phil Leger made a made a motion to accept the Minutes of April 13, 2006, Steering Committee Meeting. The motion was seconded by Jim Garreff, and accepted by a unanimous vote.

**Time, date and location of next meeting:** Phil wanted to explain and clarify that the next Steering Committee meeting will be the Special Populations Forum scheduled for June 8<sup>th</sup> at the Worcester Senior Center, 8:30 AM – 11:30 AM.

**Staff Update:** Phil explained to all present that Kerry Clark will be taking over as Program Manager, from Peter MacDonald.

**Budget Update:** Phil explained to all present that the coalition has approximately \$107,000 in committed funds.

Jana resumed discussion concerning the participation of the Region II Coalition in two table-top exercises sponsored by DPH. She explained that she had heard about two table-top exercises available: One is concerning an alternate care site with hospitals in the region. The second scenario, she explained, is more of a public health related one. Jana said that these are being put on throughout the state by DPH and they're limited to about fifty people, but for a fee of \$18,500, we can double the amount of attendee slots. However, Jana explained that one issue is that we're heading into Summer and this may result in a lack on interest, but she has no other choice, this is when these are scheduled. The other concern she has, is that this whole table-top might become too big.

Howard Ziff responded by saying that in his view, this would be a waste of money; too many people would be involved and it would be chaos. However, Andrew Pelletier said he understands Howard's point, but he feels it might be nice to see a little chaos, and how it is handled.

Bernie Sullivan suggested that in the future, thought should be given to offering training to our volunteer nurses. As a lot of them may not have clinical experience. Typically, people who are signing up to be volunteers are non-clinical types. Jana said that is something we should talk about at some point.

Jana told all present that the table-top exercises were generally scheduled for: Plague Scenario, June-July. Pandemic Flu Scenario, July-August. This prompted some general discussion, with a general consensus being that the ideal dates would be: Plague Scenario, June, 14<sup>th</sup> or 27<sup>th</sup> or July 10<sup>th</sup>. And the Pandemic Flu Scenario, there are no black-out dates in August with sufficient notice.

Local Assessments: Jana discussed this matter, explaining that allocations based on just populations doesn't always work out well. She said that the CDC and the DPH are going to Risk Based Assessments, and have already been doing these regionally. The assessment is something that CDC developed. Then a regional gap analysis will be done.

We might get more, or we might get less money for next year based on these assessments. Jana went on to say that when these come out, you'll have about two weeks to complete them. She feels it should only take about a half an hour to get them completed.

Jana then discussed some other funding concerns, mentioning the Pandemic Flu Supplemental Process, with money going toward Medical Reserve Corps. She said that they'd like to see 50% of the communities to be covered by an MRC. Howard Ziff discussed the manner in which the Region is given funding, with a small window to spend it; maybe eight months. He said that assessments are a burden, and that this is something that the consultants should handle.

**Training:** Jared Woods explained that he is now responsible for coalition training, and that he is now able to teach ICS100/NIMS700 classes. Also, that he can teach groups as small as five.

**Equipment:** Walter DePaolo discussed the equipment that is being purchased for Go-Kit-B. He explained that the last pieces are being ordered now, and we should be able to have them together and available to the communities sometime around the end of June. For now, he is working on getting an inventory of Go-Kit-B for the communities to use while they are doing the planning.

**Flu Vaccine:** Howard Ziff said he wanted some discussion about the availability of flu vaccines. He said that in a pandemic, the first waves of vaccine will come in a trickle, not a flood, so how are we to distribute it. He asked if there would be Commonwealth-wide instructions on how to distribute it? To this, Tricia parent suggested that the state open up pneumonia vaccines, since the state has strict controls on who can receive this; under age fifteen and over age sixty-five. Jana said that is an interesting point, and she will bring it up with Dr. DeMaria. Bernie Sullivan suggested that the when we ran into flu vaccine shortages a few years ago, the DPH Commissioners protocols being law, and having penalties, worked out well.

**MOTION:** Roger Mallet made a motion that the coalition pursue obtaining access to the pneumonia vaccine. There was some discussion, but not second, and the motion failed.

Jana said that she would bring these points back to Dr. DeMaria, the doctor in charge at DPH, to get the restrictions lifted.

Phil said, in closing, he recommends that whatever guidelines that were set, they should be done as transparently as possible; not in some back room, but are made based on DPH and CDC guidelines.

### **New / Old Business:**

Roger said he had some questions about the letter sent around by Peter MacDonald to be sent to communities not participating in meeting their deliverables. Phil said that the

letter itself was meant for discussion anyway, but since we don't have the letter here now, and Peter isn't here either, that this matter should be tabled.

Roger then brought up for discussion his request for a generator. He said that he would like an answer on this matter.

**Adjourn:** Motion to Adjourn was made by Tricia Parent, and seconded by Andrew Pelletier, there was a unanimous vote in favor.