

Newburyport Board of Health Meeting
February 25, 2021

Date of Approval: 3/25/2021

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 p.m.

Approval of Minutes: Motion to approve the Minutes of the Board of Health Meeting from February 11, 2021 was made by Dr. Sam Merabi; seconded by Dr. Rob Slocum. Votes to approve - 3; votes to oppose - 0. Minutes were approved as submitted.

COVID-19 Vaccination Clinics: Director Giacalone -

The remaining doses from the First Responder Clinic will be administered at a clinic on March 6, 2021 at the Page School in West Newbury. The Lower Merrimac Valley Regional Collaborative (LMVRC), which includes Newburyport, continues to request vaccine from the State; however, it remains uncertain as to whether the State will grant the request. The State has prioritized the 'mega-vaccine sites', such as Gillette Stadium and Fenway for vaccine supply and is not providing doses to small vaccine providers. In order for the LMVRC to be considered for vaccine allocation, the Collaborative must prove that it is capable of administering a minimum of 750 doses per day, five days per week. A meeting of leaders of the LMVRC convened and determined that it is possible for the collaborative to meet the State's requirement and an order for over 3,000 doses of Pfizer vaccine has been submitted to the State. Multiple vaccine sites are being considered, with Amesbury High School being the most likely to be used as the initial vaccination site. The town of Amesbury will be the 'lead community' for the LMVRC initiative. The Board discussed whether there is an equitable way to notify residents and schedule them for appointments, especially those individuals who may not have computers or may not have access to social media.

Director Giacalone informed the Board that, Tracy Watson, Director of the Newburyport Housing Authority has applied for and been approved to receive 200 doses of vaccine for residents of Newburyport senior and low income housing units. The Newburyport Health Department will hold a clinic for this population on Sunday, March 7 at the Senior Center. A private medical homecare practice, Elements, has approached the Health Department with an offer to assist with the vaccine clinic as part of their community involvement.

The Board discussed whether a clinic was planned for public school teachers to be vaccinated at a clinic staffed by Cataldo Ambulance. Director Giacalone informed the Board that this arrangement had been considered, however, at this time educators are not eligible to be vaccinated and, therefore, it appears that the clinic is currently 'on hold.' It was discussed whether the Charter School teachers would also be included in this clinic. Director Giacalone offered to speak with the Mayor to advocate for inclusion of the Charter School teachers if, or when, this vaccination clinic is held.

Newburyport's COVID risk level remains in the Yellow Category. The Average Daily Rate has dropped to 17.7 (compared with 18.1 last week); the Percent Positivity Rate has increased from 2.07 to 2.14 but the level remains well below 5%. Director Giacalone noted that the percent positivity tends to be higher

on Mondays. If Newburyport's Daily Average Incidence Rate per 10,000 residents drops to 10 or below, the City will be categorized as 'green,' low risk.

COVID Testing – Director Giacalone informed the Board that the Newburyport Public Schools have been involved in baseline COVID testing, which has gone well.

General Department Update:

- Director Giacalone stated that he has been compiling information for budget hearings which must be submitted tomorrow. He feels that the budget will look good this year since a significant amount of the department's costs may be payable through CARES Act funding.
- The restaurant, Ceia, has changed owners and the new restaurant, Bar 25, is due to open shortly.
- Changing Tides has received City approval for, and is now operating, a food truck from which they sell coffee, muffins and donuts throughout the City (except in the downtown overlay district.)
- Dunkin Donuts on Storey Ave has now reopened after the fire that occurred last summer
- Plum Island Coffee Roasters may be replaced by a Mexican restaurant; however, no permit application has been submitted to the Health Department.

Meeting adjourned at 7:56 p.m.