



Acton Board of Health
Meeting Minutes
May 27, 2020
7:30 P.M.
VIRTUAL PARTICIPANTS VIA ZOOM

Present:

Virtual Members Present: William McInnis -Chairman, Joanne Bissetta, Mark Conoby, and Dr. William Taylor

Virtual Associate Members Present: Dr. Thomas Jacoby and Dr. Rekha Singh voting for absent Michael Kreuze

Virtual Staff Present: Sheryl Ball-Health Director, Matt Dow, Heather York-Nursing Director, and Eva Szkaradek

Virtual Present: Tack Palmer, Erin Bettez, John Petersen, Kevin Thomas, Terra Friedrichs, and Joe Will

1. Opening

Chair - William McInnis opened the meeting at 7:31 P.M. A script was read that was provided by the Town stating why the meetings are virtual during this crisis.

2. Regular Business

Director Operational Updates –

Governor Baker Updates:

Ms. Ball stated that, in Massachusetts we are starting to see a downward trend in confirmed COVID-19 cases. The Governor also stated that he believes the surge is behind us. The Governor also announced that he is expanding nutritional assistance by expanding the SNAP benefits.

NARA Park – Reopening Phases

As of today, NARA Park is partially open and users can utilize the walking trails and the athletic fields for non-contact sports by the same household. The Recreation Department is currently working on a phased reopening. The reopening plan will include the opening of the bathhouse and beaches as soon as safety protocols can be met and staff be put in place. The Health Division received guidance yesterday from the State stating that municipal beaches can be open by May 25th. We expect that the beach opening will take place sometime in June. The State has



issued Beach Guidance for Managers dated May 18, 2020 that the town will have to follow requiring social distancing, wearing of face coverings(except when swimming), toweling of at least 12 feet, no organized sports and at least 6' separation of lifeguard stations.

BOS Updates - The Board of Selectmen met last night and voted to provide funding for residential rental only assistance in the form of grants to eligible households to maintain housing during this pandemic with demonstration of need and if qualifications are met. The BOS also voted a Small Business relief program with funds to eligible businesses that can be utilized for expenses not cover by other federal or state relief programs, again with determination of need, eligibility criteria and requirements. Both of these programs will be funded through Cares Act Funding the Town will be receiving in FY 20 and 21. The CARES funds are restricted to necessary expenses for the public health emergency caused by COVID-19. The Board of Selectmen also will allow temporary outdoor seating to allow restaurants to create outdoor seating. The Board asked if Health rules will need to be changed to allow outdoor seating and Ms. Ball stated no.

John Petersen asked about whether Acton should consider testing sewage for COVID-19. Ms. Ball stated that she will correspond with Corey York, DPW director regarding this program.

Nursing Director Update:

Ms. York stated that Acton currently has 165 positive cases with 47 active, 97 recovered and 21 fatalities. Ms. York stated that at the request of Benchmark, the National Guard was deployed to their facility to conduct testing. As a result of that testing 4 residents and 2 staff were positive but she noted that none were symptomatic. Ms. York stated that Benchmark Assisted Living now has 10 positive residents and 6 staff that have tested positive for COVID-19. Ms. York also stated that we have not seen any new positives at the Life Care facility in the last 7 days. Ms. York mentioned the Governor's plan to slowly reopen Massachusetts and compared Acton's rates to the State's. Ms. York stated that Acton's fatality rate is attributed to the congregate living facilities. Ms. York also stated that she expects to conduct a drive by inoculation site similar to one done in the past for flu shots once a COVID-19 vaccine becomes available. Ms. Bissetta asked Ms. York how many total Acton residents have been tested. Ms. York said she did not have this data available and would look into it.

Emergency Beaver Trapping Permit – 693R Massachusetts Ave.

Ms. Ball stated that we received an application from the Acton Water District for an emergency beaver trapping permit for flooding of the property adjacent to the Town's drinking water wells located at 693 Mass. Ave. Ms. Ball stated that a public health threat exists due to the beavers damming the culvert which is causing the flooding in close proximity of the well fields. On a motion made by Mr. Conoby, seconded by Ms. Bissetta, the Board unanimously approved the



10 day emergency permit, beginning on May 28, 2020, 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 to the property owned by the Acton Water District adjacent to 693 Mass. Ave. The Chair took roll call and all were in favor.

Household Hazardous Waste Day

Ms. Ball stated that the event was initially scheduled in May but was postponed to June 27, 2020 due to COVID-19 concerns. Ms. Ball stated that she has looked into what other communities are doing and questioned whether this event should be postponed again. The fall event is currently scheduled for September 19th. Ms. Ball also reached out to the vendor and no dates are available in July or August. The Board stated that the Stay safer at home advisory is still active and we need to ensure that we can keep our residents and staff safe during this pandemic. The Board was in consensus to skip the June event and reevaluate the date in September as it gets closer.

Athletic Fields/Tennis Courts

Ms. Ball stated that State guidance allows Athletic Fields and Tennis Courts to be open and asked the Board to consider opening. The Board stated that and Ms. Ball agreed that the printed information for opening Athletic fields is confusing and asked Ms. Ball to get clarification from the State in writing. It was also noted that the written information for tennis is clearer so the Board decided to only open tennis at this time. On a motion made by Ms. Bissetta, seconded by Dr. Singh, the Board voted to allow both public and private tennis courts to open subject to adherence of the written guidance from the State. The chair took roll call and all were in favor.

Isolation Order and Protocols

Mr. McInnis asked that this agenda item be discussed again for Board reconsideration as the last discussion warranted issues with the language in the protocols. Ms. Ball stated that she recommended that the Board adopt the revised protocols which would remove the language of what the court would decide as we have no control over court action. Currently there are two additional residents not abiding by the Governor's order to self-isolate due to a positive antibody test. The State has issued guidance that these residents must self-isolate or obtain a negative nasal swab. Similar to the last two residents, the Nursing Service has been trying to contact these two residents by phone and they are unresponsive. Ms. York also sent letters to both residents asking them to contact her office and still has not heard back. Ms. York and Ms. Ball are recommending that this Isolation Order be sent to these two new residents. Ms. York stated that she has confirmed with the State Epidemiologist that anyone that receives a positive antibody test is considered infectious until they receive a negative nasal swab. Ms.



York stated that this is the current guidance from the State and we must follow it to ensure that all of our residents are protected. The guidance is simple, get a negative nasal swab and if negative, you will no longer be required to isolate. After a lengthy discussion, the Board decided to authorize the sending of the letter to the two current non-compliant residents. On a motion made by Mr. Conoby, seconded by Ms. Bissetta, the Board voted to authorize the chair to give written approval to either Ms. Ball or Ms. York to sign the isolation order and send to any residents going forward who are not in compliance with the State guidance after receiving a positive COVID -19 test and should the order be defied, an Emergency BOH meeting will be convened to discuss the next steps. The Chair took roll call and the vote as 4 Ayes to 1 No. Motion passes.

Next Meeting – The next Board of Health meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, June 3, 2020.

3. Minutes:

On a motion made by Mr. Conoby, seconded by Dr Singh, the Board unanimously voted to accept the minutes of May 20, 2020. The Chair took roll call and all were in favor.

4. Adjournment

On a motion made by Ms. Bissetta, seconded by Mr. Conoby, the Board unanimously voted to adjourn at 9:43 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
- Protocol for enforcement of isolation and quarantine orders
- COVID-19 Mandatory Enforcement Order
- Recreation memo: Re tennis
- BOH memo: Re Beaver trapping permit
- Minutes from May 20, 2020.

Respectfully Submitted,



Sheryl Ball
Acton Board of Health



William McInnis- Chairman,
Acton Board of Health