



## OBSERVER REPORT

### **BOARD OF HEALTH- 3-4-2025**

Hybrid Meeting - Recorded

LWVM Observer: Tom Krueger

### **Members in Attendance: Andrew Petty, Tom McMahon, Tom Massaro, Helaine Hazlett**

Prior to the items on the agenda Ms. Hazlett made two announcements: first, the expansion of the BOH membership from 3 to 5 members would not take place this year. The Select Board had only recently sent in the request to the MA legislature, and there is not enough time for this to be passed; secondly, Ms. Hazlett has decided NOT to run for a seat on the BOH this year. She mentioned her 37 years in elected office in MHD, 9 years on the school committee, 28 years on the BOH with 5 years as chair. She was proud of the BOH leading the way on many health issues over the years (e.g. tobacco smoke, etc.), the COVID response, and the forming of the Mental Health Task Force. She thanked the many board members with whom she served and the health center directors.

**Town Website-** The new town website is soon to be coming to “life”, but bugs need to be worked out. When it does become live, all need to look at it, checking the links, many of which were initially “broken”. It needs to be user friendly as it will get lots of traffic.

### **Mental Health Task Force (MHTF)**

Dr. Massaro reported on the MHTF and that it will be going in a different direction, evolving as other task forces have. Dr. Lebon, the chair of the MHTF, felt as though the task force had reached its “peak” under the current structure. The best way forward is to “hand off” this to the mental health professionals who deliver the care. The town already has a great facility, MCC, and the MHTF could develop more alignment with it. There was the question - does the staff of the MCC have capacity? The MCC sees it as a “win-win”. Further discussion concerned the MHTF website, Marblehead Cares, which is robust and would continue. Already the health department has on its site links to the MCC. Other pieces of the MHTF would continue. Mr. Petty will continue to attend as a representative on the group that the MHD Humane Society convenes which also has the police chief, COA and others.

Mr. McMahon was wondering about moving the MHTF website to the MCC. The name of the website “Marblehead Cares” containing the word “cares” and could be “used” as it is in other towns. Other towns use the word “cares” in its website titles to refer to substance abuse, and it is easy for people to remember.

## **Bird Flu H5N1**

With the presence of bird flu in the country, there is a need to discuss this at the BOH. Mistakes were made with the COVID pandemic, especially about informing the public. One of the worst was that the idea that COVID was “static” but was actually “dynamic” and changed as the pandemic progressed. Already the medical journal, New England Journal of Medicine, has articles about the emerging threat, and how it needs to be taken seriously.

Mr. Petty gets updates from the state. He reminded us that MHD is a coastal town, which means lots of seabirds, as well as a number of chickens and ducks. In a recent detection in another state, a sick flock was found, culled, and a 10 kilometer buffer zone was created for other fowl. This is a “very dynamic”, changing, issue.

Dr. Massaro would like to “educate” the community about what a virus is, what H5N1 is and its difference from SARS-COVID. Perhaps creating a website for H5N1 articles, a micro library, with scientific facts would be helpful. Dr. Massaro offered some interesting facts about the US egg laying hens: in 2023 there were 379 million laying hens, which produced 110B eggs a month, and 10% of the hens were culled. There also has been some “panic” buying of eggs which has pushed up the prices. The CDC says so far that fully cooked eggs (not easy over) are safe to eat.

## **Creating a Healthier Marblehead (CAM)**

Dr. Massaro gave an update of the work to be done on the town wide survey. Dr. Coyle from UMass Boston has now an additional colleague, Megan Morgan Clark, who has a MPH, PHD, and was a health director for a town on the Cape. They are excited that this survey will cover the entire life span of residents - other towns, Salem and Swampscott, stopped at 50 and wished they had gone further. This survey will not be a “paper” one but will be done on-line or by phone; the hope is to engage more younger residents. The response rate, hopefully, will be at least 50%. Dr. Massaro said there is no update on funding, but has continued to make presentations to various groups.

Dr. Massaro then presented the talk and slide presentation he gives to groups. His first slide concerned why public health is so important. He noted that MA is one of the strongest states with regard to public health and hoped that more information can be gathered and compared.

From here he proceeded to show a series of slides -

1. Maternal morbidity - MA does well compared to other US states but not internationally: MA 16.4 (per 10,000) versus France, 7.6, Canada 8.4, and Germany 3.6
2. Avoidable deaths - US 270 (100,000), MA 222, but Canada 139, France 105, and Germany 135. The largest reasons in the US are gun violence and overdoses.
3. Women taking 4+ drugs daily - US 27%, Canada 16%, France 11%, UK 22%. In the US the black population 37%.
4. Yesterday’s MHD BOH - MHD underfunds public health. MA recommends \$40 per resident (which would be \$779K), but the actual is \$18 per resident (\$324K). He noted that most towns probably don’t get the recommended support. Also, there has been no money for many of the projects of the BOH - MHTF, Wellness Day, etc.
5. Today’s Public Health - in the past public health was focused on “disease control and prevention”; did not work in managing the COVID pandemic; and as a result there has been a loss of trust in public health that needs to be revitalized.

Dr. Massaro briefly reviewed the history of public health from 1912, Teddy Roosevelt, through the 1960’s and Lyndon Johnson.

6. Further slides - discussed an orientation to local communities and health offices, establishing partnerships with local healthcare delivery systems, and emphasizing health promotion including mental health. To improve the health of MHD, good baseline data is needed to compare results, and this is why the BOH is partnering with the UMass Boston to develop this baseline. Dr. Massaro then presented slides about the process of forming, administering and analyzing the survey. He would like to give this presentation to the Select Board. He saw the work going along three paths: cochairs, Mr. Petty working with town government, and a wide range of stakeholders (residents, business, etc.)

### **Directors Report**

Transfer station update - the steel for the tipping floor is being galvanized, and will be picked up on 3/6, and will on site by 3/7, for the install. When that is nearing completion, the compactor can then be installed and is scheduled at this time for 3/24. Mr. Petty met with the architect about the bigger project with installation of concrete and concrete walls, moving the scale into scale pit, building the foundation for the new scale house, followed by paving, lights and signage for traffic. After 7/1 there would be more dollars from the waste revolving fund to continue work at the site, e.g., building the scale house. Mr. Petty is meeting again with the architect to try to get the rest of the work out for bid.

Tattoo Regulations - North Shore Public Health coalition has spent a long time on the proposed regulations and is "set to go". There was some discussion about the fees. Mr. McMahon noted that it is very unlikely there will be a tattoo establishment in MHD, and although the fees may seem high, one tattoo could pay it. NOTE - these regulations do NOT apply to permanent makeup which is done under an MD license. (The next steps for adoption of regulations are to have them reviewed by town council and then schedule a public meeting.)

Tobacco Regulations - the proposed regulations had been previously passed out. The last update was in 2016. Some of the changes concerned new product language, e.g., synthetic cannabis. (This is already outlawed by the state of MA but if it is also included in the MHD regulations and could be looked for and if found, fined.) Other parts of the new regulations concern sale to 21 or older, and flavored tobacco and vapes.