



Observer Corps Report Form

Board of Health- 8/25/20 League Observer - Thomas Krueger

Members in Attendance via Zoom : BOH : Andrew Petty, Todd Belf-Becker, Helaine Hazlett , Sec. Andrea Flaxer, Michelle Gottlieb,

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.

Summary of Agenda Items:

Approving minutes: minutes from BOH meetings 5/28/20 to 8/11/20 were amended where appropriate and approved.

COVID 19 UPDATE: Andrew presented the update as follows for cases in MHD: 262 confirmed cases, < 5 active cases, and 32 deaths (active cases and deaths unchanged in number.). Andrew said that the State is reviewing death records as to whether COVID is primary and secondary cause, etc. and then comparing this to MHD statistics. MHD only looks at its death records with COVID as a primary and secondary cause. There are some discrepancies that can occur as the State records confirmed and probable causes, whereas MHD records confirmed causes. The death rates as determined by the State are then listed per 100,000 so that the statistics can be compared with other towns and cities. There is always the possibility of confusion about reporting as a case may arise in MHD by a nonresident and not be reported for MHD but by the non-resident's home. The "take away" is that the statistics that the State records may vary from those of MHD; it is not an "apple to apple" comparison.

Andrew again stress the need for constant vigilance as community transmission continues; this requires the need to continue social distancing, wearing facial coverings, hand washing, etc. He stressed changing surgical masks often, hand washing when coming home, etc. There are much higher rates in some of the surrounding communities, e.g., Lynn, and that workers from these towns come to MHD.

If someone has a COVID complaint to lodge, it can be emailed to the Health Department or sent MA attorney general's office who will relay the complaint back. A health inspector and a police officer investigate these once a week, often a restaurant, the beach, etc. They have seen some very good and some poor compliance, necessitating reminding staff to be vigilant.

A discussion then followed about masks: 1) Masks with Valves are NOT recommended as the valves can release respiratory droplets, a source of Covid transmission. 2) Gaiters - there have been some conflicting studies - some showing poor protection and others, that they are the equivalent of a mask. Some of the discrepancy may come from the material used in the gaiter and whether it is one or two-ply.

REOPENING SCHOOLS:

Helaine has been attending the meeting, the last on 8/17/20. At that time the following timeline was presented:

Pre-K to start 9/14 - in person

K to first to start 9/21 - in person

2nd grade to start 9/28 - in person

Grades 3-12 will begin remotely and on 10/5 move to the hybrid model, whereby cohort A will attend Monday and Thursday, and cohort B, Tuesdays and Fridays.

Various committees are continuing to meet: custodial addressing PPE and air quality; technology addressing distancing learning devices, currently trying to secure enough Chromebooks; teacher/learning specialist with a subcommittee for students social and emotional needs.

Other actions included: a survey returned by 2650 people, with less than 10% wanting total remote learning. The superintendent has held numerous listening sessions.

Andrew participated in school walk-through with special attention to air exchange in the classrooms. While table or pedestal fans are not recommended, a number of other solutions depending on the building design of the classroom are going to be implemented - from opening windows, to installing micron trapping filters, etc. There are sinks in the classroom for children to wash hands, but no water fountains because of possible transmission from improper use. Water will be supplied to the children. Masks are to be worn at all time in school, and water will be drunk during mask breaks. Masks are required for all 2nd graders and above and preK and 1st graders are strongly encouraged to if they can. (The CDC recommendation is for anyone >2 to wear a mask, unless there is a medical reason not to.) If a student is in the school medical waiting room, they must wear a N95 mask. Other operational issues include no lines inside the school before school start.

Much discussion and information then followed about the newest guidelines from MA DESE (Department of Elementary and Secondary Education). One particularly difficult one was the definition of a "close contact (CC)". The new guideline stated that CC is one who has been within 6 feet, for 15 minutes or more, 2 days prior to the onset of symptoms or a positive test. At this point it would be likely the classroom would be put on quarantine. This guideline varies from the CDC of 10-15 minutes, and the 10-15 minutes need not be continuous, but in briefer periods. This raised a number of responses including the congregating of children in lines or on their way to school, and how one would know who was a CC. Another DESE guideline change was for the return to school: CC must quarantine for 14 days even if they have a negative test. For a symptomatic individual, they may return if they have had no fever > 24 hours (without taking an antipyretic), and a negative test. If they are not tested, then they can return after 10 days and no fever. (Needless to say, these recommendations raised much discussion and concern.)

In addition, the CDC updated the definition of a fever from 100.4 F or higher to 100.0 or higher. Andrew pointed out that everyone's body temperature can be different, so that if one's normal temperature is 97.8, a rise of 1.5 degrees, could still be a fever but below the 100 or 100.4 threshold. He felt it was important for each person to know what their normal body temperature is.

Another guideline is that all students, pre-K to high school, remote or in class, MUST be vaccinated for influenza, again unless medically excluded.

If MHD should have an “outbreak” - defined as 2 or more cases of students or teachers in a classroom within 14 days, or if >3% of a grade or a school are positive within 14 days - the State will send a “rapid response test team” to the school, as they did for the long term care facilities.

A motion was made to the BOH regarding students who do not wear masks to school or in school, a mask will be provided to them by school to don, and if this is not done, the student will be dismissed. Those exempt are some special needs students but only if documented by a medical provider. This needs to be a written document. The motion above was seconded and approved. A second motion was made approved by the BOH regarding excluding mask with valves from being worn. As the “jury is still out” regarding gaiters, no recommendations were made regarding them.

Note that these motions only apply to MHD schools and not private schools or the YMCA as per orders from the governor. The BOH has been working with the MHD school department at the school department’s request.

One resident brought up a lengthy discussion about what is the purview of the Health Department and BOH. There are conflicting authorities about many of the policies. For example, when the governor inks an order, this can’t be superseded by the HD or BOH. Regarding schools, DESE has left decisions up to the local BOH and school departments. The resident felt that the guidelines, etc. should apply to a community at large, including private schools, YMCA, etc. Andrew said that doing so would require a different process, an order, that would require 14 days of advertising, etc. Andrew did feel as he has stated before that more orders and guideline should come from the top-down. The resident mentioned that the above was part of a larger question about decisions, and wonder about the metrics that would be used as when a school stays open or closes. He was frustrated that this was not determined in advance.

OTHER: A resident came to the BOH with her concern that on Primary Day there would be people standing in front of her property with signs, some smoking. It is legal to hold signs at a distance from a polling place. This is not the purview of the HD, and she was referred to the Town Clerk

The meeting was adjourned and the next to be on 9/9/20 at 7:30 via Zoom teleconferencing.