



OBSERVER CORPS REPORT

BOARD OF HEALTH – 7-22-25

Hybrid Meeting - Recorded

LWVM Observer: Tom Krueger

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

Director's Report

Update on Republic Strike

Dr. Massaro spoke of how the BOH and HD have been telling the MHD community what they need to and should know about the strike. Mr. McMahon added the bottom line is it's important to be up front and to clear, early and often offer information. The Marblehead Current, in particular, has done a good job of informing the public and all has been very transparent.

With this said, Mr. Petty stated that this is the fourth week of the strike. Republic is sending out two trucks a day for trash removal. The drivers are getting more use to the roads, etc. so the HD is getting many fewer calls and emails. It does not seem as though Republic and the Teamsters are any closer to resolving this. There is so far no mediation date. Mr. Petty said that the HD is sending out CODE RED announcements about what to expect at the beginning and end of each week. Mr. McMahon has been handling many of the questions, etc. that are asked online.

The trucks work from 7am to 5 pm, but the workers are limited to working 60 hr/wk. (Note - the workers are flown in from other parts of the country, work for 2 weeks, some stay, etc.) The trucks can come at any time of day. If a street has been missed, then this added to the workload the next day. Some small trucks operated by the DPW have been doing some of the pickups. Mr. Petty reiterated how lucky MHD is to have a transfer station, and helpful and cheerful employees. They start the day early and end late.

As for recycling, this can be brought up the Transfer Station where Waste Management has been carting away the 65 ton totters 2-4 times a day. The totters fill up quickly, but whatever can't go in is placed near the totters to be loaded when an empty one is returned.

As to the repeat question that has been asked, "can you extend the hours", Mr. Petty replied that they don't have the capacity, they are working 6 days/wk. and just can't "grab anyone." The hours are what they are.

As to the crux of the strike, it is about wages. For perspective, trash/waste workers in Boston get \$51/hr., whereas Republic workers receive \$39/hr. The Teamsters are asking for \$46/hr. for their workers, as a form of equity. Republic would like all drivers on the same rate, but not necessarily the rate of Boston. Note that the current contract with Republic has been a losing one for them because they “own” the recycling for which they are losing money. Five other municipalities have filed a suit with Republic just asking for the trash to be picked up. (These municipalities have no options, e.g., transfer stations.) MHD decided not to join this suit. MHD has not paid its most recent “bill” to Republic and will look to see what can “be taken off.”

Mr. Petty wanted to remind residents to put out trash ONLY, not recycling. This should be in a tied bag, in a barrel with a tight-fitting lid. Loose trash will not be taken. (Remember any MHD resident can bring excess trash and “weight and pay.”) The maximum weight has to be less than 50 lbs. If there is an issue, call the Health Department (781-631-0212). As stated before if there is a “one off” missed trash, they will come out to get it.

As for scofflaws, one Saturday Mr. McMahon was at the TS from 7:30-12 checking for MHD residency and didn’t find any non-residents. In the near future, the license plate reader, LPR, will be operational. As cars enter from the Green Street entrance, the LPR will read the front and rear plate, signal to the attendant a “green”, and otherwise “call out” the license plate so the attendant can go out and see.

The board entertained some questions from the audience. What has happened to the recycling? Has it gone up? Mr. Petty said it is about 100% more and a significant increase with what bins are available and how much can be compressed. Cardboard, paper and metal don’t compress well. These bins can fill in a few hours and then need to be switched out, but they have allowed all recycling to come out even 4-5 feet. He said that recycling is not solid waste so is not a public health concern.

Chair’s Report - update organizational chart

Dr. Massaro had proposed last year, and it was enacted, that there be an associate chair for community health and one for waste. He said that he would like to continue this practice and the other board members agreed. Dr. Ritvo was nominated and confirmed as associate chair of community health and Mr. McMahon, of waste.

Community Health/CAHM

Dr. Massaro and Mr. Petty have continued to meeting with the UMass Boston group with the task of devising the 45 questions for the survey. This hopefully will be done mid-August. The timeline is to have the survey out be 9/15-16 and back by the second week of October. When the surveys are back, UMass Boston will analyze the data, working through the holidays, with preliminary results by the first quarter of 2026. From the results, key areas of interest will be gleaned, and focus groups (probably four) of 10-15 people who know about a key interest will be formed. Their feedback will become part of the full report. By the end of the first quarter of 2026 a robust report will be ready to present to the town. By the second quarter before Town

Meeting open sessions can hear what we learned, what is of value to the town. With that, a leadership group from MHD could present options and as to what should we do about it.

The logistics, therefore, are to mail a card to all residents 18 and over to answer the survey questions digitally, on paper, or over the phone. The survey will be available for about 3 weeks, from late September to October. It will take about 15 minutes to complete, and hopefully there will be a 30% or higher response rate. Press releases in the paper, road signs, etc. will publicize the survey. The hardest group to get to respond are the 18-30 year olds - perhaps the YMCA can serve as a site.

Seminars on "American Health System and the Role of Public Health

Dr. Massaro started this discussion by noting that the American people spend \$5 trillion dollars a year on health care. If this were a country, it would have the GDP of the third largest, larger than all of Germany's 80 million people. Yet we need to understand our health system better. \$1.4 trillion goes into private health care where the "medical loss ratio", the amount spent on administrative costs is 12-20% of the premiums. Dr. Massaro offered to give 2-4 seminars, and Dr. Ritvo possibly some, on our health system, including Medicare with its A, B, C, D parts, its difference from Medicaid, etc.

Mr. McMahon opined that often doctors who order the tests don't know the cost. And the ordinary citizen has no idea of what health insurance actually costs - they know their premiums but not what their employer might be paying.

The next BOH meeting is scheduled for 8/12/25.