

City of Westfield, Massachusetts

Health Department

Board of Health Meeting Room 220 August 11, 2021

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

Ms. Carnes opened the meeting at 6:11 p.m. For public participation, Ms. Donna Liese of 287 Shaker Rd., Westfield, MA was present. Minutes from the May 12, 2021 meeting were reviewed and accepted as printed. A motion was made and seconded to approve the May 12, 2021 meeting minutes.

The vote was as follows:

Carnes	–	Yes
Strzempko	–	Yes
Doody	–	Yes

All in favor, the Motion was declared passed.



PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:

Ms. Donna Liese addressed the Board with three questions to which she was seeking answers: Can the Board provide visual proof that the Covid-19 virus has been isolated? If there are no documents proving that the virus has been isolated, how can we use the PCR test to identify it? Have masks been scientifically proven to prevent transmission of this virus? Mr. Rouse stated that under public participation, residents can state their concerns which are taken into consideration, however, the Board cannot interact with individuals during this time. Ms. Liese stated that she has conducted research on the PCR test and would like to know at what level it is set. She indicated that anything over a 30-cycle threshold can produce false positives. She inquired as to how many people are hospitalized and the seriousness. She believes that the virus can go through the small holes of masks; germs get clogged in the mask and end up in people's lungs. Mr. Rouse indicated that he would provide answers, if there are answers. He suggested that Ms. Liese reach out and speak to the State Department of Public Health as this is where the City is obtaining its information. He stated that everything that has been submitted by Ms. Liese to the Board will be taken into consideration and the Board will do what they can to respond.

PUBLIC HEALTH:

COVID-19 Update and Discussion: Mr. Rouse informed the Board that the current metrics for reporting Covid-19 stats would be expanded to include confirmed new cases, related deaths, individuals in isolation, number of households with confirmed cases and the number of new confirmed cases of unvaccinated individuals. Through contract tracing, individuals will also be asked about traveling. Dr. Strzempko suggested that the number of unvaccinated individuals currently hospitalized also be reported. Because it has been difficult to determine the number of hospitalized residents, the department can only report those to which it has knowledge.

Mr. Rouse indicated that not all pharmacies advertising vaccines are actually able to provide them. He will be publishing the sites with available vaccines.

Nurse Debra Mulvenna stated that she has been tracking the ages of individuals and has seen a switch from the older to younger age brackets. Mr. Rouse stated that he'd also like to report this information but didn't want to separate out pediatrics from others. He may possibly use an average age, but if the pediatric numbers are high, he may have a discussion with the school committee. Currently, 17% nationwide are pediatric cases.

This week, there were 29 new confirmed cases (same as last week), 44 in isolation and zero deaths. Of the new cases, travel seems to be a factor.

A vaccine event was held in the City Hall parking lot. Others, through Hilltown Health, will be held in areas where transportation and other travel or language barriers are present, such as the Samaritan Inn, Soup Kitchen and neighborhoods with large immigrant/refugee populations. Baystate is now operating a vax bus that will be providing vaccines.

The nurses will now be providing vaccination percentages which can be used to compare neighboring communities. Mr. Rouse advised that Chicopee is at 51% vaccination rate, Holyoke 49%, West Springfield 51% and Westfield 49%. Hampden County is lagging behind the state.

Because the state reduced the number of contact tracers when Covid numbers were decreasing, the Contact Tracing Collaborative now has to hire and train new individuals which is causing a delay. As a result, the Health Department will need to increase its contract tracing. School nurses will be asked to assist as they have in the past. Unfortunately, only people already authorized to use MAVIN will be able to help.

INSPECTIONAL SERVICES:

Local Title 5 / Sewer Connection Regulation Discussion: Because of limited resources, Mr. Rouse spoke to the Board with regard to current regulations for which the Health Dept. is responsible. He explained the local regulation regarding sewer availability and septic systems, and gave a brief history of why it was first adopted. A copy of the regulation was distributed to the Board members for their review. Mr. Rouse stated that the enforcement of this regulation would be very cumbersome and take more resources than the Health Dept. has available. Another issue was the fact that communication is lacking with regard to notification of where and when new sewers are being installed.

In a conversation Mr. Rouse had with one of the City Councilors, the Councilor offered to bring it before the Council and make it an Ordinance rather than a regulation, which will then transfer the enforcement of this to someone else. The Board would first need to rescind the current regulation.

A motion was made and seconded to rescind the local regulation regarding sewer availability and septic systems as adopted by the Board of Health on April 12, 2017.

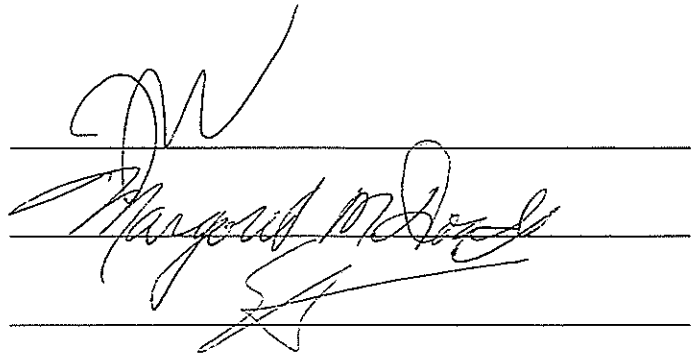
The vote was as follows:

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 7:02 p.m.

Minutes approved by:



A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Margaret McDevitt", is written over three horizontal lines. The signature is fluid and somewhat stylized.

/cam

Next anticipated meeting date: September 8, 2021