



OBSERVER REPORT

BOARD OF HEALTH - 2/1/22 LWVM Observer - Thomas Krueger

Members in Attendance via Zoom: Andrew Petty, Todd Belf-Becker (chairperson), Sec. Andrea Flaxer, Joanne Greer Miller, Helaine Hazlett

Meeting - Emergency

Meeting held in a Handicapped Accessible Location - not applicable

Public allow to Participate in the Meeting - via Zoom - 65+ in attendance

The meeting was opened with a brief statement about opening meetings, followed by a roll call. The board then went into an Executive Session to "review open meeting law complaints filed by Mark Pelletier and Dorothy Carlson pursuant to G.L. C.30A sec 20 in executive session pursuant to G.L c 30A sec 21 (ac)(3) to consider potential litigation" and then returned to open session

COVID -19 UPDATE

Andrew reviewed the town's COVID statistics from 1/28/22: total cases 3144 (1/21, 3000; 1/14, 2831); active case 186, with probable cases (1/14-28) 49; deaths to date, 31. The age distribution of the cases is as follows: 0-4, 26; 5-11, 23; 12-19, 58; 20-29, 20; 30-39, 39; 40-49, 51; 50-59, 47; 60-69, 29; 70-79, 14; 80+, 8. He noted that in the last 5 days there have been 63 cases, and the last 10 day, 124. Of those cases (63), 29 were unvaccinated and 9 were un-boosted. Andrew then reviewed the statistics for MA over the past 7 days.

For MHD the case rate in the last 14 days per 100,000 was 147.8 (lower than the previous week); total tests 97.373; tests in the last 14 days, 3024; percent positive tests in the past 14 days, 14.8% (lower).

MHD vaccination rate as of 1/28 is excellent. Specifically for each age range: 5-11, 67%; 12-15, >95%; 16-19, >95%; 20-29, >95%; 30-49, >95%; 50-64, 94%; 65-74, 92%; 75+, >95%.

The BOH chair asked the board to discuss the mask mandate. One option was to give an arbitrary end date and another was to revisit again in 2 weeks. This would occur before the upcoming school vacation. One board member noted that the statistics are

going in the right direction but was still concerned with the hospitalization rate and need to proceed cautiously. The board then voted to reassess at a meeting on 2/15/22, two weeks from now.

A public comment period followed. One resident was concerned that only a few people decide a mandate and needed to look at the science. Another resident, supported by two others, were asking for a metric or metrics to decide when to stop. Another noted that MHD is a highly vaccinated community with numbers that are improving and asked why not just go to a “highly recommended” advisory. Another resident opined that COVID is a seasonal virus that will go up and down and didn’t seem related to mask wearing.

SALT (Superintendent Advisory Leadership Team)

Ms. Hazlett of the BOH, who attends these meeting, said that there have been two brief meetings since the last BOH meeting. Much of the discussion has been how to vaccinate the student body. Last week there was a vaccine clinic that administered 100 vaccinations. At the 1/25 meeting it was noted that absenteeism of teacher and students has decreased. COVID is still a problem, especially as viewed by the lead school nurse, Deanna McMann. The schools are not ready for masks to be removed and are concerned about vulnerable people in the community. (Note - the school department and BOH are each autonomous, though work together.) DESE was to meet on 1/29 to look at changing from a mask mandate to “highly recommended.” The test kits given to faculty have worked well and 899 students involved in the pool testing are to get home test kits; at which point the pool testing will end.

Another positive change was that the dearth of substitute teacher during the pandemic has now resolved with 19 subs in the system now.

MHTF (Mental Health Task Force)

Ms Miller who chairs this task force reported that MHTF has been very busy. A second speakers’ program was on 1/31 at the high school and was focused on suicide awareness. Numerous mental health practitioners from the community participated, and Melissa Kaplowitz moderated. Amanda Rubel, a counselor at the high school, is implementing SOS (Signs of Suicide), a program to help navigate suicide ideation and awareness. The program had a Q & A period and was recorded by MHTV. This will be broadcast on MHTV in the near future and will be available on the Marblehead Cares website.

In other developments, three student interns will join the MHTF and be a voice of the youth in the community as well as help to engage with social media and live streaming. With the executive director changing at the MCC, Teri McDonough will represent the MCC in the interim.

A third speakers' program is planned for March-April to address the needs of MHD's older population, especially with problems COVID has brought, including isolation. This is not only for seniors but adult children of the seniors.

TRANSFER STATION

At the last meeting of the BOH graphics were presented for the two options at the transfer station, a renovation or a new facility. It was evident during that presentation that there were concerns about the flow of residential and commercial users. The architect, Dana Weeder, presented a new plan for flow that solved many of the problems. In this plan Green Street would be used as an ingress for both commercial and residential users. At a fork, residential users would bear right, pass a shed where stickers, bins, etc. would be available, and then go on to the trailers or garden disposal areas. Residential user would then continue to circle back and exit by Beacon Street. Meanwhile commercial users (who would use the pit) would bear left at the fork, queue, then drive onto the scale, back up, unload, drive back to the scale, pay, and exit via Beacon Street. There is one spot in this flow that traffic would have to be single file. Perhaps there could also be a technology solution with a plate reader so that a staff person is not needed.

The buildings, renovated and new, that were presented at the last meeting (staff hut, swap shed, staff support building, pit, etc.) were reviewed again.

As passed at the prior BOH meeting, there will be a community forum (via Zoom) by March 1 to discuss concerns and ideas about these plans.

A public comment periods followed. One resident said he had a solution for the transfer station that < \$1M. (Andrew said he was happy to meet with him.). Another resident voiced why there was not input from the transfer station workers and community. One asked if the funds needed were going to be asked for at town meeting or from left over funds. (It is in process now.)

Director's Report

1. Andrew said that the HD was purchasing rapid test kits for all town employees, the food pantry patrons, and those in environmentally vulnerable neighborhoods (1200 homes).
2. He encouraged all who have not to sign up for CODE RED alerts. These alerts inform you about off-street parking, delays in trash pickup, etc.

Finally, one resident asked when meeting would be back in person. Another countered that she liked meeting on Zoom as it allowed more public participation.