

Board of Health Meeting Minutes

January 4, 2022

Present: Holliston Board of Health (BoH): Thomas Ellis (*Chair*)
Josh Mann (*ViceChair*)
Jay Leary (*member*)

Scott Moles, *Health Director and Agent*
Ann Adams, *Health Department Clerk*
Kristin Abraham, *Health Department Clerk*

Chief Michael Cassidy, *Emergency Management Director*
Cynthia Listewnik, *Holliston School Committee Chairperson*
Stacey Raffi, *Holliston School Committee Representative*

Thomas Ellis, BoH Chair, opened the meeting at 7:00 PM.

Scott read the Remote Participation Statement.

Board of Health Roll Call: Thomas Ellis-present, Josh Mann – present, Jay Leary-present

Public Comment: None

Town COVID-19 Clinic:

- Saturday, January 15 from 9:00 to 1:00 pm, at Town Hall.
- Appointments required. Registration link on Town website.
- The second shots for the 5 to 11 year olds will be administered February 5th.
- There are over 100 folks registered. There is plenty of availability.
- Boosters are for ages 16+. Scott will keep the Board apprised if the DPH decides to follow the FDA new ruling for boosters for 12+.
- The Board was interested in volunteering to help with the clinic.

COVID-19 update:

- Town COVID-19 case numbers: active cases = 128, total = 1473.
- Mike Cassidy said the active case count last week was 63. The active cases doubled in a week.
- These numbers do not reflect home tests that aren't reported to the Massachusetts Virtual Epidemiological Network (MAVEN).
- Holliston moved to the red risk level by the State's COVID-19 designation.
- The positivity rate has gone up in Holliston to 5.5% but is still below the State rate of 20%, and below the rate of surrounding towns.

COVID-19 Mask Mandate:

- The Board discussed the current mask mandate for municipal buildings in Town and extending it to all public buildings and indoor spaces.
- Scott said the CDC & DPH reduced their quarantine criteria because the Omicron variant is more contagious but less lethal than the previous variant.
- Mike Cassidy stated that the MA DPH reports 80% of the MA COVID-19 cases are the Omicron variant.

- Thomas was concerned about the high occupancy rates at the hospitals. Mike Cassidy said the high hospital occupancy rates are not all COVID-19 cases. Some of the issue is limited staff as they are getting COVID-19.
- Mike Cassidy explained the COVID-19 spread in Holliston is within families and neighborhoods. He sees no evidence of people spreading COVID-19 at community gatherings or indoor public spaces.
- Thomas felt a mask mandate would set a tone to encourage public safety and would make it easier for business to require masks.
- Mike Cassidy said business don't need the BoH to mandate masks; it is within their powers to mandate masks at their business, and many businesses in Town already do.
- Josh felt that business would appreciate a BoH mask mandate so they don't have to have one. He believes the Governor should make a mask mandate for the State.
- Michelle Zeamer, 583 Winter Street and local business owner, said she would like a mask mandate because delivery persons don't always wear masks. She would like the BoH to mandate masks to include all indoor workplaces.
- Mike Cassidy said 2022 is different than December 2020 when the BoH voted the last mask mandate. Now we have almost universal vaccination, and the disease is different. He is concerned with the line between the role of government and individual responsibility. He is concerned how a mandate would be enforced.
- Josh said that young children still can't get vaccination and thinks we need to protect this vulnerable population.
- Mike Cassidy said as of the latest 2020 census Holliston has 690 children under 5 years old.
- Mike Cassidy said that the Schools have had a mask mandate since the start of the school year in September 2021, where children would be most exposed.
- Liz Borque-Theiler, 17 Norland Street and a previous BoH member, said since the Town has become a red risk level, it was the responsibility of the BoH to mandate masks where people congregate.
- Cynthia Listewnik, Chair of the School Committee, reported that the teachers and staff have received COVID-19 test kits. The Schools currently have 40 staff out due to COVID-19 (self or family member). Fortunately college students still home have helped with substituting. They are still working through the case numbers as folks are not all back from holiday travel.
- Jay felt that a mask advisory was more effective than a mandate at obtaining compliance. People and business don't want to be told what to do. People want to do the right thing. Jay is concerned about the language of a mandate.
- Thomas felt that this is a pandemic and it was on the BoH to mandate masks for public safety and health.
- The Board worked on the language and implementation of a mask mandate.
- Jay said nothing in the wording was problematic for him, but he would not vote in favor of a mandate, preferring a mask advisory.

Thomas made a motion to approve the indoor mask mandate as written (attachment). Josh seconded. Roll Call: Thomas Ellis-Aye, Josh Mann- Aye, Jay Leary-No. Passed.

COVID-19 Contact Tracing:

- Jay said that Hopkinton is considering stopping contact tracing in favor of more COVID-19 testing. He wants to explore that idea.
- Michelle Zeamer, who was previously a BoH member, warned that contact tracing was important for many contagious diseases. The Board agreed.

COVID-19 home test kits:

- Mike Cassidy said that he has given test kits to the Food Pantry, Counsel on Aging and Health Department to be used for the residents who have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19. If it a choice between getting food/medicine and getting tested, these kits will help keep the Town safe. He has been authorized to get more kits. They have a negotiated rate of \$10 per kit (2 tests per kit), down from the previous cost of \$16 per kit.
- Holliston was not one of the 102 communities to get free test kits from the State based on income. Mike Cassidy said we need to have a long-term plan and not over stockpile kits based on the current surge of cases that would probably peak in January.

Bills: None

Minutes: Thomas made a motion to approve the minutes from December 28, 2021. Jay seconded.
Roll Call: Thomas Ellis-Aye, Josh Mann- Aye, Jay Leary-Aye. Passed.

Next BoH Meeting is January 18, 2022.

Board Comment: None

Thomas made a motion at 8:57 PM to adjourn the BoH meeting. Jay seconded.
Roll Call: Thomas Ellis-Aye, Josh Mann- Aye, Jay Leary-Aye. Passed.

Respectfully:
Ann Adams, Health Department Clerk

Approval Date: 1-18-22

Attachment: Mask Mandate