

Board of Health Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, April 6, 2022
Virtual Meeting

BOARD OF HEALTH MEMBERS PRESENT

Marianne Hartmann, Emily Cilley

MEMBERS ABSENT

Dr. Peter Sheckman

OTHER TOWN OFFICIALS PRESENT

Jeffrey Vaughan, Director of Public Health; Neia Illingworth, Public Health Nurse; Michael McClung, Town Moderator

OPEN MEETING

- The meeting was called to order at 6:00 PM.

REVIEW/APPROVE MINUTES OF PRIOR MEETINGS

- The Board voted to approve meeting minutes from March 9, 2022.
- On MOTION from Cilley and SECONDED by Hartmann, the Board voted by ROLL CALL to approve the minutes listed above. Cilley (yes), Hartmann (yes).

COVID-19 UPDATE – INCLUDING TOWN VACCINATION UPDATE

- In the last four weeks, there have been 71 new lab-confirmed cases.
- Interactive graphs of lab-confirmed case numbers are available on the Town website.
- As of March 31, 2022, Swampscott's incidence rate is 14.2, increasing from the 8-range.
- According to the CDC's COVID Data Tracker Integrated County View, Essex County is in the "substantial" transmission range.
- According to the CDC's COVID-19 Community Levels, the community levels and Covid-related admissions in Essex County are "low".
- Neia explained that MWRA has been tracking "wastewater", which provides more information on cases
- BA.2 is currently the dominant variant in the USA. It is responsible for 72.2% of cases.
- Those who are not moderately or severely immunocompromised can now go longer in between primary series vaccine doses.
- As of March 30, 2022, adults who are 50 and older who are not moderately or severely immunocompromised may choose to receive a second booster dose at least four months after their first booster dose.

- As of March 31st, vaccination rates are:
 - 1 dose – 95%
 - 2 doses – 90%
 - Booster – 57%
- Many Stop the Spread locations have closed, including Salem. Lynn and Revere locations remain open at this time.
- Rapid at-home covid tests are now covered by insurance, as required by the federal government. Those with Medicare are able to go to a network of pharmacies and get up to 8 free over-the-counter tests a month. Four two-packs of at-home tests are also available to order online for free at covidtests.gov
- Masks are still required on public transportation, in congregate care communities, and in healthcare facilities. Other establishments can enforce their own mask requirements.

DISCUSSION WITH TOWN MODERATOR TO DISCUSS TOWN MEETING

- Town Moderator Michael McClung stated that his preference for the May 16th Annual Town Meeting would be to meet in person.
- The Board members stated that they would be in favor of an in-person Town Meeting.
- Jeff stated that he would like masks to be recommended as the new variant is incredibly transmissible.
- Cilley stated that she has noticed that people have been developing symptoms days before they are testing positive. Neia stated the same.
- McClung inquired about overall vaccination rates, the shape of the curve, and European incidence rates. Neia stated that the Town has seen an uptake in cases despite high vaccination rates. She also stated that some cases may not be reflected because individuals are only testing on home-tests, which are not reported to the State.
- Neia asked if it would be possible to block off seats so that Town Meeting Members are more spaced apart. McClung said that spacing would allow it, but many households have multiple Town Meeting Members who would sit together and that many individual Town Meeting Members like to sit in the front or middle.
- McClung stated that he will plan for an in-person Town Meeting unless the Board of Health feels later that it is not advisable.

CONVERSATION / INTRODUCTION WITH ANIMAL CONTROL OFFICER

- Tabled to a future meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT

- Sheryl Levenson spoke for public comment. She asked Neia if it is true that wearing a mask protects others more than the wearer and if those that are immunocompromised and do not wear masks are in danger. Neia stated that a well-fitting KN95 or N95 mask is recommended as it offers the highest level of protection to both the wearer and others that they are around. Sheryl also stated that there is a draft House Bill (#H4600) on the use of pesticides and rat poison and she is concerned that it is a health issue as rats are dying and being eaten by birds and other wildlife and also are left outside and are subject to view by children.

HEALTH DIRECTOR REPORT

- Jeff announced that the Town has a new Animal Control Officer.
- Jeff stated that he plans to add information to the website to inform residents where dogs are allowed in Town and whether or not these areas permit dogs off-leash.
- A new restaurant, Pamona will be opening soon. Other new businesses in Town include Njord Haven and Zestfriendz.
- Housing Inspection requests are increasing. This could be due to the eviction ban expiring as well as Housing Court delays.
- Cilley asked if there are any remaining unoccupied commercial properties in Swampscott. Jeff stated that he is unaware.
- In the next couple weeks, the Health Department will begin seriously looking into a recycling program for the wrap used for boats.

OTHER BUSINESS/ITEMS NOT REASONABLY ANTICIPATED BY THE BOH

- None.

SCHEDULING OF NEXT BOARD OF HEALTH MEETING

- The next meeting has been scheduled for May 4, 2022. All board members in attendance are in agreement.

ADJOURN

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

The meeting adjourned at 6:45 PM.

True Attest,

Brittney Jones