

**Newburyport Board of Health Meeting  
April 14, 2020**

Date of Approval: May 7, 2020

**Attendees**

Dr. Robin Blair, Chairman of the Board  
Dr. Sam Merabi, Board Member  
Dr. Rob Slocum, Board Member  
Frank Giacalone, Health Director  
Patricia McAlarney, Note Taker

**Call to Order:** Dr. Blair called the meeting called to order at 7:07 p.m.

**Approval of Minutes:** Dr. Blair announced that the reading of the minutes from the March 19, 2020 meeting was waived.

Dr. Blair informed the audience that public presentations would be limited to two minutes per person.

**Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19):**

Director Giacalone informed the Board about measures taken by other Massachusetts' Boards of Health relative to prevention of spread of COVID-19 and in accordance with Governor Baker's Orders. The Board discussed the importance of social distancing both within essential establishments and out in public. They agreed that due to the rapidly changing situation of the pandemic orders issued at tonight's meeting will take effect tomorrow (April 15, 2020) and will not have a designated end-date but will remain in effect until each order is voted to be lifted by the Board.

Councilor Afroz Kahn addressed the Board and clarified some of the nuances of the recent Ordinances passed by City Council. She specifically noted that the ordinance states that in public parks and areas no one is allowed to engage in any active recreation (including "ball sports" and tennis), however, passive recreation (defined as walking, hiking, jogging and biking) is not restricted in the ordinance.

Sharif Zeid (Ward 1 Councillor) and Jim McCauley (Ward 5 Councillor) wrote into the webinar to state that they were in attendance.

Councillor Zeid summarized the three main components of the ordinance that was passed by City Council:

1. Gatherings of more than 10 individuals in public areas is outright banned (in alignment with the Governor's current guidance.)
2. Active recreation is banned in all city parks and public areas but passive recreation is permitted
3. Gatherings of less than 10 people must still socially distance.

Councilor Zeid explained that the City Council gave careful consideration to enforceability and the balancing, reducing or eliminating access to public spaces (i.e. health risk of covid-19 exposure versus mental health etc.)

Mayor Holaday addressed the Board and expressed the critical role the Health Department plays in supporting the City as we move forward in the surge of COVID-19 cases. She reiterated some actions that the City has taken to address COVID-19, such as the City Council's codification regarding this

ordinance to support the social distancing messages sent out by the City, her weekly updates via reverse 911 and radio broadcasts, and her participation in many conference calls with the Governor and Lieutenant Governor. The Mayor stated that she believes that there has been an increase in the public's adherence to social distancing. She noted that the Police Department have changed their shifts to better protect from contagion. Parking Officers have been redirected to enforce parking restrictions at Plum Island. Market Basket has now instituted measures to better protect customers and employees from infection. Anna Jaques maintains a tally of COVID-19 cases that is shared with City Officials during weekly conference calls. And the Health Department is tracking and tracing all confirmed cases and contacts of COVID-19 cases. Newburyport currently has 28 confirmed cases which is significantly lower than many nearby communities. The School Committee passed an order to continue remote learning through next week. All City Staff have been ordered to wear face coverings when in public and she encourages everyone to do so when in public.

She asked the Board to consider the recommendations that she and her Chief of Staff, Matt Coogan, had submitted to further support the message of the need for social distancing (see attached.)

The Board discussed the issues of social gatherings in public areas, the importance of wearing face masks at essential businesses, and whether there should be a moratorium on evictions for residential and commercial real estate during the COVID-19 emergency.

The following motion was made by Dr. Sam Merabi; seconded by Dr. Rob Slocum. Three votes in favor; no votes to oppose. The motion passed unanimously.

Gatherings in all public areas including but not limited to parks, public buildings and walkways are hereby restricted. Gatherings include physical and interactive sports activities to include but not limited to playing frisbee, catch, tennis and other activities that may spread the Covid-19 virus from sweat, droplets and physical contact from an individual. Individual passive recreational activities, such as walking, jogging and biking are exempt from this provision. All individuals must practice social distancing of 6 feet and not gather in one setting.

The following motion was made by Dr. Sam Merabi; seconded by Dr. Rob Slocum. Three votes in favor; no votes to oppose. The motion passed unanimously.

All members of the public entering any essential business as defined by Governor Baker's Covid-19 Executive Orders, including, but not limited to, restaurants, grocery stores, farm stand stores, pharmacies, home improvement stores, banks, ice cream manufacturers/dairies, government agencies, liquor/beer/wine stores, convenient stores, and the like, must wear a facial covering, such as a fabric mask, scarf or bandana, over his or her nose and mouth. The facial covering does not have to be a surgical mask or N-95 respirator, which should be left for medical professionals and first responders.

The following motion was made by Dr. Sam Merabi; seconded by Dr. Rob Slocum. Three votes in favor; no votes to oppose. The motion passed unanimously.

All employees of all essential businesses open to the public shall wear a facial covering over their mouth and nose, provided by their employers, during all hours of operation. Food/Goods delivery personnel are considered employees and shall wear facial covering over their nose and mouth when

delivering the food/goods to the customer if there is a person to person exchange. The facial covering does not have to be a surgical mask or N-95 respirator, which should be left for medical professionals and first responders.

The following motion was made by Dr. Sam Merabi; seconded by Dr. Rob Slocum. Three votes in favor; no votes to oppose. The motion passed unanimously.

Moratorium on Eviction Enforcement: No landlord and/or owner shall enforce an eviction upon a resident of Newburyport, residential or commercial, during this public health crisis.

The following motion was made by Dr. Sam Merabi; seconded by Dr. Rob Slocum. Three votes in favor; no votes to oppose. The motion passed unanimously.

The emergency orders voted on at this meeting shall be effective beginning April 15th, 2020 and remain in effect until the Public Health Emergency declaration has been lifted by the Board of Health.

At the Board's recommendation Director Giacalone will send an advisory for senior residents via the Council on Aging to encourage them to avoid contact with others and maintain social distancing.

The Board agreed that during this emergency situation they will meet every two weeks to review the situation. The next meeting will be held remotely on Thursday, April 23, 2020.

**Yankee Homecoming: Jason LaCroix**

Mr. LaCroix informed the Board that the Yankee Homecoming Committee is proceeding as though the festival will take place as planned, however, they are fully aware that given the COVID-19 situation and the need to maintain social distancing it may be necessary for them to cancel or minimize/shorten the event. If Yankee Homecoming events do take place Mr. LaCroix indicated that the Committee would work to mitigate the chance of infection by including hand sanitizer stations and encouraging all vendors to make hand sanitizer available at their booths; and may opt to have fewer booths, spaced further apart. The Board questioned whether the event might be postponed to a later date and were informed that the YHC Committee remains open to all options.

The Board strongly advised Mr. LaCroix that the chances are slim that by July the COVID-19 situation will be such that an event such as Yankee Homecoming (and the related festivities such as road races, etc.) would be feasible because of the risk of a resurgence of the disease. The Board agreed to table this issue and re-visit it at the meeting on May 7. They cautioned Mr. LaCroix to prepare his business partners and vendors for the likely possibility that the event will be cancelled.

Motion to adjourn made by Dr. Blair; seconded by Dr. Slocum. Meeting adjourned at 8:38 pm.