

Board of Health Meeting Minutes  
August 29, 2022

The Board of Health Meeting was called to order at 5:02 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 August 29, 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; David Neylon, Public Health Nurse; Lindsey Sharp, Health Agent; Maria Reddington, Clerk.

Public Participation:

- Ms. Jane Otte spoke to Board members about geese infestation at Clay Pit Pond. She said this is a public health matter as the area is littered with feces. Ms. Otte suggested an egg addling program. There is a company called Muddy Waters Management Initiative, which will charge a fee to the Town to initiate the egg addling program. Ms. Otte will email information to the Board members.
- Ms. Sarah Koolsbergen said she would speak to the Board members following the COVID portion of the meeting, as her comments relate to COVID.

Lindsey Sharp provided the following COVID data:

- 234 cases in June. 200 cases in July, 93 cases so far in August.
- Average age of infected person was 38 years old.
- Most of the cases are fully vaccinated.
- The CDC Community Level for Middlesex County is in the Low category as of August 26<sup>th</sup>. The link to check the COVID Community Level is <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/science/community-levels.html>
- Ms. Sarah Koolsbergen spoke next and referred to an email she sent to Wesley Chin, Diana Ekman, and the Board members' general email address. Ms. Koolsbergen attended a press conference last week (MA Coalition for Health Equity). The presenters spoke about reinstating the indoor mask mandate. She asked what Belmont Public Schools will do to protect everyone during the school year.
- Julie Lemay explained what Health Department staff have done with the schools, including frequent meetings to review current data.
- Ms. Sarah Koolsbergen is concerned with CDC guidance as Dr. Wolensky has stated they have "botched" guidance in the past. Julie said the Board has actually gone beyond CDC guidance relating to mask mandates.
- Dr. Allen said risk perception is variable among people, and is hard to define. The Board will continue monitoring as the disease evolves.
- Donna David said recent CDC guidelines are good as to what a community response should be. The Board will continue to educate people to take personal responsibility including vaccination and voluntarily wearing a mask as needed.
- Wes Chin explained that Beth Rumley, BPS Head Nurse, is working on a COVID plan with the other school nurses. The plan will include opportunities to receive vaccine.

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- Ms. Erika Wolf said she also wrote to the Board members. She said there is a lack of plan for COVID masking when numbers get too high, especially in schools. She currently has COVID and contracted it because other people don't wear masks.
- Dr. Allen said the Board will look at everything - hospitalizations, slope of rise, wastewater, percentage of absences in a school/classroom.
- Ms. Suzy Feinberg said the approach for schools, at a minimum, should follow CDC guidelines. When community level is High there should be a universal mask mandate in schools. She said children/students won't wear mask unless there is a mandate in place – parents need help to enforce. Long COVID is a concern. The more the school requires masking, the less cases there will be.
- Donna David worries about school absences being misrepresented and worries about teachers and staff. Two-way masking does work. Donna would suggest the Board meet once the community level hits medium. Donna asked David Neylon to weigh in on this. David said communication with school nurses is key, they know best the situations at the schools.
- Ms. Sarah Koolsbergen said it's shameful how many people died. Belmont should bring back an indoor mask mandate while in public spaces. She worries about school children, teachers and staff. A mask mandate is not a big deal, it's about thinking of others.
- Ms. Suzy Feinberg feels it should not be up to the school nurse, too much to decide. The nurses don't want this decision on their shoulders. Everyone needs to stand together – Board of Health and School Committee and Superintendent. We need a process in place.
- Dr. Allen said the Board will continue to explore what a cut off will be and asked the public to share data/metric. We are in this together as everything evolves.
- Donna David said the CDC guidelines will be monitored weekly. Donna suggests that when the community level reaches medium/high, the Board of Health could convene in a meeting and assess what's going on at the schools. Can this be set as the parameter to call a Board of Health Meeting, with 48 hour notice to comply with Open Meeting Laws.
- Ms. Meghan Moriarty, School Committee Member, told the audience the School Committee policy follows DESE, CDC, and the Board of Health guidance. If one of these agencies made a decision, the School Committee would have to follow based on their current policy. The School Committee cannot make a decision along unless this policy is changed. Ms. Moriarty praised nursing staff and all they do. The State is not providing funds for testing this year. Need to have parent responsibility concerning accurate reporting, especially if the Board will be considering this metric when making recommendations.
- Dr. Allen is concerned what we will do if DESE/CDC guidelines don't align. She also feels the Board should convene urgent meetings with the School Committee.
- Julie thanked everyone for their input. If Belmont community level is deemed to be in the high category, the Board of Health will call for a joint meeting with the School Committee.

The Motion to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of July 13, 2022 passed by a vote of 3-0.

The Director/Assistant Director/Public Health Nurse/Health Agent report was reviewed:

- The Attorney General's office filed the petition for receivership. The Hearing is scheduled for mid-September.
- Staff investigated report of a residential cockroach infestation. The occupant reported seeing the insects in their refrigerator and frozen in ice cube trays.

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- There have been 18 new reports of rat sightings throughout the town.
- Leonard Street businesses: Bruegger's and Comella's each had citations issued for continued nuisance violations – excess trash around dumpsters, increased rodent activity. Board members feel it will be helpful to have Bruegger's at the next Board of Health meeting.
- Audrey Road update – the owner of the chickens made a decision to not keep chickens on their property. This was a case of a neighbor reporting increased rodent activity since a neighbor began to keep chickens on their property. Health Department staff investigated the complainant's property as well as a number of other properties in the same area. Rodent activity was not seen at the other properties.
- Betts Road rodent activity – Staff investigated this complaint which may be a neighborly dispute. Staff were asked to send an Order letter for correction, but explained they cannot send the letter unless it is clear to staff that there is rodent activity. A few days later, staff was asked to investigate burrows along the walls of the park and cemetery of the Grove Street neighborhood. Staff contacted DPW who had Assurance Pest Control investigate. Assurance determined that more than half the holes were due to chipmunks.
- The Health Department has been asked to increase rodent education to Belmont residents by inserting the rodent educational notice with upcoming tax/utility bills, as well as making the materials available at each Town department public counter.
- There was a discussion concerning using Clay Pit Pond as an irrigation source for the new high school athletic fields. The High School Building Committee will conduct testing. Testing has not been done since the 1990's, and chlordane and fish tissue were present. Julie Lemay also provided feedback regarding the testing schedule and sampling plan. The water is being tested for metals, SPOC's, pesticides, PFAF's. Dr. Allen asked that once results are received this subject be placed on an upcoming meeting Agenda.
- Social Media currently has 800+ followers. The summer intern, Ava, has completed her internship with the Health Department. Ava generated 5 infographics to share on the Health Department's Facebook page. Lindsey Sharp virtually attended the end of the year intern presentations, noting it was great to watch Ava share her presentation with the group. The Health Department wishes Ava best of luck in her senior year of undergrad at BU.
- VaxRx will host a COVID booster clinic on September 15<sup>th</sup>. The new bivalent should be available by this date.
- Monkeypox update:
  - August 17<sup>th</sup> new guidance included expanded testing sites.
  - Approved treatment is 2 lower doses of Jynneos. There are 14 treatment locations in Massachusetts.
  - Bob Upton has returned as Belmont's Veterans Services Officer!

The next Board of Health meeting is scheduled for September 19, 2022 at 5:00 pm.

The Meeting adjourned at 6:25 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Julie C. Lemay, Chair