



142 Main Street, Suite 410, Nashua, NH 03060

BOARD OF HEALTH SPECIAL MEETING

May 19, 2021

12:30 PM

Minutes

Attendees:

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

Board of Aldermen (BOA): Tom Lopez, Brandon Laws, Patricia Klee, Michael O'Brian.

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

Call to Order: By Board Member – Dr. Storace

In continued compliance with the Governor's Safe at Home Order, announcement made of the meeting held via Zoom. Phone numbers provided to call and for support. Meeting ID and number shared with attendees. Zoom meeting recorded.

Roll call made by Board Chair-Dr. Storace

Mask Mandate

Discussion by the BOH:

- Situational update was given by the Epidemiologist. Approximately 35% of the Nashua residents are fully vaccinated and about 48% have had one dose of vaccine.
- BOH will discuss today as to whether or not to advise the BOA to lift the Mask Mandate.
- In light of CDC guidelines and statistics we have sufficient information to say that fully vaccinated people are safe to not wear masks except for travel purposes, in hospitals and health care facilities and in the presence of immunocompromised people.
- CDC guidelines say that unvaccinated people should continue to wear masks and continue social distancing.
- All people who have a condition or are taking medications that weaken your immune system, may NOT be fully protected even if fully vaccinated. Such persons should continue taking all precautions, including masking when in public settings.
- Statistics are changing daily but at this point we are still in the category of substantial transmission and nowhere near building herd immunity so it is important that unvaccinated people continue to wear masks and keep social distancing.

- One recommendation by the BOH is to not require masks for outdoor environments but continue the mask mandate for indoor environments.
- Another recommendation is that businesses, private entities, religious institutions and public offices may make their own decisions on whether to require wearing masks or not.
- It will not be feasible to ask patrons to show their vaccination cards if they choose not to wear masks.

Public Comments:

- States like Florida and Texas have eased their restrictions and did not see a surge in cases. Nashua should also ease the mask mandate so that residents can get back to a normal life.
- It should be the choice of business owners to make the decision of whether to have people wear masks inside their businesses or not. Medical professionals have gone from no understanding of the disease to a strong understanding of the disease but are losing sight of the original goal which was to not overload the hospitals. They are incentivizing people to take an experimental vaccine.
- It is time that the City of Nashua end the mask mandate in line with what CDC has announced.
- This debate was brought on at the State House and most of the testimony given was to leave it to businesses whether to require masks or not.
- Mask mandate is hurting businesses. It should be up to the businesses to decide whether to require patrons to wear masks or not.
- Over 500,000 people in the State are fully vaccinated. We have come a long way and people have been doing the right thing so it is time to move on.
- Data shows that mask mandate has not been super efficacious in preventing the spread. Saying that people have to wear masks indoors even if they are vaccinated is not a great incentive.
- We are seeing that people want to follow what is recommended federally and on the State level. We as a community need to build a culture of health that encourages people to do the right thing and be accountable.
- Many businesses do not enforce the law and there is no enforcement by the local government either. This hurts the businesses that do enforce the mask mandate.
- BOH and BOA should end the mask mandate. It should be the choice of individuals to wear or not to wear the masks.
- Getting back to normal has always led us to a surge in the spread of virus. I ask for caution.
- Protect the rights of citizens that don't have access to transportation.

Comments by BOH:

- Incremental changes that have been made since the beginning of the pandemic have been phenomenal but we are not there yet.

- Job of BOH is to make recommendations based on what the science and data says. It is not to respond to how people follow the mandate or to enforce it. It is unquestionably been proven that masks do protect the public and that the vaccinations are very effective.
- COVID-19 is an extremely dangerous infection with sometimes long term effects on health.
- If we lift the mask mandate then it is important that people understand the risk they are taking and they should take precaution.
- We do not have information to support statement that COVID-19 is a seasonal virus.
- CDC guidelines say that if you are not vaccinated then you continue to wear mask and keep social distancing.
- BOH is here because of Public Health and not in spite of it.

Statement by BOH:

In light of the recent changes in guidelines by both State of NH and CDC, the BOH would like to advise BOA to modify the Nashua mask ordinance. Our recommendation is to allow fully vaccinated people to go about their business without the use of mask unless they want to wear one. This would mean inside and outside. We highly recommend those who are unvaccinated to wear a mask for their own protection and that of others until they get vaccinated or until the appropriate health organization deems it safe not to wear a mask. We ask that people traveling on public transportation, in tight quarters or in health care facilities wear a mask. If the current situation changes then we reserve the right to change these guidelines accordingly. We will continue to monitor the statistics. As far as local businesses are concerned, we will leave it up to their discretion on protocols for their businesses. They must weigh the risk of protecting both their patrons and staff themselves. If they feel they want to continue the use of mask, this would mean for both vaccinated and unvaccinated people, people must comply as they would not have any way to safely distinguish between the two.

Discussion on the Statement by BOH:

- The statement should include that people who are not vaccinated are recommended to avoid crowds and poorly ventilated spaces.
- The wording of the statement should be put in writing and reviewed by the corporation council.
- BOH will work with Attorney Bolton before sending it out to the BOA.
- It is not the responsibility of BOA to enforce an ordinance. If businesses think that they are not getting support in enforcing this ordinance then it should be brought to the attention of police commissioner.
- BOH would like to move the recommendation with the understanding that Attorney Bolton will help BOH craft a formal recommendation for the BOA with appropriate language that the mask mandate be lifted but it will be accompanied by the information that was shared. We urge that essential businesses create a protected environment for the citizens.

Motion to move the recommendation made by Dr. Rosenblum, moved by Dr. Cappetta and second by Dr. Storace.

Chairman's Fund:

- Proposal to take \$50,000 of Chairman's Fund and form a scholarship for Nashua student who are interested in becoming a Public Health nurse. Dr. will match that amount to make it \$100,000. The interest will be given to the student but the principal will remain the same. BOH will work with Attorney Bolton to form the scholarship.

Motion to move the scholarship proposal made by Dr. Cappetta, moved by Dr. Rosenblum, second by Dr. Storace.

Meeting adjourned at 1:43 PM. Motion to adjourn made by Dr. Storace. Moved by Dr. Cappetta and second by Dr. Rosenblum.

Next Meeting: June 9, 2020

DRAFT