

Board of Health Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, February 8, 2022
Virtual Meeting

BOARD OF HEALTH MEMBERS PRESENT

Marianne Hartmann, Emily Cilley, Dr. Peter Sheckman

MEMBERS ABSENT

None

OTHER TOWN OFFICIALS PRESENT

Jeffrey Vaughan, Director of Public Health and Neia Illingworth, Public Health Nurse

OPEN MEETING

- The meeting was called to order at 6:01 pm

REVIEW/APPROVE MINUTES OF PRIOR MEETINGS

- The Board voted to approve meeting minutes from July 21, 2021; September 21, 2021; November 29, 2021; December 20, 2021; December 21, 2021; December 23, 2021; and January 10, 2022.
- On MOTION from Cilley and SECONDED by Sheckman, the Board voted by ROLL CALL to approve the minutes listed above. Cilley (yes), Sheckman (yes), Hartmann (yes)

COVID-19 UPDATE - INCLUDING TOWN VACCINATION UPDATE

- Swampscott has had almost 1000 new lab confirmed cases since December 19, 2021. These numbers would not include those who test positive on a home-test.
- As of January 30, 2022, lab confirmed cases are trending down from the rise in cases that took place from December 19, 2021 to January 29, 2022.
- According to the CDC Covid Data Tracker, MA and Essex County remain in the red, classifying the areas as high transmission areas.
- The Omicron variant continues to be the dominant variant.
- On December 27, 2021, the CDC shortened the recommended time for isolation for those infected with Covid to be effective December 29, 2021. On January 21, 2022, the CDC updated the guidelines to specify guidance for those who are able to wear a mask vs. those who are not able to wear a mask, those who are vaccinated vs. unvaccinated, and those who are symptomatic vs. asymptomatic. Those who are up-to-date on their vaccinations and able to wear a mask do not need to quarantine. Those who are not up to date on their vaccinations or not able to wear a mask need to quarantine for ten days unless they test negative on or after day five. "Up-to-date" is defined as someone who

has completed the primary series of a vaccine within the last five months, has received the primary series of the J&J vaccine within the last two months, or has completed the primary series more than five months ago but has since received a booster dose.

- Mass.gov provides additional guidance for Health Care Personnel, those in k-12 school settings, and those in childcare settings.
- Vaccines available for different groups include Pfizer for everyone ages 5+ and Moderna and J&J for everyone 18+. A primary series for Pfizer is two doses 3 weeks (21 days) apart, Moderna is two doses 4 weeks (28 days) apart, and J&J is one dose. You are considered “fully vaccinated” two weeks after the final dose of a vaccine series. Boosters for Pfizer and Moderna should be given five months after completing their primary series of a two-dose series or two months after a J&J vaccine. Those who are moderately to severely immunocompromised should get an additional primary shot before a booster.
- As of February 3, 2022, 95% of the Swampscott total population have received at least one dose, 89% have received two doses, and 55% have received a booster.
- The CDC also updated guidance regarding masks. They recommend that if you are two years or older and not up to date with vaccines, you should wear a mask indoors in public. Those who have a weakened immune system should also do the same. It is also recommended that everyone wear a mask in areas of high transmission effective December 21, 2021.
- Neia provided a presentation on the effectiveness of masks. She stated that cloth masks give the wearer 56% lower odds of testing positive for Covid, surgical masks give the wearer 66% lower odds, and respirator (N95/KN95) masks give the wearer 83% lower odds of testing positive for Covid.

DISCUSSION ON INDOOR MASK MANDATE AND POSSIBLE RESCIND DATE

- Marianne invited attendees to comment. There was no public comment.
- Marianne provided a recap on the status of the mask mandate: the Board of Health issued a mask mandate on December 23, 2021 due to the rising case numbers. While the numbers are better at this time, she stated that Swampscott is still “in the red”. She explained that other MA municipalities are both continuing and discontinuing mask mandates.
- Dr. Sheckman stated that he would prefer the BOH continue to enforce a mask mandate as the present case numbers are still much higher than this time last year. He stated that there is no state mandate and it is a local decision.
- Emily stated that she would be in favor of rescinding the mask mandate with the option to issue a new one later should cases rise again. Those who want to wear a mask would still be free to do so.
- Dr. Sheckman asked what other surrounding communities have done. Jeff stated that Peabody, Danvers, Salem, and Marblehead have upcoming meetings. He said that many other municipalities are leaning towards rescinding, albeit setting the effective date as a future date rather than immediately. The Board discussed potential dates.
- Marianne asked for a motion to rescind Emergency Order #7: “Mandatory Face Coverings in Indoor Public Spaces in the Town of Swampscott”, effective 11:59 PM on Sunday, February 20, 2022. On MOTION by Sheckman, and SECONDED by Cilley, the Board voted to approve this motion. Roll call: Cilley (yes), Sheckman (yes), Hartmann (yes).

UPDATE ON SCHOOL CHANGES REGARDING TESTING PROTOCOLS

- The schools have been doing “pools testing”. Going forward, the schools that are pool testing will still be pool testing on their assigned days, but they will also be provided with an at-home test on a different day each week, increasing the opportunity for testing to 2x per week. Additionally, the schools will no longer be doing contact tracing.

HEALTH DIRECTOR REPORT

- Jeff announced that he just finished prequalification documentation for the DEP for grant money for solid waste and recycling programs. Last year, the Town received \$11k in funding.
- Jeff stated that he is finalizing the Annual Reports for the last two fiscal years.
- At the next monthly meeting, Girls Inc. will be invited to speak about progress and updates regarding the youth substance abuse grant.
- Unos Pizzeria and Grille has closed. A new bank will be taking over the address.
- Jeff publicly thanked the Mass Medical Society for their supportive statement towards Public Health departments.

OTHER BUSINESS/ITEMS NOT REASONABLY ANTICIPATED BY THE BOH

- Emily requested that at a future meeting, the Board discuss substance/tobacco abuse and conducting surveys for children and their parents. Jeff stated that this would be a discussion the Board had with the guests from Girls Inc.

SCHEDULING OF NEXT BOARD OF HEALTH MEETING

- The next meeting has been scheduled for March 9, 2022. All board members are in agreement.

ADJOURN

On MOTION by Sheckman and SECONDED Cilley it was VOTED by roll call to adjourn the meeting. Roll call: Sheckman (yes), Hartmann (yes), Cilley (yes).

The meeting adjourned at 7:18 pm.

True Attest,

Brittney Jones