

Board of Health Meeting Minutes
July 26, 2021

The Board of Health Meeting was called to order at 4:33 pm by Donna S. David.

In keeping with Chapter 20, of the Acts of 2021, the extension of the remote participation portion of Governor Baker's Executive Order from March 12, 2020; - "Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law" – The Board of Health Meeting of July 26, 2021 was held by Remote Access through ZOOM.

Those present were Donna S. David, R.N., M.N., Chair; Julie C. Lemay, MPH, Vice Chair; Adrienne Allen, M.D., M.P.H., Member; Wesley B. Chin, Health Director; David Neylon, Public Health Nurse; Lindsey Sharp, Health Agent; Suzanne Trasavage, Animal Care and Control Officer; Maria Reddington, Clerk.

The Meeting was recorded.

There was no public participation.

The agenda item concerning a recommendation for wearing face coverings in Belmont Schools was discussed:

- The Health Department has received many resident concerns about face coverings for the upcoming school year. School begins in 6 weeks and the Board of Health decided to begin this discussion at this meeting.
- Donna David said the Board's decision would be centered on science, not public opinion.
- Julie Lemay said the pandemic continues to be a rapidly evolving situation. Students need to be in school, and face coverings may be needed to mitigate risk.
- Adrienne Allen said the American Academy of Pediatrics ("AAP") has a great guidance document which recommends universal face covering to keep kids in school. Dr. Allen recommends following the AAP guidance.
- Several members of the public provided input for the Board members to consider when developing face covering guidance for Belmont schools:
 - Mariola Magovcevic said she has 2 children in the school, 1 is high risk, and she would like the Board to require universal masking.
 - Heather Rubeski said she is worried about what children will bring home. Adults are vaccinated but husband is high risk. The safety of the entire community needs to be considered.
 - Elshad Kasumov said masks work and he would be pleased to have a face covering requirement in Belmont schools.
 - Jin Yu said she is a new resident, she concludes masks are not effective based on CDC influenza studies. Hand hygiene is effective. Dr. Allen asked Ms. Yu to send her a copy of the studies she cites.
 - Maribel Carvajal said she wants a mask requirement, she feels it is safe and it works. There is no vaccine available for children under 12 years of age.

Board of Health Meeting Minutes
July 26, 2021

- Wesley Chin and Donna David introduced Ms. Mary Elizabeth (Beth) Rumley, Belmont Public School Nurse Director, and thanked Beth for working hard to keep Belmont students and staff safe during the pandemic. Beth said mitigation efforts have continued throughout the summer. Mitigation strategies include working with the family when a student is sick. Any decision to implement a face covering requirement will be made with safety in mind.
- Jamal Saeh is a school committee member but is speaking on behalf of himself. He heard about this Board of Health agenda item on Friday. He feels a larger community participation opportunity should be scheduled. He asked what has changed, and is the goal to mask all of Belmont, all of the schools, or all of the unvaccinated.
- Donna David said the variant carries a larger viral load, and cases are increasing daily. There is not an easy answer, this is an evolving process, but the Board of Health wants to keep students safe.
- Adrienne Allen agrees that a larger community dialogue needs to happen. Following a difficult year, she feels masking is important for student emotional, psychosocial, and educational well-being for the upcoming school year.
- Adrienne Allen will be the Board of Health liaison with the School Committee.
- The Board members discussed pros and cons of issuing a strong recommendation, versus a requirement, for students and staff to wear face coverings in Belmont schools. The final vote of 3-0 concerning the Board of Health face covering recommendation in Belmont schools is:

The Board of Health strongly recommends Belmont Schools follow the American Academy of Pediatrics guidance to require face coverings while indoors.

Several members of the public offered additional comment to the Board members. The Board will meet again in August to re-evaluate the science data available in the event the face covering recommendation needs to be adjusted.

The Board voted 3-0 to approve the June 21, 2021 Meeting Minutes.

The Receipts report was reviewed.

The Director/Assistant Director/Public Health Nurse/Environmental Health Agent report was reviewed with the following discussed:

- Housing cases: Belmont Police referred a new case to Health Department. HD staff were allowed access to the property by the occupant. An order letter was drafted and mailed. The occupant is willing to work with Social Services and BPD, but the case will take a long time to resolve; the ongoing housing case continues to be on pause due to legal proceedings; there was one other housing case brought to HD staff attention.
- HD continues to receive reports of rodent sightings. The Grove Street area has realized a noticeable improvement. Generally rat reports are the same as last year, inspections and educational mailings are up.
- Staff continue seasonal inspections of day camps and farmers market vendors.
- Calverde Naturals plan review is underway. HD staff will provide feedback to the applicant once the plan review is complete.

Board of Health Meeting Minutes
July 26, 2021

- Tobacco Control Collaborative – The Collaborative has received funding to hire a Tobacco Control Director. Belmont may need to conduct interim local compliance checks.
- The IT Department is working on the Boards’ request for an online public comment form. The “form” will auto-deliver to each Board member through the email address. Staff will post the email address as soon as the set-up is complete.
- COVID update – As of July 8th Belmont had 13 new cases – 7=full vaccine, 1=partial vaccine, 2=not eligible for vaccine, 1=no vaccine, 2=lost for follow-up.
- Brief overview of a chart of BPS Student Vaccination Data, included in the combined report.
- HD staff have participated in initial discussion with the Town Administrator about the Delta variant and when it may be necessary for staff and visitors to town buildings to wear face coverings.
- COVID updates at Select Board meetings will resume on August 2nd.
- The Beech Street Center had questions about private party rentals, and whether the BSC can require guests attending the private functions to wear face coverings. A caller asked if the BSC can require proof of vaccination status before using the exercise room.
- Brianne Gray, Food Inspector Consultant, has signed a Contract for FY22. Brie will assist HD staff to conduct food inspections at Belmont food establishments.

The Animal Care and Control report was reviewed. The MA Division of Fisheries and Wildlife has issued an advisory concerning an unknown virus affecting birds on the East Coast. The advisory is asking residents to discontinue the use of birdfeeders and birdbaths to discourage birds from congregating. Suzanne also provided a brief update concerning Tallulah Spencer – the deadline to provide a behaviorist report is extended to August due to COVID appointment delays.

The Veterans Services report was reviewed. The Board would like Bob Upton to attend an upcoming meeting.

The next Board of Health meeting is scheduled for August 16, 2021 at 4:30 pm.

The Meeting adjourned at 6:12 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Donna S. David, Chair