



OBSERVER CORPS REPORT

BOARD OF HEALTH- 7-9-24

Hybrid Meeting - Recorded

LWVM Observer: Tom Krueger

Members in Attendance: Andrew Petty, Tom McMahon, Tom Massaro, Helaine Hazlett

Mr. Petty opened the meeting as chair because after the Town election each year the Board votes on a new chair. Prior to the first order of business of reorganization a motion was made to have the YWCA representatives speak first. This motion was seconded and passed in a 2-1 vote.

AGENDA

YWCA Northeast Massachusetts

Three members of the YWCA rape crisis center based in Lynn and who support 29 towns in the areas came to present the services they offer. They provide support for all victims age 12 or older, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and work with all the regional hospitals (Salem, Beverly, Addison-Gilbert, etc.) At the hospitals where the survivor evidence is collected, they provide emotional support and guidance. They accept the survivor's story and use an empowerment model. Counseling is their main service via in-person, zoom, phone, whatever works best.

In addition to direct survivor support and counseling they work with schools on prevention, giving presentations to students from freshman to seniors. They talk about healthy relationships, boundaries, types and signs of abuse, types of sexual violence and resources. Their goal is to educate society and support survivors. This is at no cost to the school.

The board and Mr. Petty had a number of questions and comments. Mr. Petty asked the group to send him their information so he could put this on the HD website. There was a question about what constitutes evidence collection - there are 17-21 steps and include swabs, DNA collection, pattern of bruising, STD treatment, etc. All ERs in the area are trained to collect this evidence. A further question was about the difference between their agency and HAWC - they deal with sexual violence, HAWC with domestic violence, but both are interwoven. Another question was about their funding - their funds come from the MA Department of Public Health.

Reorganization

Before nominating and voting a new chair for the BOH this year, Dr. Massaro spoke noting this will be an exciting year ahead. He sees two major issues for the year - the completion of the transfer station renovation and preparing for the expansion of the BOH from three to five members. He views this year as making steps towards that future. As a relative new-comer to town he is impressed with the self-governing in MHD and the volunteerism, and lauded Ms. Hazlett as being an exceptional volunteer. He noted that in conversations before he became a board member that neither he nor Mr. McMahon wished to be chair - he, Dr. Massaro did not feel ready yet as he had a lot to learn about MHD first. He felt Ms. Hazlett should continue as chair as she has the knowledge of the board and other town boards.

Dr. Massaro went on to further to explain that as the board went from a three to five persons, he felt that there should be smaller subcommittees, each with a vice chair. He proposed one committee deal with community health and the other with environmental issues.

Mr. Massaro formerly nominated Ms. Hazlett who seconded her nomination. Prior to the vote, Mr. McMahon made a statement saying that he had felt unappreciated and obstructed on the board this past year and felt that the chair had been putting self above community. He then went on to list five areas where he felt he had been obstructed but each of the issues had been advantageous - a new trailer at the transfers station, an improved website, transparency with spending, speakers for substance abuse, and more funding for the Marblehead Counseling Center.

Dr. Massaro then said he hoped we could get by last year. He noted that public health had suffered during the pandemic, and it is clear public health is a local issue. Marblehead has an opportunity to be a leader.

Subsequently Ms. Hazlett was voted in as chair in a 2-1 vote. It was decided by motion and vote that Dr. Massaro would be vice chair of community health and Mr. McMahon as vice chair of environmental issues (e.g transfer station, etc.)

Mental Health Task Force Update

Dr. Massaro gave a brief update. Ms. Miller previously had reported on the presentation of the NAN project (a mental health awareness and suicide prevention program) at the June meeting. The MHTF had a table at the recent Wellness Fair hosted by the MCC (its 55th anniversary). The turnout was good. The next meeting of the MHTF is in August. Mark Libon is now chair.

Review of Mission Statement and Role of Board of Health and Department of Public Health

Dr. Massaro suggested delaying this formal document for now. There was more work to be done about the role of the Health Department vis a vis the Board of Health. Some discussion ensued about the current statement, and it was agreed that Mr. Petty would pass along what other towns and cities have done to the board members for further discussion.

Wellness Fair

Mr. McMahon and Mr. Petty discussed the when and where this might take place. January seemed to be a good time and the Community Center would be a good place. Mr. Petty will explore this with Lisa Hooper of Community Center and Park and Rec. The idea would be to combine both physical and mental health aspects.

Substance Abuse

Mr. McMahon and Mr. Petty discussed the planning for substance abuse speakers. It was felt that mid-November would be a good time and hopefully to use the high school auditorium as it is a good setup yet intimate enough. Mr. Petty will talk with the school about possible arrangements.

On a different issue a question was brought up about opioid settlement money given then Supreme Court's recent decision. So far what money the Health Department has has been spent on narcotic rescue kits.

Directors Report

1. Transfer Station Update

Mr. Petty gave a number of updates - there is a flag disposal box at the TS; there is a waste oil tank there; many of the components for the TS renovation are on site and by purchasing these directly there is a 10% cost saving versus via a contractor. Further work is proceeding on work and architecture value engineering, hoping to trim costs. Prefabricated structures as for the swap shed, transaction hut, etc. are being explored, offering additional savings versus building on site. Scheduling when to put the project out for rebid is tentatively set for October. Many contractors are already busy and summer is a very busy time at the TS. Mr. Petty has discussed with possible contractors about getting appropriate state certification to do this municipal work. That process is complicated and lengthy (60-90 days processing.)

2. Processing Bills

Mr. Petty and the board discussed how they wanted to process and sign the bills coming to the HD - do they want to see each individual receipt, do they want to see it on a spreadsheet, do they want to go to the office to sign each bill, do they want the chair to sign, do they want to use "docu-sign", etc.

3. Bathing Beaches

The five MHD beaches are tested each Wednesday and the results are available by Thursday and posted on the MA state website. When you get to the MHD town website, you will be directed to the MA site where you can enter the name of beach for a result. This is the most efficient way to find out.

4. Budget FY26

Mr. Petty stated the FY26 budget process is starting early and initial budgets are due back by September. This is a lengthy process and work is done in conjunction with the Finance Committee, and when that is completed with return to the BOH for discussion and vote. A major issue will be the cost of waste collection: there are two years left on the current contract and the next contract will see a sizable increase. Mr. Petty is looking across the state for the best solution. A 1% increase of the HD budget

“won’t work” because of employee contracts and the cost of waste removal. The community needs to know the consequences of this and what fees would have to rise.

New Business

Ms. Hazlett commented on the recent Surgeon Generals warnings about the harms of social media and the possible role of the BOH addressing this.

Public Comment

One resident liked the flag box, suggested a discussion with a vocational school about building a mini shed. A second resident asked about how the opioid settlement money was being spent - Mr. Petty responded the Select Board has set up a committee as to how the money would be spent. Mr. Petty offered the idea of putting out a survey to residents and how much this would cost. A third resident discussed a pilot program with a HAWC liaison. A fourth resident, one from the school committee, discussed how the school board reviews and signs bills