



OBSERVER CORPS REPORT

BOARD OF HEALTH – 4-14-26

Hybrid Meeting – Recorded

LWVM Observer: Tom Krueger

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

Guest speakers - Paul Tucker, Essex County DA, Dennis King, MHD Police Chief, John Robideau, MHD school superintendent

How Can Public Safety, Public Education and Public Health Work Together to Improve the Mental Health of Young People in Marblehead?

Dr. Massaro introduced the topic and noted that from the CAHM survey that the issues of “mental health and substance abuse” were of high concern to the residents of the town. “The town cares.” He added that working on these issues is not the purview of one town agency, but better results would happen by working together. He added “if the MHD schools, police department, and BOH can develop common goals, they can make MHD a better and safer place for children.” Many town agencies and organizations contribute to increasing public awareness. The BOH organizes and communicates public health knowledge and science. It brings residents together to discuss public health issues. After these preliminary thoughts, he introduced each of the speakers (listed above.)

Mr. Tucker was first to speak, noting that he had been a resident of MHD from 1991-2001, and previously a police chief in Salem where Mr. King also worked. The issue of social hosting is a particular concern this time of year as the Senior Prom approaches. He noted that the MHD bylaw about social hosting was perhaps effective at one time but is not effective now: those who break it are only subjected to a small fine and it is not public.

By contrast the MA General Law is not only comprehensive but carries a significant penalty. He first gave types of infractions: 1) knowing and intentionally allowing a minor to possess ETOH; juveniles can also be charged with above; 2) providing alcohol for those <21; 3) possessing alcohol at <21; 4) a person who knows it is alcohol. He noted that some parents have the idea that if it happens at home, they can control it. “Bad

idea” - not a shield from the law. The penalties can be up to a \$2000 fine and a year in prison. In addition, if the police are called or made aware, they do NOT need a warrant to enter the premises. It is a “breach of the peace” and in doing so they are undertaking a “community caretaking role.” The greater the potential for harm, the more aggressive the police will have to be.

Mr. Tucker went on to give a vignette of one incident in 2016: underage drinking was happening at a home, parents were away, came home, drank with the kids, one kid became violently ill, but was not taken to the emergency room. This prompted the law to change and addressed the endangerment of a child. There is a “Good Samaritan law” - if someone is intoxicated and in medical need, a person under 21 who is also drinking can summon the police and will be immune from prosecution.

Much of his presentation talked about what other towns have done to address these issues. Lynnfield formed a substance abuse coalition which became a 501(c)(3) organization to fund resources and programs. Gloucester has a school resource officer who has a great connection with the kids. They run a group of up to 100 for kids after school. Before Prom, they have an assembly with speakers - the superintendent, the principal, Mr. Tucker, and the Sullivans. The Sullivans, wife and husband, lost a daughter to alcohol - she drowned in shallow water. Their experience touches the listeners. He went on to tell about how his office gives grants to schools around prom time. This year MHD will get a \$3800 grant to have the Sullivans talk to the senior class.

Mr. Tucker talked of other programs - the NAN project; juvenile diversion system; programs at Essex Tech; restorative justice programs; programs to change the culture and enhance health and safety. The goal of all is for a healthy community.

After Mr. Tucker’s presentation, Mr. King spoke, reiterating much of what Mr. Tucker said. Mr. King saw MHD bylaw as a complement to the MA General law. He emphasized the need for prevention and early involvement by parents. “Teen drinking culture” is never okay. Adults need to step in early, intervene and can’t ignore red flags. When enforcement is necessary, it should involve not only the child, but parents and professionals. He noted the studies that the later one waits to drink alcohol, the less likely it leads to abuse. In MHD he had a “shout out” to the school resource officer who has developed excellent rapport with the kids. (He noted that if the override does not pass, the SRO will have to be pulled back into the daily police duties.)

Mr. Robidoux then spoke thanking all for coming and participating. He read a joint letter that Paul Tucker, Mr. King and he had authored. Key points - asking to make safety a priority, to have parents talk directly with their senior before Prom night about the specifics of where and what will happen, etc. Mr. Robidoux went on to discuss how the schools collect data via surveys about how the kids are doing and feeling and how they use this information. The school has numerous programs and groups (Health/Wellness committee, anti-discrimination committee, etc.) to address these concerns.

In a follow-up Q and A, Mr. Tucker discussed how the police don't need a warrant but need to be there immediately for health and evidence reasons. Mr. King said the police have to have something to act on – fact-based. There is, however, not a black and white response - each case is specific. As to other drug use, Mr. Tucker said the same “rules” apply. Another question concerned the effectiveness of speeches? Mr. Tucker said that the most effective is training kids, because kids listen to kids.

Transfer Station Update

Mr. Petty let the board know that for the next 2 weeks there would be more work on the transfer station - curbing, paving, striping, etc. Because of this, traffic flow would have to be re-routed temporarily. Traffic would enter and leave via the Green Street entrance. On Saturdays the traffic flow would be as usual.

Curbside Collection Update

Mr. Petty said that the barrel/bin distribution would be to the 8006 residences, that is to those that are one-to-four family. On 4/27 there will be a public hearing about the new curbside collection. He will soon be presenting a draft of new regulations. As for the “old” bins, they can be brought by the homeowner to the transfer station. He urged all to try to reuse their old bins or perhaps give them to someone in another town. The new collection will begin on 7/1, using the trucks, except for small or one-way streets where a smaller truck will be used.

During additional discussion, he said that each residence should try out the larger bins. After a trial period they can be exchanged for smaller ones. He also noted that **each** residence will get a bin. They are not to be shared. Each bin will have a barcode specific to that residence. If a homeowner elects to opt out, they need to inform the HD what they are doing with their waste.

One late note, the firm Waste Management wanted to bid a lower rate for disposal. The difference from Republic was ~ \$32,500. Mr. Petty was letting Republic know about this bid. Waste Management would like to bid for construction demolition disposal, but this is a separate issue.

Finally, the BOH and HD need to come up with the resident's fee if the override does not pass and have this available by town meeting. Mr. Petty will speak to the override at Town Meeting.

FY27 Budget Health/Waste

At the warrant hearing, the Finance Committee put a cap on the waste revolving fund at \$1.3 million.

Finally, there was a small fire at the transfer station. It is important to be careful about what is disposed, e.g., propane tanks and lithium batteries. The latter can catch fire. Lithium batteries can be disposed of at transfer station in the shed or at the health department.