

Wellesley Board of Health
Remote Meeting via Zoom
Meeting Minutes.
August 23, 2021
12:05 PM

Present:

Board:

Shepard Cohen, MPA, Chair
Marcia Testa Simonson, MPH, PhD, Vice Chair
Linda Oliver Grape, PA-C, MPH, Secretary

Staff:

Jessica Cliff, MHA, Environmental Health Specialist
Deadra Doku Gardner, MS, Administrator
Leonard Izzo, MS, RS, CHO, Director
Cheryl Lefman, MA, Community Health Coordinator
Ann Marie McCauley, RN, Public Health Nurse Supervisor
Vivian Zeng, REHS, RS, CP-FS, Senior Environmental Health Specialist

In attendance:

Marlene Allen, Board member, Council on Aging
Shira Doron, MD, resident
Jason Harris, MD, resident
Stephanie Hawkinson, Communications and Project Manager, Town of Wellesley
Ashely Hulme, Director of Nursing, Wellesley Public Schools
KC Kato, Town Clerk, Town of Wellesley
John Lanza, Advisory Committee
Catherine Mirick, School Committee, Wellesley Public Schools
Susan Rosefsky, Board member, Council on Aging
Adrew Wilson, MD, resident
Jaffee Wyatt, resident
Beth Sullivan Woods, Select Board

The meeting was called to order at 12:05 PM.

Citizens Speak

Andrew Wilson reported that he is a physician at Boston Medical Center, a town meeting member and the parent of two children in the public schools. Dr Wilson is concerned about the new COVID variant and noted that there have been significant factors that have changed since June 2021. Dr Wilson also addressed his concern that there will be no regular pool testing in the Wellesley Public Schools. He hopes that the Board of Health will be considering the testing option.

Marlene Allen reported that she is a member of the Council on Aging Board. Ms Allen reported that the COA board had a unanimous vote of agreement that the COA require stringent protocols for masking in the location. The COA Board also agreed that vaccination be a requirement for all staff. Ms Allen cited a heightened concern of the increasing threat of the COVID Delta variant and break through cases. The COA operates under the Select Board and the Selet Boad seeks help and guance from the Board of Health . Ms Allen requests that the Board of Health seek an immediate mask and vaccine mandate for all employees.

Susan Rosefsky reported that she is also on member of the Council on Aging Board and supports all comments made by Marlene Allen. Ms Rosefsky reported that the Director of the COA has been following the state guidelines and the location has been able to be open for some activities however the COA Board does not feel that there is enough control offered in the current guidelines. Ms Roselsky is seeking additional mandates for the Council on Again.

Chairman's report

Shep Cohen briefly reviewed the agenda for today's meeting.

Director's report

Leonard Izzo reported that he has a call with Newton Wellesley Hospital today to address the increase in COVID cases in the area. An update will be provided at the next meeting.

Mr Izzo reported that he has been drafting a mask advisory for the community. Additional information was addressed during the course of this meeting.

1. Community Health

a) COVID update

Ann Marie McCauley reported that there are many COVID home tests kits available, and these results are not being reported. Home testing reports are not forwarded to the state for tracing.

Ms McCauley reported that she is still receiving one or two positive cases a day. There appears to be lots of family transmission. There has been no hospitalization of Wellesley residents.

Ms McCauley reported that there are no trends. Cases have come in from across all age groups, from household spreads to cases of singletons. There has been nothing unusual and no profile. The skilled nursing facilities are in good shape.

b) Town Buildings

Leonard Izzo reported that he intends to issue a mask advisory to the town regarding indoor spaces. Mr Izzo reported that it is appropriate for public buildings to require masking when inside. Public facing employees should be masked as well as those unvaccinated employees. Mr Izzo reported that he will be working with Meghan Jopes on his advisory regarding employees.

The Council on Aging would like to require that all public entering the Tolles Parsons Building wear a mask and require that all public facing staff also wear a mask. The COA can be considered as an adult day treatment center falling under the Executive Office of Elder Affairs. The Executive Office of Elder Affairs promotes the well-being of older people, individuals with disabilities, and their families. Shep Cohen reported that the Board of Health will complete a mask advisory. The Board of Health also intends to meet with the Select Board to further address a mask requirement in all town buildings.

Linda Oliver Grape inquires as to the status of Tolles Parsons ventilation system. Marlene Allen reported that the building is the newest in town and has an excellent ventilation system.

Marlene Allen also reported that she is interested in a vaccine mandate for all COA employees. Ms Allen reported that not all the staff at the COA is vaccinated. Mr Izzo reported that he will address the issue of vaccine mandates in Wellesley with Town Counsel.

c) Wellesley Public Schools – Masking

Shep Cohen reported that the Wellesley School Committee meeting is scheduled for Tuesday evening (8/24/21). The School Committee is requesting the Board of Health's recommendation on masking in the Wellesley Public Schools. Wellesley Schools open on September 1, 2021.

Shep Cohen reported that the Board of Health has received many comments from parents and residents regarding masking in the schools. Mr Cohen reported that he expects the Board of Health to be recommending to the school committee that grades K thru 12 be masked.

Leonard Izzo reported that the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) is expected to issue a mask mandate at their upcoming meeting. Commissioner Riley will be asking for a potential state order from the Massachusetts Board of Education. Linda Oliver Grape reported that should that mask mandate be state issued it is expected to be universal for grades Pre K thru 12. The mandate is expected to be for children over age 2 years old.

Marcia Testa Simonson reported that she would like to wait for the DESE decision to come out at their meeting on Tuesday. Linda Oliver Grape suggested that the Wellesley Board of Health approve a mask recommendation for Wellesley Schools until such time DESE issues an order or guidance on a universal mask mandate across the state.

Catherine Mirick reported that it will be very helpful for the School Committee to know that the Board of Health supports a mask mandate in advance of their meeting. The Board of Health will have a motion in place if DESE does not vote on a universal mask mandate. Leonard Izzo will prepare the motion.

Linda Oliver Grape reported that the Board of Health is very supportive of the school committee's position. She noted that this is a guidance and a recommendation to the school committee, not a mandate. Ashely Hulme reported that it is important to start the school year with masks and to see how transmission rates continue.

The Board of Health voted to approve that they are in support of the school committee requiring universal masking. Lenny Izzo reported that he is supportive of the action. Linda Oliver Grape also noted that it would be important for all Wellesley programs to utilize masking.

Leonard Izzo reported that DESE has already approved the universal masking however the Board of Education as the overseeing body needs to approve the order.

d) Wellesley Public Schools – COVID Testing

At the last meeting Dr Lussier reported that in terms of testing WPS had been accepted into the state testing program and the school committee was reviewing the options. At today's meeting Linda Oliver Grape addressed James Harris recommendation on pool testing at the schools. Ms Grape reported that the pool testing is not intended to be a part of the return to school process as it is not being recommended by DESE for school children. The Board of Health supports the "test and stay" protocol as the best practice.

e) Tobacco Appeal Hearing

At the last two meetings the Board of Health reviewed the violation which took place at B & P Auto on July 30, 2021. Mr Gary Aharonian acknowledged that an employee at B & P Auto sold a pack of cigarettes to a minor during a compliance check. He was seeking a reduction in the \$1000 fine administered to first time offenders. Note that the fines are set by the state.

At today's meeting the Board of Health voted to approve a reduction of the \$1000 fine under the following conditions:

The Board of Health approved the following action: Gary Aharonian, owner of B & P Auto will be required to immediately pay \$300 of the \$1000 fine for the first offense. The Board of Health will hold \$700 in abeyance. In the event of a second violation within the next three years (2024) the \$700 will be charged in addition to the fine for the second offense, currently \$2000. The total fine at the time of a second offense will be \$2700 so long as the state does not alter the fine schedule.

In addition to the fiscal obligation, Mr Aharonian and his employees will be required to complete the tobacco education program provided by Massachusetts Health Officers Association.

Vivian Zeng and Jessica Cliff will prepare a letter notifying Mr Aharonian of the Board of Health decision.

f) Community Health Coordinator

The Board of Health and Leonard Izzo continue to work with the Human Resource Department to finalize the job description. No set date is available as to when the position will be posted.

2. Environmental health

a) Temporary Food Permits

Vivian Zeng reported that the schools and colleges are requesting temporary event permits (food trucks etc).

The meeting was adjourned at 1:06 p.m.

The next meeting of the Board of Health is scheduled for August 30, 2021 at 12 noon.

Respectfully submitted,

Deadra Doku Gardner

Administrator