



OBSERVER CORPS REPORT

BOARD OF HEALTH 5-12-26

Hybrid Meeting - Recorded

LWVM Observer: Tom Krueger

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

Chair's Report

Creating a Healthier Marblehead (CAHM) Update

Dr. Massaro quickly reviewed the process of the survey: 2500 responses, 5 focus groups, etc. UMass Boston is putting together a unified report which also includes additional physical health that is collected by the state. The initial draft will be available by 5/20 which will be reviewed by the CAHM leadership council by 5/27. A high-level summary and recommendations will then be presented at an Open Meeting on 6/16. The goal is to set up some meaningful priorities for public health in MHD over the next several years.

A large audience would be appreciated. The presentation may also be given at COA, Rotary Club or small groups. After 6/9 when the board has 5 members this will allow for more strategic planning.

Friends of Marblehead Public Health

With the fiscal constraints on the town, there will be no extra funds for public health for a long time. This necessitates looking for other resources. The major two ways to garner these is by writing grants or possibly creating a 501(c)3 nonprofit which would partner with the BOH. This latter mechanism is more attractive to outside sources, e.g., banks, government agencies, etc. So far, the BOH has had some success writing grants for small amounts. It would take time and money to create a 501(c)3, as well

as defining the goal of such an entity. (The US CDC has a CDC foundation to do things that the CDC can't do.)

Paul Tucker visit - feedback

All felt it went well with good questions. The tone and themes were those of mental health. It was clear that the problems and solutions are too much for any one single agency to do; a “silo” approach is counterproductive. It will take a combined effort of all involved - health department, schools, police, counseling, etc.

An example that was cited was the work of the NAN project. (This program was started in 2015 to promote mental health awareness and prevent youth suicide. The MHTF (Marblehead Health Task Force) presented this to the BOH in the past. One key part of the program is a peer-to-peer approach, whereby adolescents share their experiences with other adolescents. This approach resonates well with young people.) What is needed for this to be brought to MHD is partnering of the schools, health department, etc.

Community Health Improvement Planning Grant

Dr. Massaro said that the health department proposal was submitted. The competition for the grant from the state is very competitive. They are to deliberate in June. The planning is still a viable for tackling the barriers to mental health care in the town, even if MHD does not get the funding.

Marblehead Cares Website

Dr. Massaro spoke to the finding from the CAHM survey that many wanted to know what resources MHD already had. He said it was a matter of “navigation” to these resources. The previous Marblehead Cares website became defunct, but it appears that the name can be “rescued”, as well as much of the material. This could be expanded and made more user friendly.

Parenting Classes

Finally, the chair related that when pediatric, OB-GYN, and other practices were asked what the BOH could to make their practices better, all mentioned that there was a need for parenting classes. This is not just a doctor's conversation. The plan is to get together with other agencies in town to develop parenting classes.

Associate Chair for Waste Management

Mr. McMahon read the most recent bills and their costs. (He does this at each meeting.)

He referred to a program called **Recovery Coach Academy**. Here trainees receive 60 hours of education to become eligible for a MA Certified Addiction Recovery Coach. Classes will be held in person at the Swampscott police department beginning in June, once a week for 8 weeks. The first program went well and they are trying to get more to come for this program. This is being done in conjunction with Salem and Swampscott.

Associate Chair for Health

Dr. Ritvo spoke about the recent concerns about the Hanta virus outbreak on a cruise ship with 152 aboard. To date there have been 11 cases with 3 deaths. This variant of the hanta virus is the Andes. The symptoms begin as fever, muscle aches, diarrhea which progresses to pneumonia and respiratory failure. The disease was first seen in the US in 1990 and was associated with rodent droppings. In all there have been 900 cases total in the US. The last outbreak was in 2018 and was quickly contained with infection controls and quarantines. It appears as though contagion can happen with very close respiratory contact. There is no known treatment. The virus has a long incubation period, up to 8 weeks. All the other people onboard have no symptoms currently and are being closely watched - quarantined in a facility or at home. There is no asymptomatic spread. The WHO emphasizes that its spread is very low risk. Unlike the COVID virus, this virus is a known entity, exposures are traceable, and there has been no community spreads.

Otherwise, the other respiratory viruses, COVID, influenza and RSV are declining.

Director's Report

The website/app BLOOM that is available to all MHD residents and employees has been well utilized. There are 108 platform users, 2700 visits to the site, with most looking for mental health therapy. If one signs up, one can have FOUR free mental health visits. The site does provide users help to get access to doctors and appointments. This program has been paid for out of the opioid settlement funds. The percentages of the type of help people are looking for are as follows: 45% personal health, 35% mental/behavioral health, 9% elder services, and 8% coaching. The

information about BLOOM will be put on the police department webpage as well as on the town's website.

The transfer station is in the final stages of completion. Landscaping and striping need to be done. The original cost estimate for the renovation was \$1,590,000 and with the change orders, etc. the final cost was \$1,657,274 which represents 4.25% over the estimate. Mr. Petty discussed some other changes at the transfer station: adding an additional dumpster for quick disposal; moving the camera system to a cloud server; replacing an old shipping container. In the future when there are more funds, the next projects will be the swap shed and siding of the compactor building.

Mr. Petty reviewed the upcoming changes in curbside trash and recycling pickup. This will be for the 8000 residences, single up to four units. Each residence or unit will get its own carts, a 65 gal for trash and a 95 gallon for recycling. The carts are the property of MHD. If carts are damaged, there is no cost for repair, just call the health department. Note - trash or recycling has to be placed in these containers for pickup. These container will be picked up by an automated truck. In Old Town the trash recycling collection will continue to be manual. For properties that have absolutely have no space to store the 65 gallon and 95 gallon carts, they can be replaced with a 35 gallon and 65 gallon cart, but only on a case by case basis. A list is being generated already at the health department. Depending on the results of the CURBSIDE COLLECTION OVERRIDE, if it is not passed, residence will be bill twice a year. There is an "opt out" option: a form must be filled out (available online) asking where you will take your trash. If it is the transfer station, one must buy a facility sticker. There will be fines for illegal dumping. There will be occasions when a resident will need to opt out temporarily and these will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis. There is no "seasonal" opt out option.

Public Comment

A question was asked about who decides how the opioid settlement funds are spent? The town administrator, police chief, fire department chief and the health director decide how the \$5200 is allocated.

A resident brought attention to the BOH about a property, 32 Central Street, an abandoned property that is not being maintained and is the home for raccoons. The raccoons have come over and destroyed some of the resident's property. Mr. Petty is aware and has gone with the building

inspector/commissioner to inspect the property and are sending a letter to the owners to take care of the problems.