

Newburyport Board of Health Meeting  
January 21, 2021

Date of Approval: 2/11/2021

Attendees

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

**Call to Order:** Meeting called to order at 7:20 p.m.

**Approval of Minutes:** Motion to approve the Minutes of the Board of Health Meeting from January 7, 2021 was made by Dr. Rob Slocum ; seconded by Dr. Sam Merabi. Votes to approve - 3; votes to oppose - 0. Minutes were approved as submitted.

**First Responder Clinic** - Director Giacalone informed the Board that the two First Responder Clinics on January 14 and January 16 went very smoothly. Out of the 800 doses of Moderna vaccine that had been provided by the State, 480 doses were administered to First Responders and Clinic Staff from Newburyport and the seven other communities in the partnership (Newbury, West Newbury, Amesbury, Salisbury, Georgetown/Rowley and Merrimac.) Patricia McAlarney explained to the Board that the software system PrepMod was used to run the Clinic, from appointment scheduling, through registration on the day-of the clinic, vaccine administration, submission to the Mass. Immunization Information System (MIIS), submission for insurance reimbursement and reminder/scheduling for second doses. The number of vaccines that can be administered at any time during a clinic is limited by the amount of room available in a waiting area since all vaccine recipients must be monitored for 15 to 30 minutes after their vaccination. No adverse reactions were noted or reported from the clinics. Second doses for the First Responders and Clinic Staff will take place at February 13 and February 18. It was reported to Newburyport Health Department by the other communities that approximately 65 to 70 percent of First Responders who were eligible to receive the vaccine opted to receive it. The remaining 320 doses that were not administered at the January 14 and 16 clinics will be given to any individuals from the participating communities who fall within all tiers of Phase I at a clinic on February 6.

Newburyport decision to partner with seven other communities for the First Responder Clinics was necessary in order to meet the 200 dose minimum required to receive vaccine from the State. Director Giacalone stated that it is not yet decided whether Newburyport will continue to partner with all of the seven communities or whether smaller consortiums will develop within the group.

Dr. Merabi explained to the Board that he has received many inquiries from professionals within the local community as to how, when and where they will be able to receive a vaccination. Many practitioners have expressed frustration that their positions are not considered eligible to be vaccinated in the current tier/phase. Dr. Merabi noted that just recently, hospitals, such as Lawrence General, have begun to offer to vaccinate many of these professional groups; but some frustration remains because vaccinations do not seem to be equally available from different providers or within different communities (such as Newburyport.) Dr. Merabi has taken it upon himself to maintain a list of those professionals that have informed him that they are eligible for vaccine but have not been able to secure an appointment.

Dr. Slocum expressed concern not only with the limited quantity of vaccine in the State but also with inequities in the assignment of priorities for eligibility and stated, for example, that grocery store workers and educators should be in a higher priority than their current position within Phase II.

Director Giacalone shared with the Board the State website that includes a map of vaccine sites in Massachusetts and explained that unless otherwise designated to a limited population (such as town of residency, etc.), these sites will continue to be able to administer vaccine to any individuals who fall within any phases/tiers that are eligible at the time. He also stated that some CVS and Walgreens within Massachusetts are now authorized to administer vaccine to anyone eligible within Phase I, however, none of the CVS or Walgreens within Newburyport are currently offering vaccinations. Dr. Merabi noted that the State announced last week that dentists have been approved as vaccinators for COVID-19.

Newburyport remains classified as a “Yellow Risk Level” with a weekly positivity rate of 4.24 (down from last week’s rate of 4.83.) Director Giacalone informed the Board that the public schools have partnered with Cataldo Ambulance and have conducted over 300 baseline COVID tests which identified three positive cases (two of which were teachers and one was a student. ) Director Giacalone also announced that the State has agreed to cover the cost of COVID-19 Pool Testing for the school population.

**General Department Update:**

- Jersey Mike’s Sub Shop is due to open shortly
- Chipotle continues to be very popular which has created some traffic issues that have had to be addressed by the Mayor’s Office.
- Joy’s Nest is a new establishment at the Tannery that had a pre-opening inspection last week and will open shortly, if it hasn’t already.
- The abandoned Llama that was found on Hale Street remains in the care and custody of a farm in Exeter, NH. Director Giacalone explained that the owner has up to a year to claim ownership of the animal.

**Next Board of Health Meeting** will be held remotely on February 4<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 pm.

**Meeting adjourned at 8:12 p.m.**