

Board of Health Meeting Minutes

January 18, 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*

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-arrived 10 minute late

Public Comment:

Christine Schadler, owner of The Corner Market, 12 Concord Street shared with the Board their problems with the current mask mandate:

- She is losing revenue because customers are taking their business to the surrounding towns that have a mask advisory rather than a mandate. Their lunch business is 80% blue collar workers who often don't want to wear masks.
- Policing the public is a problem. When the younger front-end employee asks customers to put on a mask they are met with "mask rage" so Christine has told them not to confront non-mask wearers.
- Even friends of The Corner Market say they will come back when the mask mandate is lifted.
- It is difficult to get and retain employees with the mask mandate. Several of her employees also work in surrounding towns that have mask advisories and find wearing a mask while in front of a 600 degree pizza oven to be unacceptable. The employees' only mask break is standing outside in the freezing cold, which is not easy.
- Customers who are pro-mask mandate come into The Corner Market and take photos of people not wearing masks and post it on social media to "mask shame" them and make The Corner Market seem like a bad place. They are losing customers over this mask mandate regardless of what they do. They are fearful of the public.
- There is no end in sight for this mask mandate as was imposed without an end date or criteria for lifting or review. The customers are exhausted and angry.
- The average time the lunch customer is in The Corner Market is 4 minutes. They order and pay on-line. This is not a long enough duration to be considered close contact. They are not a super-spreader location.
- On Fridays and Saturdays The Corner Market have high customer demand so they have implemented curbside delivery, restricting anyone from entering the store. This requires 2 to 3 additional employees to facilitate and cuts into the already slim profit margins, which are typically only 7 to 10%. They have the sales do this for weekend dinners but curbside delivery is not sustainable for the lunchtime.
- Jason Schadler, Christine's husband agreed with what she was saying and asked if there was no help for the business owners.

Gordon & Lisa Woods, owners of Bar Athena, 770 Washington Street, shared their similar experiences of losing revue due to this mask mandate:

- They have spread their dining tables far apart, losing revenue but feel their customers prefer the safer distances.
- They do not try to enforce the mask mandate, but welcome customers masked or unmasked, however they feel comfortable. The diners will have their masks off to eat.
- As a professional chef, Lisa feels it impossible to wear a mask for the long hours of cooking over hot stove.

The Board asked clarifying questions and discussed what was being presented to them. They thanked the Schadler's and Wood's for coming and sharing their concerns. They will take their concerns under review.

Health Director's Performance Review was discussed. Thomas and Travis met with Scott and shared the input from the Board: strengths and opportunities for development. Thomas said they are looking forward to continuing working together.

Town COVID-19 Clinic:

- Saturday, January 15 from 9:00 to 1:00 pm, at Town Hall. 141 vaccinated
 - 32 were 5 -11 yr olds, 104 were boosters, 5 were other.
- The second shots for the 5 to 11 year olds will be administered February 5th.
- There are many available vaccination opportunities in Northborough (town collaborative) and Ashland.

FY'23 Budget: Scott shared next year's proposed Health Department budget with the Board.

- It is level funded with a 2% cost of living increase in the salaries.
- COVID-19 work will continue to be paid out of ARPA for the next 2 years.
- The Board will review the budget and potentially vote on it at the next meeting.
- They need to present the budget at the February 15th Finance Committee meeting.

COVID-19 update:

- Town COVID-19 case numbers: active cases = 127, total = 1882.
- Holliston remains in the red risk level by the State's COVID-19 designation.
- The positivity rate is comparable to surrounding towns.
- These numbers do not reflect home tests that aren't reported to the Massachusetts Virtual Epidemiological Network (MAVEN).
- Josh mentioned the COVID-19 home test kit available at CVS that requires the tester to use a phone app so the results are reported to the State.
- The COVID-19 cases will come off the active list faster now that the DPH has reduced the quarantine days from 14 to 10, reducing the apparent case numbers.

COVID-19 Mask Mandate:

- The Board returned to the discussion of the mask mandate.
- Jay stated that he doesn't agree with a mask mandate and still supports a mask advisory. Holliston residents have a very high vaccination rate and they are smart enough to decide what is best for them. Since the mandate has no enforcement language it should be an advisory.
- Thomas said he doesn't want business to lose money due to the mask mandate. He is in favor of retaining the mask mandate but making a "carve out" for restaurants.

- Josh wanted to have the current mandate to expire next Tuesday and have a meeting to review what the current mask mandate.
- The Board agreed to have a meeting next Tuesday, January 25 at 7:00 PM.

Bills: The Board reviewed and discussed the following bills:

- **Salmon VNA- COVID-19 cases, paid by ARPA** **\$16,917.50**
Thomas made a motion to pay the Salmon bill. Jay seconded.
Roll Call: Thomas Ellis-Aye, Josh Mann- Aye, Jay Leary-Aye. Passed.
- **Stantec – Covanta Compliance Officer** **\$874.00**
Thomas made a motion to pay the Stantec bill. Jay seconded.
Roll Call: Thomas Ellis-Aye, Josh Mann- Aye, Jay Leary-Aye. Passed.

Minutes: Thomas made a motion to approve the meeting minutes from January 2, 2022.
 Josh seconded. Roll Call: Thomas Ellis-Aye, Josh Mann- Aye, Jay Leary-Aye. Passed.

Next BoH Meeting is January 25, 2022.

Board Comment: None

Thomas made a motion at 9:13 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: 1-25-22