



## **OBSERVER CORPS REPORT**

### **BOARD OF HEALTH – 11-24-25**

In person Meeting - Recorded

LWVM Observer: Tom Krueger

**Members in Attendance: Andrew Petty, Tom McMahon, Tom Massaro, Amanda Ritvo**

### **CAHM Health and Wellness Survey**

Dr. Massaro gave an update on the survey. The postcards announcing the survey were mailed on 10/1/25. The first week brought 1342 replies after which the response rate fell off. With numerous efforts to “advertise” the survey, including 2000 cards, restaurants signs, videos, CODE RED announcements, extending the deadline, etc., the valid responses rose to 2,523, about 15.3% of the cards sent, a number that was larger than expected. The next step will be a preliminary review by UMB to “get a handle on” the questions. A meeting will be held on 12/3 by the leadership council at 3pm to review these early findings. More detailed analysis will be ready in January 2026. From that point, focus groups, perhaps 4-5, will be formed to offer other observations to be used in conjunction with the survey results. A question was asked about who will be in these focus groups. Dr. Massaro replied that Dr. Coyne, the leader of the UMB group, will work to find people interested in certain topics. They are seeking open-minded individuals and good listeners. They would especially like to engage people from the 18-29 and 30-39 age groups, those deciles with fewest responses to the survey. Finally, Dr. Massaro thanked all the sponsors, townspeople, business, etc. for their help and support. This survey was paid for without any town’s dollars.

On a separate topic, Dr. Massaro reported that his vision for a “micro MPH” course that would be funded by a grant from MA DPH grant would not happen this year. He said that he had enough time to write the grant proposal but needed more lead time to engage collaboration partners. He will be ready for next year.

**Associate Chair of Waste Management report** - Mr. McMahon read the bills and costs for the HD since the last meeting

**Youth Substance Abuse** -Mr. McMahon read a personal statement about the rise of youth substance abuse in MHD and what is being done or not done in response by local leadership. This upsurge appears to be accelerated by practice of “social hosting.” He noted that when he was growing up in MHD this never occurred. He has heard from numerous residents who are supporting his outrage. One tragedy occurred this year tied to underage drinking. The same houses are often identified as ones that do such hosting. Police are called and the parties are “broken up”, but there are no other consequences, such as, citations issued. Mr. McMahon went to see the town clerk to review the town’s enforcement history. The last fines for such activity were issued in 2017. Mr. McMahon stated that this lack of enforcement is not from the patrol officers but appears to come “from the top.”

Mr. McMahon went further and reviewed MHD bylaws as well as the pertinent state statutes. The MHD bylaws, Article II Offenses Involving Minors, adopted 5-1-95 at town meeting by Art. 43, has several parts all concerning those who have care, custody, or control of minors. These include alcohol transporting, being in a vehicle where alcohol is transported, failing to keep a minor from alcohol on the premises, etc. The fines from 1995 ranged from \$25-150. The enforcement of the by-law is by the police department. The town clerk will keep a record of those who violate the by-law; this record is open to public inspection. In addition to these local bylaws, MA has MGL 138-34 which allows fines up to \$2000 and potential jail time for 1 year.

Despite overwhelming support from many of the MHD community, he felt that at this time he was not getting the same level of support from the Select Board. He felt that without their willingness for change, no meaningful progress will happen. He noted that this is his last year of his BOH term and plans to run next year. He added that if there was no change, he would “not hesitate” to run for Select Board.

Other board members agreed that underage drinking and social hosting are serious problems, that enforcement of the laws above have declined and why is unclear, and that town boards, schools, etc. must work together. Dr. Massaro and Dr. Ritvo wanted to hear the perspective from the police chief, perhaps the Select Board. Dr. Massaro noted that difficult decisions and/or constraints may help explain the lack of enforcement. The BOH has the responsibility for not only addressing youth safety but educating parents and community about the risks.

In conclusion, the board reached a consensus that the board or its chair would reach out to the police chief for a meeting, either in public or private discussion, to understand the PD approach to underage drinking enforcement.

### **Associate Chair of Community Health report**

Dr. Ritvo read the latest change of the CDC wording regarding vaccines. Previously the wording was “studies have shown that there is no link between receiving vaccines and developing autism spectrum disorder.” The new wording is “the claim vaccines do not cause autism is not an evidence based claim because studies have not ruled out the possibility that infant vaccines cause autism.” This change is not based on any new data, and represents the viewpoint of RFK, Jr. Dr. Ritvo went on to say the gold standard type of study, randomized, cannot be ethically done. This leaves “observational” studies and numerous studies from all over the world, involving large data bases, have never shown an increased risk.

A question was raised from the audience - would you trust the CDC about other information? Dr. Ritvo replied it is a difficult issue to answer. She suggested that professional organizations, the American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Academy of Family Physicians each have a reliable and trusted immunization schedule.

Dr. Ritvo gave an update on influenza types that are now beginning to circulate in the US. (Last year A(H1N1) and A(H3N2) were the types most responsible.) This year there is concern about a mutated variant of A(H3N2), “subclade K”. This is not likely to cause a pandemic, but it is a mismatch for the current flu vaccine. So far, this variant does not seem to more virulent, and the levels are low. The reason that there is a mismatch stems from being able to predict which types will be circulating and the 6-8 months it takes to make the vaccine using the traditional technique based

on egg. If RNA technology was used the production would be much quicker. Note that government support for such development has been withdrawn. She still recommended getting the flu vaccine.

## **Directors Report**

Mr. Petty gave an update on the curbside trash, recycling, and disposal contracts. He has reached out to a number of vendors, including the big 5. There will be an open meeting about the contract on 12/18/25; the bids are due back by 1/14/26.

Regarding the transfer station construction, the site for scale pit and house were excavated, and “urban” fill was found. Generally, one wants to reuse this fill, but the fill will have to be analyzed and see what is fit to save. There may be a need to ship some of this out. Other findings included the need for pressed steel plate, 4 x 18 feet, 1 inch thick to bolt to the bottom of the pit (cost \$3300); and to install granite curbing by the scale house as salt can erode concrete (cost \$5016). Happily, construction is proceeding on schedule and it is hoped that the scale will be “back” by 12/19. For now trash is being taken by Republic to RESCO.