



City of Westfield, Massachusetts
Health Department



Board of Health Meeting
Via Telephone Conference
February 9, 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. Jean Pao Wilson, Adam Ripka, Sandra Mackler, Gabriella Michaleszyn, Katrina (no last name given), and Jessica Britton. Minutes from the January 12, 2022, meeting were reviewed and accepted as printed. A motion was made and seconded to approve the January 12, 2022, meeting minutes.

The vote was as follows:

Carnes	–	Yes
Strzempko	–	Yes
Doody	–	Yes

All in favor, the Motion was declared passed.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:

Dr. Jean Pao Wilson questioned data presented on the City's dashboard as well as commenting on the number of breakthrough Covid cases.

Adam Ripka stated he was opposed to mask and vaccine mandates and suggested physicians and individuals focus on boosting immunity and promoting health.

Sandra Mackler spoke in favor of vaccinations.

Gabriella Michaleszyn spoke in opposition of mask mandates and stressed the importance of Vitamin D.

Katrina (no last name given) believes masks are detrimental and stated her opposition to them.

A motion was made and seconded to extend public participation for three minutes to allow for one additional speaker.

The vote was as follows:

Carnes	–	Yes
Strzempko	–	Yes
Doody	–	Yes

All in favor, the Motion was declared passed.

Jessica Britton spoke in opposition of mask and vaccine mandates and believes individuals should have a choice. She also feels that natural immunity is more effective.

PUBLIC HEALTH:

COVID-19 Update and Discussion: Mr. Rouse stated that, because not all home testing results are reported, the department is no longer placing numbers on the website. Inaccurate information is dangerous and not useful. The information that was being reported came from a state disease surveillance software (MAVIN). If the numbers were inaccurate, it was not intentional but possibly a flaw in the system. There may also have been a delay in reporting by the State. The only metric now that can be relied on is deaths. Contact tracing can no longer be conducted so the city's nurses' time can be better utilized.

Ms. Carnes reminded everyone that we need to look at the bigger picture and the number of lives lost from Covid. She received complaints regarding not having public participation at the December 15, 2021 special meeting. Because this was an action item requiring a vote, no public participation was required per the City's Law Department. Public Participation was held at the Board's regular monthly meeting on December 8, 2021. Based on information received from the experts, the Board will continue to do what it feels is best for the residents and community. She also wished to clarify her reference to feedback received prior to the vote on the mask mandate, which led to a search of city emails. Her reference was a broad reference to all communication received, not specifically emails. This is irrelevant as the vote was based on science and not public opinion. It was not a political decision. Because of the steady reduction in cases, she would recommend a downgrade to a mask advisory and reevaluate this issue in one month. If this does pass, every business has the right to decide whether or not their patrons wear a mask. The state continues to have a mandate on public transportation and health care facilities.

Dr. Strzempko stated that he is cautiously optimistic in that he has seen a rapid downward trend in the last two weeks. Hospitalizations and deaths are down. He believes we are in a position to rescind the mask mandate and issue an advisory.

Ms. Doody agreed with rescinding the mask mandate and asked that the residents to abide with the advisory.

Mr. Rouse emphasized that the decisions of the Board were based on the metrics and science and not a conspiracy. They have reviewed the recommendations of the experts and analyzed data. He also noted that making a phone call to discuss these matters with him is a better alternative than email. Also, before voting to rescind the mask mandate for residents, a vote should be conducted regarding the mask mandate for schools to be consistent with the Governor. A motion was made and seconded to downgrade the original mask mandate, which was voted on September 8, 2022, to a mask advisory effective February 28, 2022, for all public, private and parochial schools in the City of Westfield, consistent with that of the Governor and DESE.

The vote was as follows:

Carnes	–	Yes
Strzempko	–	Yes
Doody	–	Yes

All in favor, the Motion was declared passed.

A motion was made and seconded to downgrade the current mask mandate to a mask advisory for the City of Westfield effective immediately.

The vote was as follows:

Carnes	–	Yes
Strzempko	–	Yes
Doody	–	Yes

All in favor, the Motion was declared passed.

Mr. Rouse thanked the Board for their hard work.

Ms. Carnes notified everyone of a candlelight vigil to be held on the Green on February 14, 2022, from 5:00 – 8:00 pm. One candle will be lit for every individual who lost their life due to Covid.

Nursing Division Update: Mr. Rouse stated that the staff nurse has been relocated to the Senior Center and will tend to the needs of that population. He will be asking the Mayor for funding for a third nursing position within the department. He would like to become more proactive with health promotions within the community.

With no further items on the agenda to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 6:50 p.m.

Minutes approved by:

/cam

Next anticipated meeting date: March 9, 2022