



Acton Board of Health

Meeting Minutes

December 8, 2021

7:30 P.M.

VIRTUAL PARTICIPANTS VIA ZOOM

Present:

Members Present: William McInnis

Virtual Members Present: Dr. William Taylor, Joanne Bissetta and Michael Kreuze

Associate Members Present: Dr. Jacoby

Virtual Associate Members Present: Dr. Singh voting for absent Mark Conoby

Staff Present: Sheryl Ball-Health Director

Others Present: Jill Salamon, Doug Sherman, Eva Szkaradek, Pam M., Felix Garcia, Catherine Litchfield, Janet Adachi, Mary Lynn Miller, Nancy C, Himaja Nagireddy, Select board liaison and Nancy C.

1. Opening

Chair - William McInnis opened the meeting at 7:30 P.M. A script was read that was provided by the Town stating why the meetings are hybrid during this pandemic.

2. Regular Business

Health Director – Update

Ms. Ball stated that the Massachusetts Department of Public Health's (MDPH) focus has shifted to getting as many as possible vaccinated. Massachusetts currently has one case of Omicron but suspects there are more due to the lag time in sequencing. The Federal Government is now requiring international travelers to test within 24 hours of departure regardless of vaccination status. Cases are on the rise and the State of Massachusetts has a percent positivity rate of 4.86% and Middlesex County is at 3.49% as of today. Ms. York will talk more about Acton statistics.

On Saturday, December 11, 2021 the Town will have completed both first and second doses for those 5-11 year olds for approximately 1100 students. The school has given us the following vaccination breakdown for their elementary schools.

First Dose vaccine statistics

Conant -266 vaccinated out of 403 students = 66%

Douglas- 265 vaccinated out of 384 students=69%

Gates-240 vaccinated out of 369 students=65%

MCT- 328 vaccinated out of 449 students=73%

Merriam- 352 vaccinated out of 457 students=77%



Nursing Service Update:

Ms. York stated that there are currently 68 cases in Acton and Acton has a 3.42% positivity rate which is less than both the State of Massachusetts and Middlesex County. Ms. York mentioned we have had an uptick in cases in the last two weeks. Ms. York also mentioned that the COVID vaccine is widely available and encouraged those that are not vaccinated to obtain one. Ms. York also stated that hospitals are reaching their peak and approximately two weeks ago they have been told to not perform any elective surgeries. Ms. York mentioned that most cases are currently the Delta variant and that there is a delay in the sequencing of the Omicron variant. Ms. York further advised the Board that the MDPH has asked cities and towns to prioritize contact tracing and expressed hope that the Contact Tracing Collaborative (CTC) continued, however, as of November 30th we can no longer send cases to them. Ms. York stated some larger cities and towns are struggling with this and mentioned that she will be hiring a part time employee to help with contract tracing. In addition, Ms. York mentioned that Ms. Ball is working on a collaborative grant with Lowell, Westford and Dracut and we will receive additional grant money for contact tracing initiatives. The Board asked Ms. York about the ages of the positive cases and Ms. York stated from infant to elder. The Board asked Ms. York if we have residents hospitalized and Ms. York stated not that she knows of.

Massachusetts Department of Public Health Contact Tracing Guidance

Ms. Ball asked the Board to review the updated guidance issued by the MDPH on core requirements for contract tracing and investigation in regards to COVID-19. This guidance takes into consideration the current status of the pandemic, success in getting residents vaccinated and our learned knowledge in the last 21 months. The prioritization is outlined below:

- 1) **Prioritize follow-up on those COVID-19 cases with positive lab results or known close contact exposures occurring within the previous 5 days.** Cases where testing occurred further back in time are likely already past their peak infectious period. People with exposures that occurred more than 5 days ago are already past their peak incubation period.
- 2) **Plan to make only one call per case.** If you do not reach the case, be sure your phone message to them includes the information about how to reach you if needed, advice on notifying their close contacts, and information about isolating for 10 days. If there are multiple cases in a single household, one call to a responsible adult in the household is sufficient to inform all household members.
- 3) **When you interview a case, please convey to them an expectation that they should notify their close contacts themselves.** If they express an inability to do that or are associated with a K-12 school, please capture the information about their close contacts, then plan for local health staff to notify them.
- 4) **In most circumstances, neither cases nor contacts need to be called multiple times during their isolation or quarantine periods unless there are exceptional circumstances.** People do not need to be contacted for a release from isolation as long as they are given information that



they should isolate for 10 days and can resume normal activities on day 11 as long as their symptoms have resolved. Please feel free to direct people to the DPH isolation and quarantine information website on [mass.gov](https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-isolation-and-quarantine-information) for more information and detailed instructions.

<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-isolation-and-quarantine-information>

5) **Prioritize investigation of clusters that have evidence of ongoing transmissions.** You do not need to follow up on all individuals involved in a single super-spreader event such as a wedding, banquet, or other large social gathering. Rather, this information can be disseminated to attendees through organizers, the hosting facility, and your local website.

Ms. York stated that staff currently are following these updates and she will be hiring a contact tracer to assist. Ms. Ball also mentioned that an additional part time contact tracer will be hired as part of a collaborative grant that Acton is working on with Lowell, Dracut and Westford. The Board supported this change.

Private Vaccine Clinics

The Town would like to assist businesses in helping to vaccinate their employees and presented the Board with a draft policy to allow for us to hold a private vaccine clinic for Board consideration. The Board reviewed the policy and stated that it is consistent with the policy the Town has had in place to help businesses with flu clinics in the past and all costs associated with this clinic are charged to the company. The Board supported this request.

Face Covering Discussion

The Board reviewed the data that Ms. Ball put together showing the positive cases within many communities that have no mask mandate, full mask mandate or a municipal mask mandate. The Board discussed this data at length and stated that will continue to talk about this at every meeting. The Board also mentioned that we are been seeing emails from residents asking the Board to consider instituting a mask mandate and stated that communities without a mask mandate are seeing higher positivity rates but Acton is still currently lower than the State's rate. Dr. Jacoby stated that he believes we should follow the State's guidance on masks that only advise people to wear them. Mr. Kreuze stated we should reinstitute an indoor mask mandate until we can get this pandemic under control but also mentioned the Board is constantly looking at the data and will continue to do so. The Board also discussed the fact that the State has not reinstated a mandate and questioned whether we could have a mask mandate only when social distancing is not possible and when businesses are interacting with the public. There was also discussion about how effective masks really are. Ms. Ball stated that we should do a municipal mask mandate, full mask mandate or not do one as it would be difficult for the Health Division to enforce if we were to consider one only where social distancing is not possible or just when businesses meet with the public. Pam M. from Old Village Road stated that she believes that a mask requirement for indoors is needed and would rather the Board be proactive and support at this time. Ms. Nagireddy also stated that the Select board looks to the Board of Health for guidance, however, stated that personally she would like a mask mandate for municipal buildings and thanked the Board for all they do. On a motion was made by Mr. Kreuze to re-institute a



mask mandate for indoor public places effective in two weeks subject to endorsement by the Select board. Himaja stated that the Select board can put this on the agenda for endorsement at their next meeting. Dr. Taylor seconded the motion. The Board discussed this further and had the following questions; should a mandate be tied to an increase in positivity rate for a certain number for a set amount of weeks? how will we deal with gyms? (and membership, social clubs, licensed establishments, should we continue to analyze data that shows our positivity rate higher than those in Middlesex County and the State?, should we wait for new information regarding the Omicron variant which will be available to us in the next few weeks? The Board questioned whether we should rephrase the motion once we know the risk of the new variant and revisit this at the next meeting. Since there is a motion and a second, and since questions have been raised, it was suggested that we either, vote, withdraw the motion or delay it to a future meeting. Mr. Kreuze withdrew his motion to discuss this at the next meeting and the chair asked the Board if anyone else would like to make a motion. No motions were made. The Board will discuss this again at their next meeting.

Vaccine Update:

Ms. Ball mentioned that the Town's vaccine rate is fairly high and stated that she would send out information to encourage residents that are not vaccinated to get vaccinated. The Board also stated that there is a lag for up to about 3-4 weeks to get an appointment for the vaccine.

Emergency Beaver Trapping Permits –Charter Road, School and Willow Street

Ms. Ball stated that there are three requests for emergency beaver trapping permits and the flooding is encompassing large areas that are actually affecting multiple streets. Ms. Ball further stated that she visited these three sites to determine if alternatives could be instituted rather than trapping. In all cases, the water is level and you need some slope in order to allow water to flow through the pipes to prevent flooding.

Three requests have been made for an emergency permit for beaver trapping due to beaver activity with flooding occurring on said property in close proximity to multiple septic systems, residences and driveways located at 86, 98 and 100 Charter Road, 106 Willow Street and 172-174 School Street. The Health Department has confirmed that in accordance with the Rules and Regulations that a threat to Human Health and Safety by beaver or muskrat-caused flooding of residential septic system(s)/driveway(s)/home(s) exists at all these properties.

Based on this information, the Health Department recommends that the Board of Health approve a 10 day emergency permit, beginning on Thursday, December 9, 2021, giving the licensed trapper and its agent the right to use restricted traps and breach the dams or dikes subject to the conditions of the Conservation Commission.

In addition, the department would recommend that the Board approve that the applicant, should the 10 day emergency permit not solve the beaver problems be granted a 10 day extension.



On a motion made by Ms. Bissetta, seconded by Mr. Kreuze, the Board unanimously voted to grant 10 day emergency beaver trapping permit to the property located at 106 Willow Street. The Chair took roll call and all were in favor.

On a motion made by Mr. Kreuze, seconded by Dr. Singh, the Board unanimously voted to grant 10 day emergency beaver trapping permit to the property located at 86,98 & 100 Charter Road. The Chair took roll call and all were in favor.

On a motion made by Dr. Taylor, seconded by Dr. Singh, the Board unanimously voted to grant 10 day emergency beaver trapping permit to the property located at 172-174 School Street. The Chair took roll call and all were in favor.

Minutes –October 27, 2021

On a motion made by Mr. Kreuze, seconded Ms. Bissetta, and the Board unanimously accepted the minutes from October 27, 2021 as written. The Chair took roll call and all were in favor.

Next Meeting

The next BOH meeting is scheduled for December 29, 2021.


4. Adjournment

On a motion made by Mr. Kreuze, seconded by Dr. Singh, the Board voted to adjourn at 9:05 PM. The Chair took roll call and all were in favor.


Documents and Exhibits Used During this Meeting;

- Town of Acton script for boards and committees opening meeting
- Board of Health agenda
- BOH contract tracing memo
- Town of Acton – private vaccination clinic
- Beaver Trapping Permit applications for 86, 98 and 100 Charter Road, 106 Willow Street and 172-174 School Street
- Minutes of 10/27/2021

Respectfully Submitted,



Sheryl Ball
Acton Board of Health



William McInnis- Chairman,
Acton Board of Health