



## OBSERVER CORPS REPORT

### **BOARD OF HEALTH 9-29-25**

Hybrid Meeting, Recorded

LWVM Observer: Tom Krueger

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

Approval of minutes - the minutes of 7/10/25, 7/22/25 and 8/13/25 were approved

### **Community Health Assessment Marblehead (CAHM)**

Dr. Massaro reported on the progress of the CAHM. The primary researcher from UMB, Dr. Caitlyn Coyle made a presentation to the Select Board on 9/24. She discussed all the general goals of the study - assessing the health and well of MHD, how it will inform strategic planning, provide data for all the stakeholders, and act as a baseline for documenting progress and future projects. Much attention was directed toward the privacy and security of the data.

On 9/29 16,739 postcards asking people to fill out the survey were sent to all MHD voting members and students >18 years old. Seventeen percent of this population are 18-29 years old. This can be a challenging group to get replies from as they are off at college, out of town, etc. Dr. Massaro stated that they would like to get back at least 5-6,000 surveys. In hopes of increasing participation, he shared two different flyers that were created (one by the COA and the other by Jack Attridge). This can be printed on 8x11 paper, and distributed at the YMCA, COA, and other places (JCC, etc.) houses of worship). In addition, Mr. Petty said that 12 plastic mounted posters have already been made and more could be done. A banner about the survey will be hung by the MMLD over Tedesco Street during October. There will be ads in both MHD newspapers.

The hope is that the returns will come in the next 3 weeks, but this time frame may have to be extended. He will be meeting with Dr. Coyle on 10/8 to see how it is going. With surveys there is usually an initial good return and then it tails off. As this might happen, Mr. Petty has a large Listserv to remind people as well as the use of the reverse CODE RED.

Dr. Massaro hopes that this survey will be taken very seriously. He is basically saying “tell us what you want us (BOH, HD) do for you.”

Dr. Massaro shared some of the slides that were used in the presentation. One showing the links among wellness, emotion, spirit, mindfulness, connection, environment, and purpose - the multiple areas of life. Another slide addressed why you should complete the survey: a) be heard, b) be part of the solution, c) it only takes a few minutes (10-12 minutes), and d) support your neighbor. There was also a slide that addressed the security and privacy - a) responses are anonymous, b) data is collected on a password protected platform which is on the UMB server, c) only UMB researchers have access to this data, d) no raw data will be shared with HD or BOH, and e) the reports with aggregated data will be made public. Interestingly, these results can be linked to other data that is already collected at the state level. MA does a “healthy aging community profile” on every town.

The data will hopefully be available by Thanksgiving time and preliminary analysis by early 2026.

### **Charter Commission**

Dr. Massaro gave a brief update. The HD/BOH were only 1 or 2 of the 68 departments, etc. that were “fine” with Draft B. He also announced that there could be a delay if this passed at Town Meeting and then sent to the MA legislature. The timing is such that one legislative term ends and another begins with elections, new committees, etc. All this means it could not be until 2028 before it could come back to the MHD Town meeting.

### **Community response to recent tragedy**

Mr. McMahon will be meeting soon with members of the school committee, Select Board, Park & Rec to discuss ideas to prevent further tragedies. Some of the potential ideas include: curfew for driving (12am-5am) for under 18 years olds, reviving a program from long ago whereby an impaired student could call another to drive them (a safe driver program), and perhaps educating students with a “Arrive Alive” simulator. This device simulates what it’s like to drive impaired which each participant (student) able to experience the effects. There is a company that comes to the site and runs it. For MHD if all the high school and 7th and 8th grade students participated, it would run for 9 days at a cost of \$22, 500. Further discussion was about potential funding sources.

Dr. Massaro talked about a webinar he recently viewed on cannabis. (He will get the slides for the next meeting.). He noted that the cannabis industry is using the same tactics that the tobacco and alcohol industry used: it’s not addictive, it doesn’t cause

problems, etc. There is no national oversight, and no state has looked at the consequences of cannabis. Even doctors have little information about the consequences.

### **Community Health Update**

Dr. Ritvo discussed the confusion about the COVID vaccinations for '25-26. She noted that the members of CDC ACIP (Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices) were all replaced many without health expertise and some were "anti-vaccers". They shifted from broad recommendations to an individual approach, with no new evidence. MA DPH, however, took clear steps by stating that all those eligible persons can to be vaccinated and not requiring a prescription. The MA DPH aligned its recommendations with the professional doctors' organizations - AAP, AAFP and ACOG. This also reflects the consensus of the NE Public health collaborative which includes CT, ME, NY, RI, PY, MA and others. The recommendations are for all those > 18 and especially those >65 to be vaccinated; infants 6-23 months; 2-18 on a risk-based approach, and all pregnant women in order to confer immunity for their baby in the first 6 months.

### **Transfer Station**

Mr. Petty reported that the transfer station renovation consisting of a new scale house, site work, moving the scale to its permanent location, and other work has now been put out to bid. The bids were received and the winning amount is \$1,590,000 from Deiulis Brothers of Lynn. The second bid that was made was for \$1,708,435. The board moved and approved taking this bid.

The project will require some disruption and down-time, but this will be primarily felt by the commercial business. While the pit is "down", the trash will be taken directly to Resco. The project will begin with concrete work this fall, and construction of the building will be during the winter. When this is all done, attention will be paid to a new swap shed and the feasibility of sorting demolition and construction material on site.

### **Trash/Recycling**

Mr. Petty turned the discussion about the future curbside trash and recycling changes looming ahead. Currently, each household is allowed a 65-gallon toter or 2 x 35 gallon toters for trash. (All trash has to be bagged, in the container, which has to have a tight lid. All this to prevent tip-over and rodents.) Also, currently, with recycling there is no limit to the amount. He reminded all that there should be no waste in the recycling. (There are Recycle Smart stickers.) Recycling should NOT be bagged. The reason why this was possible was that in the previous contract (which will expire September 2026) Republic was responsible for all the recycling. MHD does about 3000 tons of recycling

per year. In the future MHD will have to pay for recycling at \$80-90/ton and this will be added to any new contract.

This discussion is all leading to each residence having a standard barrel size, 65 gallons each for trash and recycling. The HD would buy these in bulk, one of each for the 8000 households in MHD at a cost of \$900K that could be paid for over 5 years. (Buying in bulk greatly reduces the cost of each container to ~\$50 versus \$100 that one might pay at Home Depot. Additionally, each could be RFID tagged, so it would be known who owns a container.) Using these standardized barrels would allow a truck with one driver using an automated arm to load, resulting in a saving of having one not two workers. The other benefit is that the town would know exactly how much the cost of curbside trash and recycling would be.

Further discussion was about the separate needs of the historic parts of town where such a system would not work because of narrow streets, etc. Clearly, these areas would have collections as it currently is done. Some discussion was about every other week collection of recycling as happened during the final weeks of the strike. (This would result in some significant savings.) Salem does every other week collection successfully. Other thoughts were about the recycling that business currently put out. For now, it hasn't mattered to MHD since Republic "owned" that. This would have to change with any new contract. Also, it is important that only recycling be put in recycling. Companies use optical scanners and if they see more than 5% trash in the recycling, it is charged as trash \$130 versus recycling at \$80.

When asked about whether or not the Finance Committee is aware of the upcoming changes, he said they were. The costs of trash and recycling is currently ~\$1M and will likely jump to \$1.6-1.7M with any new contract. Mr. Petty is going to put out an RFP with a list of options and can price accordingly. Mr. McMahon noted that there is oftentimes initial resistance to change, and both he and Mr. Petty stressed the need for public input. An RFP will have to go out soon, as companies need almost a year's lead time to obtain trucks, employees, etc. Mr. Petty again addressed the question of why doesn't MHD just do this itself. He reiterated that the costs (truckers, employees, heavy work -> employees out, etc.) were just too high. Finally, Mr. Petty is looking at qualified companies, big and small, who can do this work.

## **Q and A**

A question was asked about the need to increase the HD budget. Yes, absolutely and this can't be done by an override, because if such an override was voted down, there would be no trash collection. Trash and recycling are all covered by taxes.

Another question concerned the amount Republic was paid as a result of the strike. The regular bill \$84K and Mr. Petty is cutting that in half and also adding in costs of non pickup. He will be paying \$34K.

As for a new contract Mr. Petty is looking at the best he can get, i.e., a 3-year contract with a 2-year extension. The reason that is the best is that all the landfills in MA will be closed by 2030. NH and ME already ban out of state dumping.