



OBSERVER REPORT

Board of Health - Date - 3/8/22 LWVM Observer - Thomas Krueger

Members in Attendance via Zoom - BOH : 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

The meeting was opened with a brief statement about opening meetings, followed by a roll call.

Marblehead Counseling Center Annual Update

Terri Allen McDonough, social service director for MCC, Tim Phillips, co-president of the board of MCC, and Frank Sweeney, co-president of the board for MCC - presented the MCC annual update. Terri led off with a historical perspective of the MCC which began 53 years ago and has provided counseling, education and community services to Marblehead and surrounding communities. The funding for the MCC has evolved over the years: initially it was funded 100% by the town, then over the years with budget constraints this dwindled. The BOH has always contributed, initially at \$120K/year (there is a question whether some of those funds came from the school department), and in the past years \$60K/year. The MCC is very grateful for the collaboration and support from the BOH, but notes that \$60K only represents 10% of their total budget. Over the years the case load has had a dramatic increase from less than 3000 visit/yr 15 years ago to over 7000/year currently. The building itself has needed many repairs which have further depleted funds. Notably many departments rely on the MCC - the police, the fire, school, etc and the MCC gets many referrals from other groups - veterans, library, etc.

Tim and Frank both stressed the demand for services from the MCC with a wait list currently of 110 people (actually a backlog of 300 that is growing daily.) Besides the challenges of funding is the dearth of mental health clinicians. There is much competition (e.g. TalkSpace) for these clinicians and the credential process is lengthy, taking at times 3 to 6 to 12 months. (Only credentialed clinicians can work at the MCC for insurance reasons.) The Board will resume fund raising efforts that have been

stymied during COVID this fall. It remains difficult to get any funding from MA or the federal government. In conclusion, the Board of MCC is asking the BOH for additional \$60K (back to the original amount) so that the MCC could provide ~ 905 sessions which would take care of the wait list. Again, Teri, Tim and Frank all thanked the BOH for its support, both financial and other.

During a question period from the BOH members the following facts and answers were given:

1. Clients seen - 60% MHD, 18% Salem, 15% Swampscott. All MHD residents have preference and many of the visits for "out of town" are for slots that aren't filled for MHD residents, especially children who are in school when the slots are available.
2. The extra funds from the BOH could not come this year as a level funding budget has already been submitted. The MCC and BOH should meet in the fall to discuss 2023.
3. Currently the MCC has 2 therapists, a psychiatrist 1/wk, and hires other clinicians for FFS. They are looking to hire a clinical supervisor and another clinician.
4. Preference is always given to MHD residents. Clients have to be prioritized by severity of mental health disorder - e.g. schizophrenia, suicide ideation, etc.

COVID-19 Update

Andrew gave the most recent statistics of COVID cases, tests, etc as of 3/4/22: total cases to date = 3334; 25 active cases (39 in the past 2 weeks) with 7 probable cases - a dramatic decrease; average incidence 16.9/100,000; tests (2 weeks) 1576, percent positive = 3.3% (unchanged). The vaccination rate remains high with all > 95% except 5-11, 72%. Boosters per capita: 12-15, 35%; 16-19, 64%; 20-29, 55%; 30-49, 63%; 50-64, 71%; 65-74, 78%; 75+, 90%.

The HD meeting with the MA have decreased from weekly to biweekly. Indoor masking at child care, K-12, etc. stopped 3/1. HD will soon stop its weekly updates.

Superintendent's Advisor Leadership Team (SALT) Update

Ms. Hazlett gave an update of the SALT meetings, noting the last one was today 3/8. There had been discussion of when to stop the masks at school between the school board and the superintendent after the February school vacation: immediately vs 1 week after. Many of the schools were mask optional - after vacation at Glover and Brown 30-40% were still masking, but this week even fewer. Next steps include opening the cafeterias but going slowly. Some schools still have desk spacing - Village 5-6 feet, Glover 3 feet. In the pool testing only 2 cases in the elementary and 2 cases in the upper school were found after the vacation. Fewer are requesting pool testing which will probably be eliminated soon. It was stressed that all should be respectful of those who make other choices (masking, etc.) Rooms are well ventilated and opportunities for outside lunch will be soon.

Mental Health Task Force Update

Ms. Miller, who chairs the MHTF, gave an update. The most recent meeting was on 3/7 with excellent attendance. The previous program by the MHTF about suicide prevention was discussed with further possibilities of working with Man Program, another suicide prevention program in late September. Dennis King, the MHD chief of police, is in the process of getting a grant for a mental health clinician to work with the Police Department 24 hrs/week. All 40 of the police members will get Crisis Intervention Training.

The MHTF is looking into new initiatives and how to work with volunteers from the community and to include members of the faith community. The next meeting is on 3/21/22.

Transfer Station Discussion

The board needs to make a decision of going with either Option A or Option B by 4/5 in order to be on schedule with final requests for Town Meeting. Andrew said the community forum for the Transfer Station on 3/1 was well attended. The major issue was that of traffic from Green Street, especially for its effect on the Arnold Terrace community. A traffic study was done in the past, 2012, but further discussion needs to be done with police department, DPW, etc. The board suggested that a pro and con list for each option be made prior to the 4/5 meeting. There is still the question of forming a building committee for the project. The architect and engineer will attend the next BOH meeting.

Ms. Hazlett, with concerns about the trailer at the Transfer Station, went there to see it. Her impression was that the employees seemed satisfied with the fixes. She questioned whether it would last during the construction period. (During the public comment period, a spokesperson for the employees, said that they were not satisfied and that a board member was unlikely to hear the truth. She advocated for renting a new trailer.)

Ms. Miller said that she would like to hear more from the Arnold Terrace community. Carol Kennedy, a resident, seems to be a representative for the community. Ms. Miller offered to sit down to hear from the residents and Carol could contact Ms. Miller to set this up.

In a limited public comment period, one resident said that he appreciated the thoughtfulness and again asked what type of mitigation for noise and fumes could be done for the abutters. He would like the cost of these mitigations be included in the projected costs of Option B.

Director's Report

1. There will be another household hazardous waste day on 3/9 and will operate the same as previous days. ACD will drive to the household, pick up the HHH waste, bring to the transfer station where it will be repackaged and then removed.
2. Andrew asked that residence sign up for CODE RED (which can be done easily on the town website, marblehead.org) or MHD listserv so that important information can be relayed - e.g, delays in trash and recycling pick up, etc.
3. The Transfer Station will need a capital improvement in its rolling stock - a roll off truck needs to be replaced.
4. With spring soon upon us and boat work beginning, the TS will have a dumpster available on 4/1 for shrink wrap.