



City of Westfield, Massachusetts

Health Department

Board of Health Meeting Via Telephone Conference January 12, 2022

Present: Juanita Carnes, Chair Stanley Strzempko, M.D. Margaret Doody

Ms. Carnes opened the meeting at 6:04 p.m. For public participation, the following individuals were present: Dr. Susan Barry, Louis Tulik, Daniel Allie, Jessica Britton and Becca Florek. Minutes from the December 8th meeting and December 15th Special Meeting were reviewed and accepted as printed. A motion was made and seconded to approve the December 8th and December 15th meeting minutes.

The vote was as follows:

Carnes	–	Yes
Strzempko	–	Yes
Doody	–	Yes

All in favor, the Motion was declared passed.

Authorize Signature Authority for Kimberly Sienkiewicz Mr. Rouse stated that there is now an additional Office Manager in the Health Dept.; one Officer Manager is assigned to the Transfer Station and a new Office Manager is in the Health Dept. He requested that the Board vote to give Kimberly Sienkiewicz authority to sign payroll, invoices, maintenance, transfers, schedules and other documents for the Health Department in his absence. A motion was made and seconded to give Kimberly Sienkiewicz authority to sign such documents.

The vote was as follows:

Carnes	–	Yes
Strzempko	–	Yes
Doody	–	Yes

All in favor, the Motion was declared passed.

Ms. Carnes addressed the public with regard to civility in expressing disagreement with decisions made by the Board. She stated that, despite the opposition with the newly-enacted mask mandate, the Board members remain strong in their decision based on what is happening in the world. She wanted to remind everyone that the Board consists of three community-minded, educated, experienced individuals: Margaret Doody having 40 years in the Health Dept., Dr. Strzempko and herself with approximately 70 years of patient care experience. She quoted the CEO of Mass General with regard to the role everyone must take for the common good. She implored this community and its community leaders to do their part; and she thanked those that already are.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:

Dr. Susan Barry spoke in opposition of both the mask mandate and vaccines for children.

Louis Tulik expressed concern that masks may be detrimental if not the proper type, incorrectly worn or not properly cared for.

Jessica Britton spoke in opposition to masks and mask mandates.

Dan Allie voiced his concerns with the mask mandate.

Becca Florek asked the Board to make mask wearing among school children a choice and not a mandate.

PUBLIC HEALTH:

COVID-19 Update and Discussion: Last week there were 538 newly confirmed cases; this week it is 853. Unvaccinated individuals accounted for 73% of this total and school-age children 21%. There were 2 new deaths. These figures do not include any of the rapid home tests as those tests are not added to the state's database. The Health Dept. has focused all of its time and resources to assist the schools with their contact tracing. Mr. Rouse stated that the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) is the one that mandates masks in public schools, not the Board of Health. The school mask mandate was in effect prior to the mandate implemented by the Board of Health. Dr. Strzempko noted that Mark Keroack, President and CEO of Baystate Health, and an infectious disease specialist, wanted the Board to know just how important it was to implement a mask directive. Baystate Noble was at 118% capacity due to Covid. Additionally, Dr. Andrew Artenstein, the second senior physician at Baystate Health, also specializing in infectious diseases, strongly advised the Board to vote for a directive. Although our numbers this week were 853, it is more like 1,500-2,000 because of home testing. This is 3.7% of the entire city testing positive. The city has experienced approximately 130 Covid deaths and our local health care facilities continue to function understaffed and over capacity. Experts like Dr. Keroack and Dr. Artenstein say masks and vaccines work. Ms. Doody remarked that the Board has not implemented a vaccine mandate and, with the numbers increasing, there is no choice but to mandate masks. A motion was made and seconded that the Board of Health continue with the mask mandate which was put in place as of December 15, 2021.

The vote was as follows:

Carnes	–	Yes
Strzempko	–	Yes
Doody	–	Yes

All in favor, the Motion was declared passed.

Nursing Division Update: Mr. Rouse indicated that, because the state has disbanded the contract tracing collaborative and the numbers are increasing, it has not been possible for the department to conduct contact tracing on its own. Therefore, he has established a new position for a second staff nurse who will assist in contact tracing and with health promotions once Covid has declined. The current staff nurse will be relocated to the Senior Center to aid that population, but will remain under the Health Dept. Currently, there are five paid part-time contract tracers allocated to assisting the school department.

INSPECTIONAL SERVICES:

Request for Waiver of Notice and Assent to Entry of Judgement Regarding Tax Lien Foreclosure: 11 Howard St.: The Law Department has filed proceedings in Land Court and has asked the Board of Health to vote for a Waiver of Notice and Assent to Entry of Judgement regarding the property at 11 Howard Street so that the Tax Lien Foreclosure may proceed. A motion was presented and seconded to assent to the Waiver of Notice and Entry of Judgement with regard to the property at 11 Howard Street.

The vote was as follows:

Carnes	–	Yes
Strzempko	–	Yes
Doody	–	Yes

All in favor, the Motion was declared passed.

With no further items on the agenda to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 6:42 p.m.

Minutes approved by:

/cam

Next anticipated meeting date: February 9, 2022