



142 Main Street, Suite 410, Nashua, NH 03060

BOARD OF HEALTH MEETING

May 5, 2021

12:30 PM

Minutes

Attendees:

Board of Health: Dr. Storace, Dr. Charles Cappetta, Dr. Stephanie Wolf-Rosenblum

Board of Aldermen: Tom Lopez

City Employees: Bobbie Bagley, Kim Bernard, Flavia Martin, Angela Consentino, Jane Goodman, Nicole Chute, Foqia Ijaz, Bob Mack.

Call to Order: By Board Member – Dr. Storace

Approval April 9, 2020 Minutes: Minutes approved by board members: Moved by Dr. Cappetta and 2nd by Dr. Rosenblum. All in favor.

Mask Mandate:

- The discussion was opened by the Director of Division of Public Health and Community Services (DPHCS). The director was asked by a member of Board of Alderman to revisit the City of Nashua Mask Mandate after the Governor's order of ending the mask mandate in NH. The Epidemiologist and The Incidence Response Team met to discuss that. They will present some information as to why it is important to maintain the mask mandate in Nashua at this time.
- Extended situational update was given by the Epidemiologist.
- As of May 3rd 27% of Nashua residents have been fully vaccinated and 43% have been partially vaccinated. There is some vaccine hesitancy but about 70% of the population is expected to be vaccinated if it was to be available to them.
- Q; Do we have any general demographics on the age range of current cases?
- A: Current active cases: 0-19 years of age-25, 20-30 years of age-20 cases, 30-40 years of age-20 cases, 40-50 years of age- 13 cases, 50-60 years of age-20 cases and 60 and older-17 cases.
- A significant number of cases are in the age groups that are only recently eligible to be vaccinated. Hospitals are reporting that there is a decrease in the number of hospitalizations and deaths in the populations that are vaccinated and a decrease in the number of cases within the staff as they are vaccinated. Percent positivity rates has

decreased but the number of cases per 100,000 is still significantly high. If we relax the mitigating measures then we will see an increase in the number of cases.

- Do we have any sense of the number of people who have not taken their second dose of vaccine?
- A: Some people missed their second doses, some are still waiting to get the second dose and some are just being cautious.
- Q: Is it considered good that 70% of the populations will be vaccinated? How does this compare to other initiatives in the State e.g. smoking cessation?
- A: There are some people that can be convinced to make the decision to be vaccinated. We are doing a lot of education in the community to help people make that decision.
- What would it take to relax mask mandate? People are getting tired. Mask mandate can only be lifted until we achieve herd immunity in the community and that cannot be achieved until the children are vaccinated. We need to pick some target indicators in order to relax the mask mandate. BOH should not compromise the safety of the community at this point even if it may not make economic sense.
- A member of Board of Alderman (BOA) expressed concern that no changes are being made to the mask ordinance. BOA are looking for recommendations from BOH. If there is no change made to the mask ordinance then all the pressure goes to the BOA to make a decision and it becomes a political rhetoric. BOA refer to the numerous benchmarks that were discussed in the earlier meetings to be used as guidelines. BOH is not implementing those guidelines in an ordinance for the legislatures. It is worth considering that fatigue happens at both sides, fatigue of wearing masks and fatigue of health professionals to engage in these kind of conversations.
- The DPHCS director said that there are some relaxations in the mask wearing for the fully vaccinated people. Each city can choose to make their own decisions. Lifting the mask mandate at this point can cause a huge spike in the number of cases.
- Member of the BOA asked if the CDC guidelines are legally binding on the businesses.
- CDC recommendations are not legally binding but we have the ordinance in Nashua.
- Q: Is it correct that either the BOH or BOA can amend the ordinance?
- A: The court has relied on the authority of the BOA in upholding the mask mandate in the past. BOA has the authority to lift or amend the ordinance but can rely on the BOH for recommendations and criteria.
- Masks are required outdoors at the places of business but not if you are walking down the street.
- BOA has requested to increase the number of BOH members to five.

Motion to hold a special BOH meeting to discuss the changes in the mask mandate made by Dr. Storace, moved by Dr. Cappetta and second by Dr. Wolf-Rosenblum.

Department of Public Health and Community Services (DPHCS) Director's Report.

- Celebrated Public Health Week and acknowledged the staff.
- City and State budgets came through for Public Health Network Grants. We have the funding to keep our programs and continue all the COVID-19 related activities.

- The Division is maintaining sufficient staff.
- The Director is appointed to NH Opioid Abatement Commission and NH Overdose Council by the Governor.

Comments/questions:

- Q: Are the Mayors Opioid Task Force and the Suicide Prevention Group still working?
- A: Yes they continued to work during the pandemic. The Suicide prevention Group meeting will be convened soon.
- Q: Is there some messaging going out in the community around mental health awareness?
- A: A press release will go out on Friday on Mental Health Awareness and a campaign has also being going on “Know the Signs and Symptoms of Emotional suffering”

Department Summaries

Community Health Department (CHD):

- Continue to provide services including immunization clinics and outreach focusing on STD/HIV/Hepatitis C. Child and adult immunizations, SSANA services and lead poisoning awareness and testing.
- CHD is a part of vaccination strategy team.
- Total of seven outbreaks were investigated. Overall cases went down.

Report from Epidemiologist:

- Work on Community Health Improvement plan continues. Getting trained on a new software. Five priority area surveys are going out to the community based providers.

Report from Public Health Emergency Preparedness Department (PHEP):

- PHEP Coordinator resigned and Director of DPHCS is the interim contact.
- We will be able to maintain the responsibilities of the position with the help of staff.

Report from Health Promotion and Communication Specialist:

- Continue to update Division’s social media pages and website regarding Covid-19, including but not limited to: data, recommendations, and resources.
- Attended three mass vaccination clinics to oversee communications and marketing.
- Was able to provide in time information to the public on the pause of the Johnson and Johnson vaccine.
- Community Health Workers continue to provide information to the community to reduce vaccine hesitancy. They also sent information to the health care providers about our vaccine clinics.
- Disseminated information on expiration of the State’s mask mandate and the continuation of the City’s mask mandate to the local media and food establishments.
- Mailed lead testing toolkits to regional health care providers. Will follow up with them about any barriers to lead testing.
- Running marketing campaigns on Mental Health awareness and STD prevention.

Report from Public Health Strategist:

- Working on the Community Health Improvement Plan. A few priority areas are Communicable Diseases, Maternal and Child Health, Emergency Management, Chronic Diseases and Behavioral Health. We have a really good representation from the partner organizations to work on these priority areas.
- Working on a four year internal Strategic Plan.

Report from Environmental Health:

- We are looking into how the lifting of the Governor's Safer at Home Act will impact outdoor events and food establishments. We provide information on mask requirements but cannot enforce that.
- Resumed our regular food service inspections. We are educating the food service workers and owners.

Question/Comments:

- Q: Is there a push back by the food service industry on mask wearing?
- A: It is a split-some owners appreciate it and others say that their businesses are suffering due to the mask mandate.

Report from Welfare Department:

- Demand is lower for emergency assistance due to tax return season and stimulus assistance. People can apply for financial assistance to the CAP agencies if they have a COVID-19 related hardship.
- To date we have spent \$350,000 of the general budget which is about 60% of the budget for the fiscal year. .

**Full departmental reports can be found on City Website under April 2021 BOH Meeting Reports*

Public Comment:

- Q: Who may be contacted to be notified about public meetings in advance?
- A: There is a system in place. Anyone can subscribe to be notified to public meetings and all agendas are posted a week in advance on the website and public library.

Meeting adjourned at 1:53 PM. Motion to adjourn made by Dr. Storace. Moved by Dr. Cappetta and second by Dr. Storace.

Next Meeting: June 9, 2020