



OBSERVER REPORT

Board of Health: 12/22/20 League Observer - Thomas Krueger
Members in Attendance via Zoom : Andrew Petty, Todd Belf-Becker, Sec. Andrea Flaxer,
Michelle Gottlieb, Helaine Hazlett

Meeting Posted 48 hrs in advance
Meeting held in a Handicapped Accessible Location - not applicable
Public allow to Participate in the Meeting - yes via Zoom.

COVID UPDATE:

Andrew began his COVID report with a summary of Governor Baker's most recent (12/22/20) COVID -19 Order No. 59. With the fact that COVID spreads mainly by person-to-person (PTP) contact and in order to slow the spread social distancing and minimizing personal contact in large groups is necessary, the order restricts all non-essential PTP contact outside the home. This is in response to the large increases in cases (as of 12/22 65.1/100,000; average daily 4073 (vs. 1837 on 11/8)) and hospitalizations (doubling from 986 to 1991 from Thanksgiving to now). Effective 12/26/20 at 12:01am, most industries (restaurants, theaters, casinos, office space, place of worship, retail, libraries, lodging, museums, fitness centers and health clubs, etc.) will be subject to a 25% capacity limit. (Workers and staff do not count toward the occupancy count. And all other rules and restrictions in each sector remain in effect.)

In addition, also beginning on 12/26 the gathering limits will be instituted. Indoor gatherings are limited to 10 people; outdoor gatherings, to 25 people. These limits apply to private homes, event venues, and public spaces. These limits are enforceable as was outlined in Orders 57 and 58.

In Marblehead the statistics for COVID from 12/18/20 are as follows: total cases to date = 558 (503 on 12/11, 441 on 12/4), so 117 new cases in the past 2 weeks. The age breakdown of cases from 12/3-12/17/20 are on the town website marblehead.org. Active cases = 81; confirmed deaths =31; total tests done in past 14 days = 3031, with a positive rate =4.32%; average incidence rate = 45/100,000. Currently Marblehead is still in the yellow range. Also on <https://www.marblehead.org/sites/g/files/vyhlf4661/f/uploads/casereporting39.pdf> (where the case reporting is) is a reminder about wearing masks, safe holiday practices (limiting gathering size, postponing/canceling travel, monitoring for symptoms, testing, safe gathering practices, etc.) In addition there are travel guidelines of self quarantining for 14 days upon entering/returning from out of state or producing a negative COVID test. For those who have been in contact with a COVID case, they must self-quarantining and monitor for symptoms.

Andrew noted again that the website [mass.gov](https://www.mass.gov) is replete with daily COVID statistics, cases, ages, regional hospital capacity, etc. There are also suggestions for alternative ways to celebrate the holidays.

Regarding COVID vaccinations, Governor Baker gave updates about the availability and guidelines for administration. On 12/21 MA got 5,850 doses of the Pfizer vaccine that went to four hospitals. On 12/22 an additional 53,520 doses arrived going to 17 hospitals. It is anticipated that MA will get 180,000 Pfizer doses and 120,000 Moderna doses in the beginning. MA DPH places the orders which are then shipped to hospitals and other sites. As doses are administered, they will be reported to DPH who will publish a public dashboard. The vaccinations will be given in a phased program - Phase 1 Dec-Feb, Phase 2 Feb-Apr, and Phase 3, April to June. On the [mass.gov](https://www.mass.gov) website is a section giving the criteria for who will get the vaccine in each phase. Currently, front line essential workers are in Phase 1, including health professionals, police, fire, EMT, and grocery personnel. (See <https://www.mass.gov/covid-19-vaccine-in-massachusetts>)

In MHD, the HD will be getting the Moderna vaccine, as it does not require ultra cold storage. The first group to be vaccinated will be first responders and will be done via a vaccination clinic (200+). The vaccinees will be divided into groups A and B, and vaccinated on different days, so that any side effects of one group won't affect the functioning of town. The staffing for these vaccinations will include the HD and nurses from neighboring communities. These vaccinations will be entered into a database (the logistics of which needs to be up and running) and second doses will be administered 21-28 days later. It is hoped that vaccinations can start by the second or third week of January.

Because of the increase in case load in MHD 10-12 cases/day has overwhelmed the MHD public health nurses, CTC (a state wide contact tracing group) has begun to help. Their help will be even more needed as the nurses will also be doing vaccinations. With the exploding case loads, it can take 24-48 hours to be contacted by the HD or CTC.

The testing done on the four dates in MHD by Cataldo Ambulance went well, testing 1600 individuals. No further dates are scheduled as the HD had to use any funds available via the CARES act by 12/30 when the funding would stop. (The recent bill passed but not signed would extend the CARES act to 12/31/21. If the funding comes through, the HD would get \$30,000 for the feds, and a MA allocation of \$18,000 to be used by 6/30/21. This would pay for a full time inspector and public health nurse.)

REOPENING COMMITTEE

Helaine reported that the committee met 12/21 - Andrew also attended - and the discussion was where we are now and where we are going the first week after vacation. The schools are maintaining the 6 feet distancing and don't expect to "shut" unless MHD becomes a RED town. As has been noted most of the spread of COVID has been out of the school. Absentee rate needs to be followed both for students and teachers. Policies can change day to day and even building by building. (At the meeting Andrew addressed the parent concern about identifying staff or students who are positive. This is not done for many reasons, starting with HIPPA regulations.)

Winter sports teams began practice on 12/18 and will continue the current week and through vacation. If a member of a team become COVID positive, the entire team will need to go into

quarantine. It is the school department's purview to make decisions and the health department acts as an advisor.

Food service continues to provide meals for all students and families in the school system. Next week, bulk meals (meals for the entire week) can be picked up during the remote and vacation weeks. (Andrew noted that for food security issues, the MHD food bank and other local resources are available, as well as information on [mass.gov](https://www.mass.gov).)

The reopening committee plans to meet weekly through until June:

COMMUNITY QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS

1. Why don't the COVID case count numbers generated by the state match those by MHD HD? Both use the MAVEN database, but the discrepancy arise from the fact that the state "pulls" their data on Wednesday morning and MHD HD, on Thursday morning. Both try to "clean" the data to avoid any duplication, etc.
2. When contact tracing is done and a phone call is placed, is a second call made if the phone is not answered? All are attempted to be contacted in 24-48 hours, but often calls aren't picked up as it is often an unknown caller's number that appears. A message is left, but a second call is not done. (Andrew also mentioned another issue that occurs: some don't want to give any information or allow others in the household to be talked to. Fortunately, these are few.)
3. Michelle was exploring the possibility of a student or volunteer or health information analyst from Northeastern to take the COVID data and show it an easy to understand visual way. This data would be gathered from MAVEN but would have no names, etc. associated with it.
4. Sarah Gold from the School Committee wished to clarify that the schools do make the decisions about sports, but the HD has the ultimate call. Teams can't play against other town's teams that have been in the red zone for 3 weeks. She reiterated that they are trying to avoid any massive school shutdowns. The school nurses are saying that contact tracing from the schools is going well.
5. Michelle highlighted that Jodi Smith was starting a column in the Reporter called Mask UP, a place where people could submit a picture with their mask and a profile of why they wear their mask. Send your submission to with Andrew or Michelle.