



OBSERVER CORPS REPORT

BOARD OF HEALTH - 1-14-25

In-Person – Hybrid -Recorded

LWVM Observer: Tom Krueger

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

Marblehead Counseling Center - Ruth Ferguson

Ruth Ferguson, president of the board, came to the BOH to give an update and highlight some of the achievements for the past year, including new staff, building and landscaping improvements, sponsoring a Wellness Day, a conversation with Rob Delaney (Lisa Hughes), a comedy night at the Gerry 5, etc. She thanked the town and the BOH for the generous funding that helps to keep the center going.

In the past year (2024), 400 clients were served, 53% from MHD, for a total of 7000+ visits. This does not include the extra social service work that is often provided. There are 235 people on the waiting list, of this 100 are from MHD. The MCC is constantly contacting people to see if they want to remain on the list. Each situation is assessed for its urgency and referred on, if needed. The demand still exceeds the supply.

Currently there are 7 licensed clinicians, 2 master level graduate students (they need 2 years of supervision before obtaining a license) and 1 intern from SSU - hopefully 2 more interns will start in June. The MCC would like to hire one more clinician. Kathryn Percy was hired to replace an outgoing social service coordinator and Terry McDonough continues in her role.

Specific improvements to the building include IT completion, first floor renovation so that all administrative functions are on one floor, but windows, back porch and kitchen improvements are soon to be done.

Ruth asked for questions. First, why are only 53% of the clients from MHD? Some of the reasons are a) MCC has had financial struggles and had to broaden its scope to serve more and accept more insurances; b) logistics - clients often only want certain times which are not available; c) if someone does call from MHD, the MCC just doesn't stop seeing a current client. These facts also explain why there is a waiting list. Terry

McDonough added that there are currently <25 MHD children on the wait list. Some of these children have additional needs beyond behavioral health. More staff would help and the MCC is currently recruiting. The MCC saw >200 people for social service needs (housing, food, etc.) this past year.

At this point Mr. Petty noted that the HD and BOH currently allocate \$60K to the MCC and would like to return to the sum of \$120K that the HD was previously able to give. He said that these funds are used solely for MHD residents.

Mental Health Task Force - Dr. Lebon was unable to attend, but Dr. Massaro reported that the MHTF met 1-13-25 and is a robust involved group of up to 17 people who are exploring new types of therapy with hopes to make clinicians more effective. There is good support from the school and superintendent and one articulate student representative is a member of the MHTF. The group has written three different articles about aspects of mental health with some already appearing in the Marblehead Current.

Community Health Update - Creating a Healthier Marblehead (CAHM)

Dr. Massaro has been meeting with various community groups (Rotary Club, etc.) and others in MHD seeking \$45K to fund the general health assessment study done in conjunction with U Mass. Ms. Hazlett commended him and said that he had to just be persistent. (In the Public Comments time slot, Jack Attridge via Zoom gave a surprise to Dr. Massaro and the group: the MHD Rotary Club voted to give \$10K for the health assessment study.)

Wellness Fair

Mr. McMahon reported that all the preparations are done for the Wellness Fair. It will occur on 1/18/25, 10am-2pm, at the gym area of the MHD Community Center. There will be 20 MHD vendors featuring exercise, nutrition, mental health, etc. opportunities in the MHD community.

Transfer Station

Project Update - Mr. Petty gave an update on the project. The only bid for the entire project far exceeded (\$2.3M) what was budgeted (\$1.2M). In response he suggested that the work be done "piecemeal" with the most necessary work done first. Phase 1 would include installing the compactor, a compactor building and performing site work. With the use of the revolving fund the scale house could be replaced. After this work the next phase would be the building of the swap shed. The compactor is to be installed next week and this function will be "down" for 2 weeks.

Mr. McMahon added that he had a conversation with a contractor about the work. The contractor was eager to do the work, but the process has excess "hurdles." The contractor could do the work for half the cost but with all the rules for municipal projects

the costs mushroom. And if a low bid is accepted but the paperwork has even a slight error, the next lowest bid has to be taken which is often much more.

b) Compactor - as noted above to installed next week with a shutdown for 2 weeks.

c) Stickers

Applying for facility sticker is now completely online. (Via marblehead.org -> departments -> health department -> trash and recycling). The cost of the first sticker \$100 and a second \$40. The processing of the application takes a few days. This will be the last year of stickers on the cars as a license reading process (LCR) will be used in the future, hopefully installed by the spring. (For those without a computer or need help, you can go to the Health Department office in the Mary Alley Building 9-11am and 2-4 pm for assistance.)

6. Bills - Mr. McMahon read the vendors and costs of each of the bills for the past month.

7. Leash Law Article (sponsored by Rec and Park Commission)

Betsy Cougar, MHD animal control officer, and Sherry Bedrossian of the Recreation and Park Commission came to present a Leash Law Article (for Town Meeting) to address needed new regulations. (They gave the BOH members a 4-page document with pages 1-2 the current regulations (last updated in 2007), and 3-4 the proposed.) The hope is to have the Rec & Parks, Health, and Police departments all involved. The two most pressing issues are dogs that are not on a leash and the dog excrement that is either left or bags of excrement not disposed of. Most MHD residents follow the laws, but ~5% simply ignore them. Owning a dog comes with responsibility. In the presentation they listed the various parks, beaches, etc. where leashes are required. There is one "dog park" (off Lime and Hood Streets) but as was noted it is not easily accessible and has limited parking. In addition, the previous November - April time when dogs can be off leash may no longer be appropriate as youth sports often extend into November and begin earlier. No dogs are allowed on bathing beaches because of health and environmental risks.

The proposed new leash law would increase the fines for first offenses to \$100, second offenses to \$300, and the third and subsequent to \$500. Often the first offense is a warning. (For dog excrement not picked up, the fine would increase from \$50 to \$250 for each violation)

The BOH will review these documents and there was some question about the size of the fines, but the BOH will meet again on 1/27/25 and vote on the proposed article.

8. Health note - Mr. Petty informed the group that there is a significant uptick in both Covid and norovirus. He encouraged mask wearing, staying home when sick, washing hands, etc. The HD does have some Covid test kits.