



# City of Westfield, Massachusetts

## Health Department

### Board of Health Meeting Via Telephone Conference April 13, 2022



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

Ms. Carnes opened the meeting at 6:03 p.m. For public participation, the following individuals were present: Sandra Mackler, Jessica Britton, Gabriella Michaleszyn, and Katrina Ripka. Minutes from the February 9, 2022, meeting were reviewed and accepted as printed. A motion was made and seconded to approve the February 9, 2022, meeting minutes.

*The vote was as follows:*

Carnes	–	Yes
Strzempko	–	Yes
Doody	–	Yes

All in favor, the Motion was declared passed.

#### **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:**

Sandra Mackler asked that Covid information again be displayed on the City's website.

Jessica Britton stated her belief that the shared services grant would only invoke more government control over the City.

Gabriella Michaleszyn also spoke in opposition to the increased government control associated with the shared services grant and asked for the opportunity to speak with Board members about the importance of Vitamin D.

Katrina Ripka echoed the concerns regarding the increase in government control the shared services grant would bring and would like to see additional information provided.

#### **PUBLIC HEALTH:**

COVID-19 Update and Discussion: Mr. Rouse stated that the City cannot go back to reporting cases as we have no access to hospital records. There were 77 new reported cases this past week. Ms. Carnes stated that she has seen an uptick in Covid cases but they are not as severe. Most of the patients being seen have the flu. Dr. Strzempko also stated that the number of Covid cases has risen slightly, but are 20-25 times lower than at the peak in January. Influenza A has been most prevalent. He also stated that new medications are readily available with a prescription that decrease hospitalizations and deaths tenfold.

Mr. Rouse informed the Board that 61% of Westfield residents are fully vaccinated. He also indicated that the mask mandate would no longer be included on the agenda each month.

Report from Director Regarding Recent and Future Activities: Mr. Rouse stated that all Health Department positions have been filled and the Mayor has agreed to fund the third nursing position. This nurse would be responsible for conducting additional community health outreach. The inspectors have now begun septic and restaurant inspections, etc.

**ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH:**

Shared Services Grant Discussion: Westfield was asked to be the host agent for the Shared Services Grant for which Mr. Rouse refused. Although the City would receive 15% of the \$300,000 grant, there are stipulations for the use of these funds. Several of the hilltowns have expressed interest in this, however, the state prefers that a larger community become the fiduciary agent. Mr. Rouse has asked Southwick if they would be willing to become the host agent. Westfield may need to sign into this, but that does not mean that Westfield needs to take advantage of those services. Mr. Rouse stated that Westfield has no intention of using any of the services outlined in the grant nor are the funds needed, unless an emergency arises. He believes that the smaller communities involved in this could use the money more. He also does not want to be under the state control.

**EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS:**

Medical Reserve Corps Update: This organization is in danger of becoming defunct as the current director can no longer perform his duties. This organization acts as first responders in the event of an emergency such as opening shelters for widespread power outages, house fires, etc. Mr. Rouse sees its effectiveness and would like to see it continue, however, a new director will be needed. A question was raised as to whether the director position was a paid or volunteer position. Mr. Rouse will provide further information.

With no further items on the agenda to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 6:54 p.m.

Minutes approved by:

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/cam

*Next anticipated meeting date: May 11, 2022*