

BOARD OF HEALTH



TOWN OF HEATH
Massachusetts

Heath Board of Health – Special Meeting – Meeting Minutes MASK MANDATE & EMPLOYEE TESTING PROGRAM REVIEW Meeting Held February 25, 2022 – 5:00 PM via Zoom

- I. Board members in attendance: Randy Crochier (FRCOG), Lorraine Berger, Gene Garland (chair), Barbara Gordon, Susan Gruen, Elissa Viarengo, Kate Peppard (Clerk).
- II. Meeting called to order 5:00 PM (Garland)
- III. Reviewed agenda
- IV. MASK MANDATE DISCUSSION:
 - a. Franklin County 8.25% positive test rate (as of 2/17/22), Massachusetts is at 2.13% as a whole
 - b. Franklin County is 87% vaccinated
 - c. Barbara noted that Heath's rate is 29.79 positivity (14 day average); Heath is the third highest rate in the state. Randy noted that due to how we are spread across multiple zip codes, this can skew the numbers. These numbers are more reflective of center Heath (residents with mailing address in 01346 zipcode). Therefore, our numbers could be higher with Heath cases being attributed to other zip codes used within our town.
 - d. February cases in Heath as of 2/25/22: 13
 - e. Randy reviewed local mandates:
 - i. Ashfield lifting 3/14
 - ii. Buckland, Charlemont, Shelburne lifting 3/7
 - iii. Rowe lifting next week for outdoors at the school, will retain at all indoor town locations for the time being.
 - iv. Trying to be consistent with school schedules. Randy met with BOH reps for all towns overseeing schools in Mohawk district and negotiated that they all agree on the 3/7/22 date, which was a compromise reached to provide consistent messaging for the schools within the district.
 - v. Greenfield has lifted their mandate, as has Montague, Erving, Deerfield
 - f. Susan noted that she felt 3/14 is more appropriate with school vacation; Randy agrees that 3/14 feels like a better date, and that 3/7 was the minimum he recommended for communities.
 - g. Barbara noted that CDC has issued new metrics/guidance, just today, for how much protection to maintain in communities; have developed formula that is predictive of risk and it will be available on their website tomorrow. Barbara would prefer to be strong with holding the mask mandate rather than premature lifting. Consider including the new CDC metrics in our decision process, while still remaining cognizant of our LOCAL stats, which are not always reflective of the County or State.

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- h. Randy noted that contact tracing efforts have shifted dramatically and for all intents and purposes will end via FRCOG as of 3/1/22.
- i. Susan noted that committees want to meet in person
- j. Barbara noted that she would like the Select Board to ask all committees to offer a virtual option, regardless of future State OML rulings, for meetings and virtual postings to protect most vulnerable residents while preserving their access to town governance.
- k. Elissa noted that she wants to look at maintaining protective guidance, but also keep in mind the community's fatigue about masks, and communicate clearly on this
- l. Lorraine noted that she'd like to see a way that we give some freedoms while keeping people safe. Perhaps open the library but hold the mandate until 3/14.
 - i. Elissa agrees – give people some hope that things are lifting
 - ii. Gene noted that if we give a little and rescind the mandate, we should have an advisory in place for immunocompromised people
 - iii. Barbara noted that the Library Trustees want to follow the BOH recommendations, they do not want to make this decision on their own.
- m. CPHS is willing to update signage when we change mandate/shift to mask advisory
- n. Barbara moved that BOH formally provide an update to the BOS (written and verbally at the 3/1/2022 BOS meeting) regarding the mask mandate in Heath – that we are closely monitoring metrics at state, county, and local level and hope to drop the mandate on or around 3/14 if the trends continue in a positive direction. Elissa seconded. Ayes: Susan, Barbara, Lorraine, Elissa, Gene
 - i. Should note (letter and verbally): Heath has 3rd highest rate in the state at 29.79% positivity (14 day average as of yesterday); also that we will utilize the CDC formulas; need to let people know we have a plan, and that there is reasoning.
 - ii. Have a robocall after the Select Board meeting to share same information with residents. Perhaps present it as a joint message from the SB and BOH if agreement at the SB meeting on Tuesday.
 - iii. Issue a robocall after the Select Board meeting
- V. Heath-based Free Rapid Antigen COVID testing program testing for town employees
 - a. Susan and Claire took a class with FRCOG's Meg Ryan on the Simple Report COVID testing. Susan and Claire have drafted a protocol. Will revisit in a month and review how much time Claire is spending. Town may need to increase Claire's hours.
 - b. Randy noted we should clarify who is an employee; Susan to get list from Hilma
 - c. If municipal employees test positive, their families and non-employee contacts can PCR test for free at GCC through April.
 - d. Gene will present the plan to the Select Board for implementation if BOH approves

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- e. Gene moved to accept Susan's plan as written. Seconded by Barbara. Ayes: Lorraine, Elissa, Gene, Barbara, Susan
- VI. Barbara moved to adjourn at 6:00, seconded by Gene. Ayes: Barbara, Gene, Lorraine, Susan, Elissa
 - a. Meeting Adjourned 6:02 PM

Meeting minutes produced by Kate Peppard, BOH Clerk.