

WESTON BOARD OF HEALTH
Meeting Minutes for
Wednesday, January 12, 2022
10:04 AM – 11:43 AM
Zoom Meeting

Present: Laura Azzam - Chair
Dr. David Kominz - Member
Dr. Jennifer Kickham - Member
Michele Fronk Schuckel MBA, BSN, RN – COVID-19 Response Manager, BOH Public Health Nurse
Kelly Pawluczzonek, RS, MS - Public Health Director
Michelle Hubbard – Administrative Assistant, Meeting Minutes

I. Residents' Concerns

No resident concerns unrelated to agenda items.

II. 60 North Avenue – Ted Doucette – Request a Variance from MA DEP Title 5-310 CMR 15.211 - Setbacks

Kelly Pawluczzonek spoke about the failing septic system at 60 North Avenue. There is a catch basin that is an open subsurface drain to the tributary to a surface water supply. Because this exists, the homeowner must be 200 feet away from that per Massachusetts State Code. Due to some high groundwater issues, ledge, and some other factors in the back of the house, they are proposing a repair of the system that is going to be no less than 60 feet from that manhole cover. The homeowner originally wanted to upgrade and construct an addition to his house and create another bedroom, however, because he needs this variance, he is restricted to only the repair. He will stay with the repair, and keep it a 3-bedroom septic system. The original septic system was a septic tank to a leech pit, and this will be a septic tank to a full system. He is proposing and Innovative Alternative System which is the chambers, but there is no operational maintenance for the chambers. The I/A System does decrease the system, which is allowed through the approval under MA DEP. They are requesting the variance to be closer to the open surface drain to be no less than 60 feet. The plan shows 65 feet. The Cambridge Water Supply is happy with the system that has been proposed because the flow will not be increased. A discussion was had with the Board members about specific issues on the lot, why the repair needs to be done, and the location of the tank on the property. Kelly recommends that the variance be approved.

Dr. Jennifer Kickham made a motion to approve the variance as long as another bedroom is not added. Dr. David Kominz seconds the motion. All in favor, the motion is carried.

III. 47 Whitney Tavern – Rescind Bedroom Deed Restriction

There is currently a deed restriction for 47 Whitney Tavern from 2016 restricting the home to 3 bedrooms. They have since updated the system to meet new construction and accommodate a fourth bedroom. Working with Town Council, a release of the restriction was drafted so that the property and property owner are no longer restricted to 3 bedrooms. Town Council is looking for signatures from the Board members. Questions were asked about the previous system compared to the current system, and all were answered by Kelly Pawluczonek.

Dr. David Kominz made a motion to rescind the deed restriction. Dr. Jennifer Kickham seconds the motion. All in favor, the motion is carried. All members will sign off on the paperwork to rescind the restriction.

IV. COVID-19 Report/Update – Michele Fronk Schuckel, MBA, BSN, RN

Case rates are extremely high right now. Mass DPH Lead Epidemiologist Dr. Katherine Brown said “We are moving to a model of personal responsibility and best practices for risk reduction, COVID-19 is here to stay, and we have the tools to reduce risk and live with this virus.” The Omicron variant arrived faster and moved more quickly around the globe than anyone thought was possible. As of December 27, it has been assumed that if a person has tested positive, it is likely the Omicron variant. There is increased evidence that this is a milder version of COVID-19 because it does not attack lung tissue in the same way with most patients. More people infected, though, means more people will have severe disease and the hospitalization numbers will be higher. On Monday January 10, Massachusetts changed the way hospitalizations are classified. They are trying to show the people who are hospitalized for COVID-19, rather than people who are hospitalized and have COVID-19. Those currently hospitalized with Omicron appear to be younger and are less likely to have chronic ailments. There is no data showing this is a “cold like” virus. The risk and prevention strategies that have been put in place mean that it remains preventable, and that prevention efforts are worth continuing. Reinfection after infection with Delta, even within the 90 days, is occurring and we are getting data on how often that is happening. The incubation period is shorter than with Delta and other variants, being between one and three days.

Antigen tests are less sensitive than PCR tests and are most likely to be negative early and late in disease. A positive result indicates likely infection and should be assumed to be positive. A negative result when someone is symptomatic should trigger a follow up PCR or another antigen test within 24-48 hours. If you expect a positive (exposed and/or symptomatic) and get a negative, follow up with a PCR or the second test in the box. Self-tests are not official test results for specific scenarios such as traveling. The Baker-Polito Administration announced January 11 that an order was placed with iHealth to supply the state with 26 million rapid antigen tests over the next 3 months. The tests will be prioritized to support K-12 schools and childcare settings. The shipments of tests

will arrive on a rolling basis in the Commonwealth, but the timing and shipments will vary depending on international shipping and production variables.

Per the CDC, who is considered “essential” is broad: public safety, those related to travel and movement of food and supplies, healthcare, and education. The spread of the Omicron variant has the potential to worsen staffing shortages, disrupt supply chain, and jeopardize education and industry and other systems. The CDC guidance has changed quite a bit. The isolation and quarantine periods have been shortened, as well as some the possibilities around using testing. It was found in studies that only 25-30% of people were isolating for the full 10 days. The new guidance does not say that you are not infectious by day 6, thus the masking requirement, with a well-fitting mask around others on days 6-10 if symptoms are gone is required because 31% of patients remain infectious after day 5. Currently in Massachusetts, if you are vaccinated and boosted and have had an exposure, you can wear a mask and go to work and test on day 5. After 5 days, continue to monitor for symptoms. If you are unvaccinated or vaccinated and not boosted, you must quarantine for the 5 days. DESE schools, preschools, and healthcare settings have their own guidance that is different.

From December 26, 2021 – January 8, 2022, there were 299 positive test results, which was up from the previous 2 weeks when there were 205 positives. These are people who took antigen tests that were proctored or people who got a PCR or lab type test. This does not include any home reporting. On December 22, MA DPH recommended that because the numbers are so high, that case investigations be focused on K-12 schools, preschools, higher ed, town staff, and the care of older adults who remain at the highest risk for adverse effects.

On January 3, the FDA expanded EUA for the Pfizer vaccine to allow boosters for ages 12-15, boosters at 5 months (previously 6 months), and a third primary dose for immunocompromised kids ages 5-11. On January 4, the CDC recommended the Pfizer booster at 5 months, and a third primary dose for immunocompromised children ages 5-11. On January 5, the ACIP and CDC recommends boosters for ages 12-15. On January 7, the FDA and CDC shortened the interval for the booster dose of the Moderna vaccine to 5 months. Individuals 12 and older are recommended to be boosted. On December 17, there was a Pfizer clinic through a state partner and 44 individuals between the ages of 5 and 11 were vaccinated. The purpose of this clinic was to bring pediatric vaccinations to Weston and make it so that younger individuals would be comfortable receiving their vaccine. The second clinic that was scheduled was snowed out and has been rescheduled for January 21. 85% of the total population of Weston is considered fully vaccinated and 46% of the population is boosted. The best mask to be using is a KN95 because they are more effective against Omicron. All current data can be found on the town website.

A discussion was had with the Board regarding mental health. The total health of a person is comprised of both their physical, mental, and emotional health, and the

pandemic has caused people to talk more about mental health. We will continue to have inequities and struggles until it is normalized and we have the resources people need. Weston has more resources than many other communities and Michele was about to talk to a psychologist who shares a part time role with the Weston and Wellesley Police Departments about what they are seeing. The police departments are seeing increased reports of domestic violence. If the case enters the legal stream and charges are brought, an advocate can be appointed through another organization. There are also more calls from the same individuals who have chronic mental illness and are living in the community. Substance use and abuse calls are also increasing.

V. COVID-19 Safety Measures in Weston Schools including testing and masking

Public schools are receiving guidance that is less strict than CDC general population guidance, less strict than K-12 CDC guidance, and less strict than MA DPH guidance. The biggest difference is around the nuances in the definition of word choice used to describe a person's vaccination status. DESE is still using the term fully vaccinated and that term relates directly to having the primary series of the vaccine. Individuals can go to school and work if they have had an at home, close contact exposure even if they are not boosted, but they have to quarantine when they are not at work or school.

Weston Public Schools have done a great job at making testing available. Every choice that the schools are making is data driven, but there are some localized frustrations with the information coming out of the schools. There is some spread within the schools from people coming back from vacations who were possibly infected and did not know it, or there was some transmission over the holiday break. A few of the sports at the high school level had transmission, so wrestling, men's basketball, and swimming have been paused. There are students who are out, but are able to Zoom into their classes. It is a daily struggle within the school system to try and find coverage if a teacher is out, especially within the middle school and trying to find a full day substitute.

Michele is communicating with the schools on where they are booster wise with the students, faculty, and staff. All schools are between 80-90% of their faculty and staff being boosted. The schools are making KN95 masks available.

Michele has traded messages a couple of times with Dr. Steinberg, who is the psychologist for the public schools. The schools are continuously adding staff and are very busy supporting the public-school students. Michele would like to talk with dr. Steinberg about opportunities they may have to support whole families. There is data showing that ER visits, particularly for adolescent girls, had a large increase. The goal is prevention so it does not get to crisis point. There is a new program out of California regarding teen mental health and what can be done. The high-level takeaway is we need to increase resources and prevention and that children have acute response to stresses but with their neuroplasticity also comes the opportunity to help. They respond better

to care and treatment than adults do. If you have healthy parents who are coping, the children will have a more well-rounded and supportive environment.

VI. Director Monthly Review – Kelly Pawluczzonek, RS, MS – Public Health Director

There has been some discussion about the state getting a procurement allowing us to order COVID-19 test kits at a discount. This is only for ordering test kits for employees and is not able to be used to purchase test kits for the general public. The general public is still advised to go through any retailer that they can to purchase the kits. Childcare centers and schools are able to order the test kits under this discounted rate. The Town of Weston was granted 4,000 tests, which is 2,000 test kits, and we were tasked to hand these kits out to the town's lower income residents. Our department was able to distribute those in five days. Weston received these test kits because the town meets the federal guideline of having 7% of the town's population under the federal income poverty line.

The Grant Manager position has been posted for the shared services grant that we signed on to with Sudbury and we have received multiple resumes. We are working to get Public Health Nurse positions posted as well. Wayland was awarded another grant and invited Weston. This grant will be used for a regional Epidemiologist as well as a regional Public Health Nurse. The grant averages approximately \$300,000.00 a year.

The department received the reimbursement for the COVID-19 clinics that were held from October 16, 2021 - December 12, 2021 and it was a little over \$13,000.00. Using the Color system to do our clinics has allowed us to receive the reimbursements quicker than usual. The department is still pushing booster shots and is looking into another date for a booster mini clinic.

It has been busy in the office due to our renewal season. We are doing the permits a little different than usual by setting up a mail merge rather than doing them one at a time as in previous years.

Kelly would like to look into updating the septic regulations for the town. There were some changes in previous years that never got updated in the regulations. She will send the Board members the current regulations and would like to go through them and update or rescind a couple of things.

VII. Next Meeting Date

February 2, 2022 at 10:00 AM via Zoom.

VIII. Adjourn

Dr. Jennifer Kickham motioned to adjourn the meeting. Dr. David Kominz seconds and Laura Azzam adjourned the meeting at 11:43 AM.