

DATE: December 7, 2021
TIME: 2:50 PM

Board of Health Meeting Minutes
November 8, 2021

The Board of Health Meeting was called to order at 4:32 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 November 8, 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; Diana Ekman, Assistant Health Director; Lindsey Sharp, Health Agent; Suzanne Trasavage, Animal Care and Control Officer; Maria Reddington, Clerk.

The Meeting was recorded.

The first agenda item concerns lifeguard requirements at the Higginbottom Pool:

- Wes said during the permitting process of the newly renovated pool, there was no lifeguard guidance available. Lifeguard exemptions must be approved by the BOH. The Belmont High School swim team does not provide for a dedicated lifeguard for practices and meets. Other teams and users of the pool do provide dedicated lifeguards.
- Donna David and Julie Lemay asked if the pool is used by others, such as high school students for physical education classes.
- DESE and DPH rules require a lifeguard(s) at public pools, but dual roles are not allowed, i.e., one person cannot be the coach and the lifeguard.
- Health Dept. staff are unable to determine if there is a dedicated lifeguard for the BHS swim Team. Past practice revealed they did not to have a dedicated lifeguard at high school swim practices.
- All Board members agreed there should be a dedicated lifeguard present each time the pool is in use.
- Motion: A dedicated lifeguard must be present whenever the pool is in use.
The Motion passed by a vote of 3-0.

Public Participation: Ms. Marina Atlas of Newton Street talked about the use of gas-powered leaf blowers in Belmont, noting its use is known to cause hearing loss, emits 5 known carcinogens, and contributes to asthma and cardiovascular disease. The matter was brought forth during a Select Board meeting but their final decision favored business. Donna David thanked Ms. Atlas for bringing forth this matter, and said this will be an agenda item before next Spring.

The next agenda item discussed the metrics for the face covering mandate:

- Office staff have received calls from the community asking how much longer Belmont will have a face covering mandate.
- Lindsey Sharp shared current numbers: September = 71 cases, October = 75 cases, average age of positive cases is 34.8 years old. 58.7% were fully vaccinated, mild to moderate symptoms, household spread cases. Middlesex County remains in the high-risk category.
- Adrienne Allen said data is important - the hospitalization rate has plateaued and/or is flat, but has not fallen, and MWRA wastewater reports are also a good metric. There are surges in Europe (Germany), the mandate should remain in place for at least the next few months.
- Julie Lemay said metrics are helpful to look at. She is encouraged, but concerned we have moved back to the high category. She said the Board should not change the metric that the Board voted on.
- Donna David said the face covering mandate must remain in effect until at least the holidays are over. The Board can revisit the issue after the holidays.
- There may be a conflict if Belmont Public Schools apply for a face covering waiver from DESE, as they would be in violation of the current Board of Health face covering mandate. Julie Lemay said the school

Board of Health Meeting Minutes November 8, 2021

would then be in direct conflict of the Town's mask mandate. Julie also said perhaps the Board could look at relaxing a mask mandate at the school level in certain situations, such as if a high percentage of the group is vaccinated. Also, Julie asked if there is room to change the mandate for other indoor situations, such as gyms, or other low-risk businesses.

- Substantial changes to the mandate would need to be done jointly with Select Board and School Committee.
- Adrienne Allen would have to look at more data before making a decision about relaxing the mandate among non-essential business and/or schools.
- Donna David said the vaccination rate needs to be much high (90%-95%) before she would be comfortable relaxing the mandate.
- Public comment related to this agenda item:
 - Mr. Salpi – high % of high school students are vaccinated, and he wants to know if the BOH is using science, or “gut feeling”, he also asked about oral medications, and EUA for children ages 5-12 year old, not specifically approved.
 - Mr. Ades asked that Adrienne Allen's numbers (hospital rates, MWRA reports) be included on the data dashboard. He would also request the Board subtract the communities that are more than 10 miles from Belmont when determining category risk.
 - Mr. Whittemore said the policy should be voluntary at the high school for those vaccinated – the goalpost keeps getting moved.
 - Mr. Brady said DESE is conservative, sent students back to school, he favors optional face covering for vaccinated students. He also has not heard of any children being hospitalized since back to school.
 - Mr. Trabilcy believes metrics should be based on similar communities, not counties. He also spoke about high-risk vs. low-risk businesses and the face covering mandate as it relates to both.
 - Ms. Magovcevic said last year cases surged during the holidays, Europe is currently experiencing a surge, the vaccinated are spreading COVID, face coverings are a minor inconvenience. She does not believe this is a good time to change the mandate.
 - Ms. Rubeski said people come to schools from a broad number of communities. Many metrics need to be pieced together.
 - Mr. and Ms. Salpi also asked if the dashboard data includes natural immunity statistics, as well as clarification of the Town/School vaccination rate differences.
- Donna David said the mandate will continue through at least the holidays before the Board can consider modifying the current mandate.
- Julie Lemay said the issue should be discussed at the next meeting.
- Wesley Chin agrees the issue should be discussed each month, and included as an agenda item.
- Adrienne Allen answered some questions asked during public comment:
 - The goal post is for Middlesex County to be categorized as moderate for 2 weeks.
 - Oral medication as treatment is still in trials, not approved yet, but we are near a transition.
 - She suggested we link numbers from other towns on Belmont's website.
 - Natural immunity is not effective as vaccination. Link to information can be found here: <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/70/wr/mm7044e1.htm>

The Receipts and Financial reports were reviewed.

The September 20, 2021 Meeting Minutes were reviewed. The October 4, 2021 Meeting Minutes were reviewed.

Motion: To approve the Meeting Minutes of September 20, 2021 and October 4, 2021. The Motion passed by a vote 3-0.

The Direct, Assistant Director, Public Health Nurse and Public Health Agent report was reviewed.

Board of Health Meeting Minutes November 8, 2021

- There have been 4 new housing cases referred to the Health Department since last month's meeting. Staff inspected and issued order letters as required.
- The Town has entered into a contract with Mojin Solutions to conduct food establishment inspections. Health Department staff will continue to inspect the schools.
- The presence of rodents in the Grove Street neighborhood continue to trend down as a result of a neighborhood-wide effort.
- Ms. Rotem Aloni has been hired as the Tobacco Care and Control Coordinator for the 7 community Tobacco Control Collaborative. Ms. Aloni will be scheduled to meet board members at an upcoming meeting.
- Project Beacon was hired to provide free COVID testing to Belmont and Lexington residents during the holiday season.
- The Health Department and Fire Department will host a Moderna booster shot clinic for senior residents on November 9th at Temple Beth El. Homebound residents will also be given booster shots on that day.
- Pediatric vaccine will be offered at Temple Beth El on November 12th. VaxinateRx offered 180 appointments which were booked within 35 minutes.
- Board members reviewed and approved the letter to MDPH encouraging mandate of the COVID-19 vaccine for all school aged children in Massachusetts. Staff will mail the letter on behalf of the Board of Health.
- The Youth Commission Coordinator position will be under the direction of the Recreation Department. The Health Department budget was unable to effectively support this position.

The Youth and Family Services report was reviewed. Janet Amdur is working with a Lesley University Graduate School student.

The Animal Care and Control report was reviewed. Suzanne Trasavage reported three dog day cares were being run in residences. The Community Development office issued cease and desist orders. Two have closed, one is pending contact with Suzanne. Coyote sighting concerns continue to be received by Suzanne.

The Veteran's Services report was reviewed. Bob Upton reports the Veterans Breakfast will be held at the Beech Street Center, and was again sponsored by East Cambridge Savings Bank. The Belmont Hill School B-Flats singers will provide entertainment.

The next Board of Health meeting is scheduled for December 13, 2021 at 4:30 pm. (The meeting date was subsequently rescheduled to December 6, 2021 @ 4:30 pm.)

The Meeting adjourned at 6:09 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Donna S. David, Chair