



CITY OF NEWBURYPORT

BOARD OF HEALTH

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Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Board of Health Meeting Minutes

February 17, 2022

I. Call to Order

Meeting was called to order by Dr. Blair at 7:01pm.

II. Approval of Minutes

a. December 30, 2021 [Emergency BOH Meeting]

b. January 20, 2022 [Regularly Scheduled BOH Meeting]

Motion to approve both sets of minutes by Dr. Slocum. Seconded by Dr. Merabi. Both sets of minutes approved.

III. Public Comment

Mayor Sean Reardon

Jeff Trail

Holly Mazur

Fred, owner of Newburyport Fish

IV. COVID-19

a. Update on Current Numbers/Trends

Month to Date Cases (Feb 2022) – 62

Month to Date Deaths (Feb 2022) – 2

January 2022 Case Total – 601

Pandemic to Date Cases (all time) – 2,935

Pandemic to Date Deaths (all time) – 58

Current Percent Positivity – 5.09%

AJH down to single digits for COVID-19 patients and staff out. They have reinstated inpatient elective surgery as of last week. Continuing to require masking in the building and restricting number of visitors for patients on select units. They are requiring staff to receive booster shots as well.

b. Indoor Mask Mandate (set to expire 2/28/2022)

Dr. Merabi explained the history of the current mask mandate. This has not been a two-year mask mandate city wide. This started in August 2021 as a three municipal building mandate (library, city hall, and senior center). There was modeling showing a substantial increase in October which there was, and this was preemptive. No other mask mandate was in place until end of December while in the midst of the surge that was predicted. It

was set in place for a month with the point to revisit. In that month, we hit record case numbers and AJH hit max capacity. Voted to extend to February and sync it with the school's mask mandate. Dr. Merabi wanted to clear up some misinformation that was presented during public comment. Masking does work and science shows that and so does history. Masking is just one aspect to protect against the virus.

Dr. Slocum wanted to bring up that this mask mandate has only been in effect for 51 days. The reason it was extended past January was because there was not enough change from where we were in December that caused the mandate to go in effect. Believes that there may be some confusion on how the Board goes through these processes. Hopes this is not everyone's last Board meeting. The Board plays a large role in policy and has a broad purview. Hopes these last few months shines a light on the fact that the Board is an important part of the city government and hopes that there is some more public engagement.

Dr. Blair pointed out that even before the pandemic the Board was lucky if one other person showed up to the meeting.

Motion to end the mandatory indoor mask mandate immediately and replace it with a mask advisory made by Dr. Slocum. Seconded by Dr. Merabi. Motion passes.

V. General Department Update

- The Thirsty Whale officially reopened last weekend after being closed for nearly two years due to the pandemic.
- Nu Kitchen is a new restaurant looking to open within the next week.
- Scheduling of the Health Director interviews.

VI. Other Matters

VII. Next Meeting

The next regular BOH meeting will be on March 17, 2022. The BOH will meet before then to interview candidates for the position of Health Director.

VIII. Adjourn

Motion to adjourn by Dr. Slocum. Seconded by Dr. Blair. Meeting adjourned.