

**Board of Health****City of Newburyport**

Regular meeting: Thursday, November 4, 2021, 7:00 p.m.

Held in a remote format, hosted by Michael Lawler

Board Members present: Director of Public Health Frank Giacalone,

Board Chair Dr. Robin Blair, Dr. Sam Merabi (member), Dr. Robert Slocum (member),

Office Manager Michael Lawler

**Approval of Minutes**

Robin called the meeting to order at 7:06 p.m., and asked about the minutes from the two previous meetings. Sam moved to approve both sets of minutes, those from July 15, and August 19, 2021. Robert seconded the motion, which passed.

**General Department Update**

Frank: We hired Michael Lawler as our new office manager.

Michael introduced himself. He is a graduate of the University of New England.

Frank: At the end of November, the state will stop providing contact tracing services.

We have two contact tracers who are being funded with FEMA funds. Those monies are also paying for an office assistant.

We had two Community Flu Vaccine Clinics, in addition to clinics that were conducted on-site at complexes for senior citizens. We gave 430 flu shots. The state had us use a new platform. With the old platform, Pamela had to enter all the information by hand. Now we can use the software at the Clinic. The number of flu vaccines we gave this year was a little lower than last year. Frank showed a table that Michael prepared.

**COVID-19 Update**

Frank: Here's what we are doing for boosters. Jack Morris, Health Director in Salisbury, called me to invite us to partner with them at their Senior Center. Vaccines

have been sourced from the Federal Government, with all three brands being offered. Conley Drug out of Ipswich is running the clinic. (Frank showed the on-line forms that folks use to register for the clinics.) Newburyport will provide some staff support at the Clinic. Also, although it's not official yet, today I got an email (shared the screen) from the Health Director of West Newbury saying they are planning two clinics with the Lower Merrimac Valley collaborative. The Monday clinics are from 4 pm to 7 pm, on 3 dates. They are for children 5 to 11 years old. Lauren McDonald, Nurse Leader of the Newburyport Public Schools, along with Pamela Palombo, is spearheading a third front, utilizing a system set up by the State. They'll administer 500 shots. The registration for those first- and later second-dose clinics, for 5 to 11-year-olds, was filled within 1.5 hours. CVS and Convenient MD are also offering vaccines.

I just updated the confirmed cases. At the end of October, we were at 103 cases. There were only 10 cases during the first three days of September, but 20 cases in the first three days of November. There are cases at the two assisted living facilities, at Country Health nursing home, and two cases at Kindercare. Nearly all of the cases are in either Assisted Living or nursing homes, with the positive cases being primarily people who are vaccinated.

Sam: How often are the residential facilities testing?

Frank: Country said they're now doing weekly testing.

Sam: Where is funding for testing coming from? Do we have testing funds? They may be able to do it themselves.

Frank: One of the City departments had some positive cases, and we did the testing of the close contacts. The Schools only recently started having positive cases, several from Halloween parties.

Sam: If I ran a residential facility, I'd limit testing to visitors and employees. I would do rapid antigen.

Frank: We only have a handful of tests. In the beginning they were required to test. I can get that info – what tests are the facilities using.

Sam: Are there visitors? I'd strongly suggest that we suggest that they test more frequently. If they have COVID funding, they can use it on testing.

Sam: Visitors, especially, should get tested every time.

Robert: Don't they have to follow DPH regulations? It seems like no one wants to do more than what the State requires.

Sam: I think the message should be put forth that outbreaks are happening because what the state was requiring wasn't enough.

Frank: At Atria, the outbreak started with the visit from one infected person, a resident's son. From there, it spread quite a lot.

Sam: With Thanksgiving coming up, it would be good to publicize the importance of testing with antigen test before you visit your parents. I don't think we've implemented testing as much as we should.

Frank: The State doesn't make it easy for us to do frequent testing. Michael can put out something about mask-wearing and testing pre-holiday.

Sam: if you're infectious, an antigen test will pick it up. You can screen yourself for the day of your visit.

Frank: I'll come up with a flyer and then send it to the Board to see if you like it.

Sam: Thank you.

Frank: I'll send the info about what Long Term Care facilities are doing regarding testing, too.

### **Other Matters-**

Frank: We are dealing with a couple of hoarding cases.

Sam: Do we meet with the new Mayor?

Robert: Do we serve the full term?

Robin: I was informed by the City Council that my reappointment had been sitting on their desk. I think we'll hear from the current or future mayor. It was Jim who approached me.

Robert: I got reappointed just before the pandemic. The Safety Committee interviewed me.

Robert: I'm primarily a primary care physician for people with addiction. We warn our patients about Fentanyl. It now seems that possibly a person could smoke marijuana

and get harmed by fentanyl. If it didn't come from a pharmacy, it probably has fentanyl, and if you don't have tolerance for opioids, it could really hurt you. The DEA is now sending out information to medical professionals. I worry about counterfeit Gummies getting into the hands of kids.

Frank: I meet with the Beacon Coalition, representing schools, behavioral people, and Andrea Egmont from Newburyport Youth Services. I'll bring that up the next time we meet.

Robert- that's a great way to proceed with that. Thanks, Frank.

Robin: If nothing else- we'll set a date for next meeting.

Frank: If our numbers start going down, we could consider lifting the mask mandate at the next meeting, but the way they are now, that doesn't seem likely.

Robin: do you want to meet Dec. 9?

All agreed that they would meet next on Thursday, December 9, at 7 p.m., through the Zoom format.

Sam: Can I work with you, Frank, to put something on social media, maybe a video? I could post it on some of the Newburyport Facebook pages.

Frank: Yes. And it could also be posted on the City website, and the sites that Youth Services, the Library, and the Senior Center use.

Robin adjourned the meeting at 7:58 p.m.

Next Meeting: 7 p.m. Thursday, December 9, 2021. Michael will send a link to the Zoom webinar, along with the agenda, to Board Members' email accounts.

Respectfully submitted,

Laurel D. Hanke