

**Newburyport Board of Health Meeting  
October 8, 2020**

**Date of Approval: 10/29/2020**

**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 7:23 p.m.

**Approval of Minutes:** Motion to approve the Minutes of the Board of Health Meeting from September 24, 2020 was made by Dr. Merabi; seconded by Dr. Slocum. Votes to approve - 3; votes to oppose - 0. Minutes were approved as submitted.

**COVID-19 Update and School Re-Opening - Director Giacalone**

Massachusetts' State Re-Opening Plan is now at Phase 3, Step 2 as of October 5, 2020 for communities that are deemed to be in a 'low risk' category (designated as 'Gray, Green or Yellow' on the Massachusetts' COVID-19 Dashboard.) City's that are in the higher risk/Red category may not progress to Step 2. Likewise, Cities that move out of the low risk category into the higher risk/red category for three reporting periods, will revert back to Step 1. Newburyport is currently designated as a low risk community in the 'green' category which reflects the city's Average Daily Incidence Rate for the past 14 days as 2.8 (per 100,000 population.) The report is produced by the State Health Department every Wednesday and results are available on Thursday. Director Giacalone explained the State's coding system for assigning risk levels to Massachusetts communities.

Some of the changes that took effect with the implementation of Phase 3, Step 2 include: Indoor and outdoor performance venues may now operate at 50% capacity with a maximum attendance of 250 people; recreational activities such as arcades, trampoline venues, laser tag, etc. may operate at 50% capacity; fitting rooms at retail stores may now re-open; gyms may operate at 50% capacity. Indoor private gatherings remain at 25 people and outdoor gatherings (backyards) remain at 50 people. Attendance at outdoor event venues is now at a maximum of 100 (for low-risk communities) and a maximum of 50 people (in higher risk communities.) Bar seating at restaurants is allowed, however, a six-foot distance must be maintained between parties, and a six-foot distance must be maintained between a server at the working area of the bar and the customer unless a 30" physical barrier (such as plexiglass) is in place between the customer and bar-area server. Director Giacalone explained that there has been considerable confusion among local restaurant owners regarding bar seating guidelines; he asked the Board to notify the Department if they are made aware of any local restaurants that may not be in compliance. Pool tables are allowed but no food/drink consumption is allowed in the area of the pool table.

Director Giacalone explained that the Halloween activity of trick-or-treating falls under Public Safety and the Police Marshal has stated that it will not be cancelled but will take place during set hours (5:30 – 8:30 pm on Saturday, October 31.) The City will not be holding the afternoon downtown trick-or-treating event for younger children that has been popular in past years.

Director Giacalone shared with the Board a flyer that the City created to notify residents of safety tips for Halloween and the time-frame for trick-or-treating. The flyer outlines risk levels for various activities (i.e. high risk includes trick or treating and parties; low risk includes virtual costume contest, movies at home, etc.) The Board questioned whether conflicting messages are being provided to residents since social gatherings (including trick-or-treating) are firmly discouraged but the City is advertising a specific time-frame during which trick-or-treating will take place.

#### **Public School Transition Plan – Director Giacalone**

Director Giacalone informed the Board that he had attended a School Committee meeting to lend support to the school's re-opening plan. Director Giacalone referred to a copy of the plan (which had been previously sent to Board Members.) He specifically referenced "Transition Step-One – Increased In-Person Hybrid" which allows for the remote learning day on Wednesday to be removed and children in grades one through eight to attend school in person 50% of the time. In this phase, all High School Students in cohort A will attend school in person on Mondays/Tuesdays and all of cohort B will attend school in person on Thursdays/Fridays. Most of the transition criteria noted in the plan relies upon data derived from the State's Weekly COVID-19 report. Specifically, Director Giacalone noted that the evaluation period in the school's plan runs from September 28 through October 26 during which time all stated criteria must be met to move into the Transition Step One. Director Giacalone stated that there is a group of parents in Newburyport that support a change to 100% in person learning; however, Director Giacalone warned that the Health Department is seeing a rise in COVID cases and in community transmission and would not recommend 100% in person learning at this time. He further explained that recently there have been multiple COVID-19 cases that have required a number of contacts to be quarantined. In one case an entire segment of a class had to be quarantined, in another situation a total of 15 families needed to quarantine and in a third situation an entire soccer team had to be quarantined due to their exposure to a student from another community who had tested positive.

#### **Flu Vaccinations – Director Giacalone**

Two drive-through flu clinics have been held; both of which were very successful and well received by participants. A third (outdoor, walk-through) clinic was held for City employees, which also went well. The Department has a limited supply of vaccine remaining and it has not been determined whether further vaccines will be administered due to the need for maintaining social distancing and the preference for an outdoor setting for administration.

**Next Board of Health Meeting** will be held remotely on November 5 at 7 pm.

**Meeting adjourned - 7:54 pm**