

**Newburyport Board of Health Meeting
May 20, 2021**

Date of Approval:

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: The meeting was called to order at 7:11 p.m.

Approval of Minutes: Motion to approve the Minutes of the Board of Health meeting on April 15, 2021 was made by Dr. Robert Slocum; seconded by Sam Merabi. Votes to approve - 3; votes opposed - none. The Minutes were approved as submitted.

COVID-19 Update: Director Giacalone reported that the vaccination clinics hosted by the Lower Merrimack Valley Regional Collaborative (LMRVC) have been extremely successful. Clinics were held at multiple sites in Newburyport, West Newbury and Amesbury and at the height of the clinics up to 2,400 vaccines were administered at each clinic. At this time, the demand for vaccination is significantly lower and the majority of vaccines being administered are to individuals ages 12 - 16. Director Giacalone noted that at the current time 34% of Newburyport residents ages 12 - 15 and 80% of city residents ages 16 - 19 have been vaccinated with at least one dose. A total of 74% of Newburyport residents ages 12 to 75+ have received at least one dose of vaccine. In addition to the vaccines administered at clinics, approximately 40 Newburyport residents who are homebound were vaccinated. The final vaccination clinic hosted by LMVRC will be held on June 10 at the West Newbury Town Hall Annex.

Newburyport remains in the 'green' low risk category for COVID-19 according to data from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health. The city is averaging zero to three new positive COVID-19 cases per day.

Re-Opening Massachusetts: The Board discussed the state's anticipated elimination of COVID-19 business-specific guidelines and lifting of face-covering requirements. The Board agreed with Director Giacalone that given reduced incidence of COVID-19 cases and the reduction of risk to public health, it is reasonable for the City to follow the state's lead in lifting restrictions, capacity limits and no longer requiring face coverings (except on public and private transportation systems and for facilities housing vulnerable populations.) The Board further agreed that it is no longer necessary for the City to impose a requirement that face coverings be worn at all times in Downtown Newburyport. The Board did note, however, that private businesses have the prerogative to impose requirements, such as face coverings for employees and/or customers, if they so desire.

Motion: Dr. Slocum made the following motion that was seconded by Dr. Merabi:

"Motion to rescind the Downtown Masking Order."

Vote: Votes to approve the motion - 3; votes to oppose - none. Minutes were approved as submitted.

Yankee Homecoming: Jason LaCroix, Vice President of the Yankee Homecoming Committee informed the Board that the Committee has been working hard to develop various plans in anticipation of any COVID-19 requirements by the state or the city. The Committee was surprised by the earlier than expected lifting of restrictions; however they still plan to incorporate extra precautions, such as making hand sanitizer readily available, to help ensure a safe festival. Mr. LaCroix explained that funding for this year's festival is of great concern, especially for concerts and fireworks.

Farmers' Market: Shari Wilkinson, Coordinator of the Newburyport Farmers' Market, informed the Board that the Market will resume on June 5. This year's market will be considerably smaller than prior years, with approximately two-thirds the number of vendors participating. Ms. Wilkinson noted that members of the Mass Farmers' Market Association plan to resume their Farmers' Markets in pre-COVID fashion in alliance with the state's elimination of restrictions. She expressed hope that the Newburyport Board of Health supports this, as well. The Board expressed that they agree that City activities, including the Farmers' Market, may resume without COVID related restriction, as allowed by the State. The Market is scheduled to close on October 31 this year; however, if everything is going well, it may be extended into November.

New Food Establishments:

- Brine has opened for business at 17 State Street
- Cookie Kitchen has opened for operation at the Masonic Temple on Green Street
- Bar 25 has opened at 25 State Street

Budget: Mayor Holaday presented the City budget to City Council last week. Individual Department's will meet with City Council over the next few weeks. Director Giacalone stated that he didn't foresee any issues with the Health Department budget, especially since grant funding related to COVID had been secured for this past year that supplemented the department's budget for FY2021.

Beach Testing: Beach testing for Newburyport will resume this upcoming week in anticipation of Memorial Day weekend.

Animal Control - Director Giacalone noted that Animal Control services are going well with no issues to report.

Update on 7 Drew Street - This residential property was condemned for sanitation issues over five years ago and the interior of the home was subsequently flooded on two occasions (once due to frozen pipes and once due to a water main break that caused water to seep into the basement of the home.) The Attorney General's Office intervened in the case; however, repairs to the home have been excessively slow. Director Giacalone, Patti McAlarney and the Assistant Building Director, Dennis Morel inspected the home and were informed by the General Contractor that all repairs should be completed by mid-July 2021.

F.O.G. Program: The owner of a food establishment informed the Health Department that a septage hauler had been viewed on video footage of using a scoop to remove a small bucket-full of grease from the establishment's grease trap. The technician then proceeded to place the scoop in the establishment's food prep sink and take the bucket of grease out of the room. It is not known where the grease was disposed of but later in the day the owner suspected that the grease had been poured into a drain that was not connected to the grease trap. Because the owner had previously experienced a grease blockage that cost him thousands of dollars to replace the ejector pump, he insisted that the septage hauler come to the establishment and suck out the building drain that leads to the city sewer pipe. The restaurant owner indicated that a significant amount of grease was dislodged during the vacuum process. The Board stated that City establishments rely upon the Health Department to issue permits to companies that have been vetted and are reputable; the behavior and workmanship demonstrated by the grease hauler is unacceptable. Director Giacalone stated that there are three punitive options available: issue a monetary fine, revocation of permit and putting the establishment on notice. The Board stated that the permit to operate should be rescinded.

Next Meeting: The next meeting for the Board of Health is scheduled to be held remotely on June 17, 2021.

Adjournment: Motion to adjourn was made by Rob Slocum; seconded by Dr. Merabi at 8:10 pm.