



Meeting Minutes #0210.21

MEDFIELD BOARD OF HEALTH Meeting dated February 10, 2021

Members Present: Stephen Resch, Carol Read, Holly Rand, Melissa Coughlin and Kathleen Thompson, members,

Also Present: Bridget Sweet, Health Agent, Nancy Bennotti, Administrative Assistant Kristine Trierweiler, Town Administrator

Meeting was through Zoom teleconferencing.

Dr Resch opened the meeting by reading the notice of meeting by remote participation.

The health agent, Mrs Sweet, updated the Board as follows: updates were released today by the state late this morning. The state is encouraging the public to sign-up to receive their vaccine at one of the over community/mass vaccination sites. It is easier to ship thousands of doses to one location for distribution. There is an anticipated release of 30,000 doses being released soon. The phase remains at residents 75+; however they will now allow caregivers to receive their shot at the same time. The state has also launched a campaign designed to dispel some concerns about the vaccine and encourage people to “trust the facts”. Mrs Read asked about status of seniors in public housing. Mrs Sweet continues to work with the Town of Needham to facilitate this population as well as the homebound population. Brewster Ambulance just did some home-bound clinics and is creating an SOP for local health departments. In addition, new sports guidance has come out and the health agent is in process of reviewing that. Mrs. Thompson stated that the schools have distributed return to play guidance as sports teams were eligible to return this week and as seasons are ending student athletes are anxious to play their final games. Mrs. Trierweiler and Mrs. Read both expressed gratitude to the health agent and Roberta Lynch and the COA staff for the assistance they are providing to residents in navigating the state vaccine website.

Dr Resch moved to the next agenda item which is Associate Members. Mrs. Trierweiler reviewed the process of becoming an associate member, suggested that the two interested individuals be invited to the next meeting.

Dr Resch moved to the next agenda item which is discussion and a potential vote on a recommendation for health considerations and schools. There was discussion at the last meeting about school policies and the role of the Board of Health. Although the Board cannot set policy the Board of Health can make a recommendation. Dr Resch shared that although it is within our rights, he is uncomfortable about making the recommendation without being asked by the school committee. Mrs. Trierweiler clarified the Board of Health’s authority and also the authority of the chairman of any board to include/not include items to be discussed on that board’s agenda.

Mrs Coughlin presented a power point that she hopes will assist school administration and residents alike with decisions regarding schools. The power point is titled "A Proposal for full In-Person Learning at Medfield Public Schools", and covered the following areas: Experiential knowledge gained about Covid-19; Mask Compliance; School Nurse Triage; In-School Transmission; Viral Spread Related to Surface Transmission and Proximity; Covid-19 Testing; Transportation Concerns; Vaccine Availability and Continued Concerns.

The board discussed their thoughts on the power point and Mrs Rand asked if Dr Laura McCullough could be brought forward to speak. Dr McCullough, who spoke as a pediatrician and not as a school physician, that the pandemic is taking its toll on the mental health of children and families.

Online participant question from Lauren Liljegren: *"...could you describe the plexiglas and how that impacts the safe-distance, if at all"* Mrs. Thompson confirmed that the plexiglas is at the elementary level; Dr Resch stated that the function is the prevention of droplets.

Online participant question from Cailin Caskey: *"Why would the BOH need to wait to be asked when it is our expertise and opinion that is most important with Community Health and Safety concerns in regard to reopening decisions?"* Dr Resch confirmed that there is a role for the BOH and that is why it is being discussed at this meeting. Mrs. Read responded that the school administration and school committee has consulted with this board and, in order to expedite the process Dr Resch does serve as the Board of Health liaison on a subcommittee assisting the school committee.

Brief discussion of planning regarding vaccine availability to teachers when time is appropriate. Update of Town of Needham upcoming appointments for residents.

Online participant question from Ian Lynch: *"a quick clarification on the CDC recommendations, it's actually is if kids are six feet apart, the recommendations that masks can be considered they are not mandatory Between three and six feet the CDC would actually probably argue that it's safe."* Dr Resch noted that there is information from other countries that students are in closer proximity than six feet with a lot of success and, the mask can only help.

Online participant question form Steve Caskey: *"... the CDC does not make policy decisions they make recommendations for property authorities to use as guidance.... Board to actually make a recommendation or take a vote to help the school committee to create guidance ... I understand that the board doesn't have jurisdiction but their actual expertise and opinions can help parents who are concerned about sending their kids back to school."* Dr Resch stated that this brings the board to a decision point.

Dr Resch continued that while he basically agreed with the position that was presented by Mrs Coughlin through the power point, with the caveat that there remains concern due to the variants and the uncertainty presented in terms of transmission. Dr Resch stated that he feels confident about the younger grades, but the upper grades present a challenge and a higher level of risk. In terms of managing risk in the schools, there is evidence that what is being done now is working. With the controls that are in place, a return to school would probably be fine, however, it is not risk free – and the risks are higher in the middle and high school.

Mrs Thompson clarified the following points made in the presentation: (1) there is a pause on nebulizer treatments in school and (2) the spread that occurred within the sports teams happened due to an outside social event which was attended by a group of friends who were also on a team. Mrs. Thompson described the pool testing process which will begin when school resumes after February vacation.

Dr Resch asked if the Board would like to move forward with the process of communicating this recommendation to the school committee. Mrs Trierweiler asked that Mrs Coughlin provide her with a draft document and she will review and send it to the Board of Health for discussion as an agenda item at the next meeting. Mrs. Read would like to include updated CDC guidelines be incorporated into the document. Mrs. Rand is supportive of making a recommendation; and noted that Zoom makes it challenging to have a collaborative discussion between boards. Also, expressing a personal opinion can be perceived as representative of the board despite not deliberating and/or voting.

As the final item on the agenda Mrs. Trierweiler will provide the board with a memo which outlines the process of being a board member, as well as invite the two interested candidates for associate membership to the next meeting.

Mrs Read thanked Mrs. Trierweiler for sharing the FY22 budget for the Board of Health, stating that she is committed to advocating for a public health nurse to be added as a town employee. Mrs Trierweiler stated that the position has met with favorable consideration from the Board of Selectmen, stating that the public health nurse request of \$75,000 per year is the only full-time employee request included in the Town FY22 operating budget.

Mrs. Coughlin made a motion to adjourn, Mrs. Read provided second. Roll call vote was 5-0, unanimous.

Next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, February 24, 2021.

Meeting adjourned.