



## OBSERVER CORPS REPORT

### **BOARD OF HEALTH – 6-23-25**

Hybrid Meeting- Recorded

LWVM Observer: Tom Krueger

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

**Reorganization:** Mr. Petty initially chaired the meeting in order for the board to select a new chairperson. Dr. Massaro was nominated, seconded, and unanimously elected. He said he was grateful and predicted an interesting year as it would be a transition to a five-member board in the future.

**Meeting Schedule:** Dr. Massaro asked the other board members about the meeting schedule. All agreed to the second Thursday and fourth Monday of the month, meeting at 7:30 pm.

**Meeting Minutes 6/3/25** - meeting minutes were approved with some minor corrections.

### **Community Health/CAHM**

Dr. Massaro said that the survey was “moving along” with a formal contract signed with U Mass Boston group. They are having regular monthly meetings, the next on 6/24, to work on the mechanics and process of the survey. The survey will include 45+ questions, sent to all residents 17 and older. They are hoping to have a 30-40% or higher response rate. The challenge will be getting responses from the younger population who are more likely to answer a digital survey, and to maintain privacy. The next step is to work on the survey questions, hopefully complete by Labor Day, with the survey then going out by November. A presentation of the survey and process will be given to the Select Board. Their endorsement will give the survey “legitimacy” and hopefully increase the response rate.

Dr. Massaro reported that the merger of Marblehead Cares (MHTF) and the Marblehead Counseling Center is proceeding. A group of five has been meeting to facilitate this step. Once the merger is completed what will be the role of the BOH? The board all wished to continue to have a role. Dr. Massaro introduced the concept of “public mental health”, arguing that government has a role for advocating ways for mental health for the town.

Dr. Massaro has talked to the main pediatric care providers for MHD children, Marblehead Pediatrics and Pediatric Associates of Greater Salem. He has asked each what they would like from the BOH/ HD: MHD Pediatrics would like to be made aware of school health issues, and PAGS would like parenting classes taught. (The group then discussed parenting classes in the past, private classes, whether a grant could be obtained, possible regional classes, etc.)

At this point Dr. Massaro posited the major responsibility of the BOH is to clarify, explain, and educate about health issues. He gave out two articles from the Boston Globe, one about how health care is becoming unaffordable, and the other about a VT legislator moving to Canada because of the health system crisis. He went on to say that the public does not understand what the impact of the health system is on the entire larger national system. He noted that the health care budget in the US is much, much larger than the defense budget which all agree is huge. (If the health care expenses of \$5 trillion was a country, it would be the 4th largest.) We, the US, has basically a private system that is much more separate from public health system than anywhere in the world. He feels strongly that “we” cannot over communicate. Transparency is not enough. He would like much more interaction with the public - tell us what you would like the BOH to do - what additional services, explanations, etc. The BOH has an email address (as does each board members), and he wishes ideas and questions, etc. be sent.

As a final item Dr. Massaro wanted to set up an orientation for the board's newest member. For example, it could include a tour of the transfer station to meet all the workers. And have the public health nurse come to meetings to explain their role and what they need from the HD and the board. Mr. Petty will put together the budget schedule, etc.

Mr. McMahon was asked about the project of speakers to talk about their journey from addiction. Unfortunately, he reported that most speakers are “afraid” of public speaking. He plans to use the MHD Cares domain for a website for these topics - many other towns use a similar “town name” Cares for substance abuse issues. Mr. McMahon hopes perhaps the speakers would feel comfortable “writing their story.”

**Bills** - Mr. McMahon read the monthly bills - vendors and bills paid. (Of note LPR cameras are installed and need some final connection. The number of stickers sold so far this year is: 4047 primary, 1411 secondary, and 342 no fee veteran stickers.)

**Transfer Station Plaque** - currently there is no plan for one, perhaps after the renovation is completed.

## **Transfer Station Settlement Explanation from Counsel**

Mr. McMahon wished the board to revisit obtaining an explanation about the transfer station settlement from the town counsel. He noted that Mr. Petty had given an excellent explanation of the capping of the transfer station (with 172 slides), but this was only half of the story. He wanted answers to two questions - (paraphrasing) why did MHD need to enter into litigation with the construction firm? And how did we settle for less than the original amount agreed to? This request was moved, seconded, and passed unanimously.

## **Counseling Center Assistance**

The MCC was not able to get the additional \$60K from the HD, because of budgetary constraints. Mr. McMahon wondered if the MCC could ask for a debt exclusion override to deal with the long waiting list. This is not something they are able to do. He suggested that the MCC come to a board meeting to discuss the costs and how long it would take to deal with this backlog. The board all agreed and plan to have this by January. With this information, Mr. McMahon would go ahead to ask for a debt exclusion override for the necessary funds.

## **Directors Report**

**Japanese knotweed** - is an invasive plant, that looks like bamboo and is extremely difficult to eradicate. It puts out roots and regenerates easily. If it ends up in the loam pile, it can be unwittingly transferred elsewhere. For these reasons, it is actually disposed in the compactor, so goes into the trash. But, there has to be a limit on the amount added.

**Summer Updates** - summer is always a busy season with its particular cautions - namely deer ticks (Lyme and other diseases). He recommended a daily full body check if in grasses, woods, etc. Secondly, there are mosquitoes. MHD participates in the NE Mosquito Control program. MHD is a pesticide free town, and only natural pesticides are used in catch basins. They sample weekly for arboviruses. The most common one is West Nile but over 80% of people have already been exposed. Here it is important to be aware when and where mosquitos are most prevalent and to empty containers that may have collected water to prevent breeding.

**Grants** - Mr. Petty read a list of the grants that MHD receives dollars from: the Public Health Emergency Preparedness Grant, the PH Excellence Grant (a regional grant that provides dollars to supplement health department budgets), Tobacco Control Grant, etc.

**Republic Services** - the labor for the company Republic that picks up the trash is a teamsters union. Their contract ends 6/30 but there has been no progress yet on a new one. If one is not formalized, the trash pickup will be delayed, and pushed to the next day, etc., but the most this can happen is two days. If this does happen, a CODE RED call will be made to all residents to notify them and will also appear on the town website. (Note - residents can still bring trash to the transfer station).

### **Public Comment**

One resident was wondering if the five-member board process was moving along. The MA legislature has to pass it, and then it is “back” to MHD to have an election.

A resident suggested that Dr. Massaro might write a regular column for the newspaper, something he said he is interested in.