

DATE: April 6, 2022
TIME: 3:47 PM

Board of Health Meeting Minutes
March 7, 2022

The Board of Health Meeting was called to order at 4:34 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 March 7, 2022 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.

Public Participation:

- Mr. Elshad Kasumov said the Agenda does not mention discussion of face coverings for children under 5 years old. Donna David said this would be discussed under the general topic of the face covering madate listed in the Agenda.

Agenda item to discuss the face covering mandate in Town public spaces:

- Lindsey Sharp reviewed four pages of data. The charts showed a sharp decrease in COVID-19 cases in the Town, Schools, and Middlesex County, as well as a decrease in State and County hospitalization rates. A chart representing the number of Belmont Public School staff/students vaccinated was also included in the presentation.
- Public participation comments:
 - Patrick Whittemore commented the data presented was very nice, and said the time is right to remove the face covering mandate.
 - Mariola Magovcevic asked if the pool testing data represents the number of pooled tests or the number of students being tested. The data represents less than 5% of students and may not be good data.
 - Nancy Snyder was next to speak, also noting the school test sampling data distorts the figures. She also wants to know if anyone tracks the daycares. She does not feel there is a need to remove the mask mandate in Town.
 - Bill Trabilcy asked if County outliers could be adjusted, and also said there should be a vaccine mandate in public spaces. Wes was asked which cities/towns have retained a vaccine mandate. He said the mandate was either relaxed or withdrawn. The Board of Health would need to add this discussion as an Agenda item.
 - Cheryl Peterson thanked Lindsey for the data presented. She also feels the mask mandate should be dropped for businesses. She agrees with Mr. Kasumov that face coverings for 5 years and younger needs to be discussed.
 - Aaron Pikcilingis asked a follow up question to his email to the Board – will the Board maintain the current regulation with updates to align with CDC recommendations? Currently the mandate is indexed to turn off/on.

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- Jamal Saeh said pooled testing data needs to be checked and corrected for the meeting minutes.
- Kelly Rowan said masks for schools need to be optional.
- Jane MacKinnon said decisions need to be based on mental health.
- Heather Rubesky said compromised families need to be remembered. Also need language to include metrics to be used to reinstate the face covering mandate.
- Joanna Kolis said the numbers are low and it's time to move forward to mask optional. Local businesses are hurting, and she is against any vaccine mandate.
- Catherine Wall said there were some schools that lifted a mask mandate in November, and Belmonts' spikes were comparable to those towns.
- BC90 had a hand raised, but the audio was not working.

Donna David opened up the discussion to members of the Board. The first item considered was the Town mask mandate.

- Julie Lemay is comfortable to rescind the mask mandate for the Town. The current CDC guidance, as well as the statistics presented by Lindsey at the beginning of the meeting, are all pointing in the right direction.
- Adrienne Allen agrees with Julie, and said the CDC face covering metric has been amended to include community level ratings. Middlesex County continues to be "low." Adrienne agrees the mask mandate should be lifted, but include language that when the community level is "high" the mask mandate will be in effect.
- Donna David agreed with Julie and Adrienne. After discussion on the wording of a revised face covering mandate, the Motion is as follows:

The current mask mandate is rescinded, but masking will be mandatory if the CDC community level metric reaches high for Middlesex County. The Motion passed by a vote of 3-0.

The Board members continued the discussion relative to the School mask mandate.

- Julie Lemay began by stating she felt it was time to remove the school mask mandate citing high vaccination rates and low case counts. She understands there will be special school circumstances where masks may be needed. Individual policy decisions should be left to the smaller groups, such as day cares, LABB, etc.
- Adrienne Allen said severity of illness is down, hospitalization rates are down, and there is treatment available. She believes the mandate should be lifted for all ages, with a strong recommendation for those who are not vaccinated to continue to wear a mask. Follow CDC guidance for masking factors.
- Donna David wants a face covering recommendation for public and private pre-schools, and 5- to 11- year- old age group due to a low vaccination rate.
- Julie Lemay and Adrienne Allen also do not support a mandate for any age groups, rather a strong recommendation for those under the age of five. The Motion is as follows:

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Lift the mask mandate for Belmont schools, both public and private, with a strong recommendation for those less than 5 years old, or unvaccinated, to continue to wear a face mask. The Motion passed by a vote of 3-0.

The February 7, 2022 Meeting Minutes were reviewed.

The Motion to approve the Meeting Minutes of February 7, 2022 passed by a vote of 3-0.

The Receipts report was reviewed.

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

- Diana reviewed current housing matters, noting 19 Burnham Condos are actively working to find a Contractor for their sewer repair project.
- Thanks to Diana's efforts, the department was awarded a \$5,000 FDA Grant. The funds will be used to conduct a self-assessment of nine retail food program standards.
- There were 4 new rodent complaints since the last meeting.
- Vaccine and testing clinic attendance have not been well attended. The clinics will be on hold until demand for them increases.
- All except 15 at-home COVID test kits have been distributed to residents. Distribution was on a first come/first serve basis.
- On March 2nd staff met with Biobot Analytics to learn about waste water monitoring services in Belmont. Information from this service may provide advanced warning of surges. The service may be cost prohibitive.

The Youth and Family Services report was reviewed.

The Animal Care and Control report was reviewed. Belmont will host a Rabies Clinic with Watertown on March 19th from 10 am to 1 pm at the Beech Street Center. Belmont residents will also have the opportunity to purchase their annual pet licenses (late fee waived), and permits for the Off Leash Program.

The last topic discussed Town Meeting ZOOM or in-person meetings this year. Donna David prefers remote meeting because attendees are not able to safely distance from one another. Adrienne Allen asked if the meetings could be held hybrid. Jeff Hansell of Belmont Media Center said they don't have the capacity to televise and record, the hybrid system should be in place in about 3 months.

The next Board of Health meeting is scheduled for April 4, 2022 at 4:30 pm.

The Meeting adjourned at 5:56 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Donna S. David, Chair