

Board of Health Meeting Minutes
July 13, 2022

The Board of Health Meeting was called to order at 4:34 pm by Julie Lemay.

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 13, 2022 was held by Remote Access through ZOOM.

Those present were Julie C. Lemay, MPH, Chair; Adrienne Allen, M.D., M.P.H., Vice Chair; Donna S. David, R.N., M.N., 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.

There was no public participation.

Lindsey Sharp provided some COVID data:

- Approximately 500 cases in May. 234 cases in June.
- Average age of infected person was 41.18 years old.
- 75% of the cases are fully vaccinated.
- The CDC Community Level for Middlesex County was Low at the end of June. The current CDC Community Level for Middlesex County is Medium. The link to check the COVID Community Level is <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/science/community-levels.html>
- July 1st through today there have been 89 new cases reported. The average age is 37 years old.

Back to School Discussion:

- At the peak of COVID, student/staff absence was about 15%, but this may or may not have represented absences due to sickness – end of vacation week, some may have been out due to extended vacations.
- Is it possible to determine what the sickness to absenteeism rate is? Some children are kept out of school for family travel plans.
- Dr. Allen suggests asking parents to voluntarily disclose what the illness is to help with mitigation efforts. Mitigation efforts would have to be discussed.
- Donna said 20% absenteeism may affect school services (staff and children absent).
- Have School nurses work with public health nurse depending on the circumstances surrounding the illness.
- Donna asked if there is a system set up for the attendance line at schools? There may be privacy concerns, and can the attendance line be direct to the school nurse office?
- Ms. Suzy Feinberg, Belmont Resident and Cambridge Public Health Information Officer, asked the Board members to provide feedback to several emails she sent. The questions relate to the Board of Health and Belmont Public Schools views on the risk of COVID, long COVID, and spreading COVID to others; the Board of Health's special duty to protect; and mask mandates. Is there a clear process?
- Julie said Health Department staff were meeting with School Department staff on a weekly, sometimes daily schedule if needed. Board of Health members were notified when necessary.
- Dr. Allen shares Ms. Feinberg's frustration. Dr. Allen is also the Director of Safety at her medical practice, and studies risk. Everyone has a different threshold as to when mandates need to be put

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in place. Dr. Allen favors a strong stance, and said the Board of Health was the last one to remove the mask mandate following DESE's announcement to end the mandate. Dr. Allen also noted it is not common practice for a Board member to offer guidance during School Committee meetings, but she was glad to help.

- Donna David said the duty of the Board of Health is to protect public health. The mask mandate was lifted due to the best medical information available. A school mask mandate is a school decision. The Board members will revisit the issue in August.
- Julie said the Board's thinking has evolved with new information, vaccine availability, etc. Risk perception has changed due to all of this.
- Ms. Feinberg feels DESE won't initiate a mask mandate.
- Middlesex County metrics – when community level is high, wear a mask, low community level, remove the mask.
- Dr. Allen agrees there are not good metrics, but we are managing. Dr. Allen also recommends there be a focus on school ventilation and air filtration. Wes will contact the Facilities Department for information.

The Motion to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of June 6, 2022 passed by a vote of 3-0.

Tobacco Policy Discussion to Align First Offense Schedule with the State of Massachusetts:

- Rotem Aloni, Tobacco Control Coordinator, reviewed a slide summary to Board members.
- The State of MA Tobacco Regulation changed in 2020, increasing tobacco violation fines, and requiring the suspension of tobacco sales for a first offense violation of selling tobacco to an underage person.
- Rotem said the Board should decide the number of days to suspend a tobacco permit in advance.
- Wes said he spoke to Arlington, and they chose a 7-day suspension. A 7-day suspension covers the week, doesn't allow the retailer to "choose" the slower days to have their permit suspended.
- Donna David entered a motion to incorporate a 7-day tobacco permit suspension for the first violation of selling tobacco to underage person(s). Dr. Allen seconded the Motion. Donna David, Adrienne Allen, and Julie Lemay voted to pass the Motion.
- The Motion 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.

- The AG's office will begin the receivership process of a condemned Belmont property.
- There is a lot of rodent activity throughout Belmont. Moraine Street has complied with the Order Letter to provide pest control. Health Department staff will continue to monitor progress. Wes said the Health Department can issue fines of up to \$300 per day for nuisance violations.
- The noise and odor complaints from clean-up of the former Aram's Café location have been received by nearly every department. Odor was detected by Health Department staff. The company has removed the soiled items. The contractor advised staff that removal of the odor will take longer if the machine sound has to be lowered. Belmont Police Department will measure the sound level.

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- Bruegger's – Julie asked if Bruegger's should attend a Board of Health Hearing. Wes said there is a new manager and they are hoping for better results.
- Diana provided details of a Title V matter of a property with a cesspool. The Title V inspection results indicated that further evaluation was needed by local authority (Health Department). Staff from Community Development and Health Department worked together to measure the groundwater level. Health Department staff will notify the property owner a soil evaluation test is needed.
- Lindsey reports Ava will create a new, weekly infographic for social media. The posts will NOT be related to COVID!
- VaxRx will hold a vaccination clinic tomorrow at the Beech Street Center. This will be a small-scale clinic to test how the younger population will fare with vaccination.
- The COVID Home Tests received last week are quite popular. There is good distribution throughout Town, including the Library, Powers Music School, Beech Street Center, Belmont Housing Authority, and the Farmers Market.
- Excellence Grant was awarded. Three communities will share \$300,000 each year for 10 years, which will help fund and/or supplement shared positions.

The Animal Care and Control report: Suzanne reports the Arlington Animal Control officer is on leave; 175 citations will be mailed to owners of unlicensed pets; the Recreation Department will assist with oversight of the employee hired to monitor town parks, to include off-leash permit compliance.

Bob Upton will return to the office to work on coordinating the annual Purple Heart Ceremony.

The next Board of Health meeting is scheduled for August 29, 2022 at 5:00 pm.

The Meeting adjourned at 5:41 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Julie C. Lemay, Chair