



TOWN OF NORTH READING Massachusetts

Board of Health

North Reading Board of Health Meeting Minutes August 12, 2021 Teleconference/Virtual

Members Present: Gary Hunt, Chairman
Karen Martin
Pam Vath

Others Present:

Robert Bracey, Health Agent
Donna Hovey, Public Health Nurse
Stephanie Connolly
40 Members of the Public

7:00 PM

Mr. Gary Hunt opened the meeting.

Minutes

All previous minutes have been accepted, signed and posted to the Health and Board of Health websites.

New Business:

Dr. Daly Superintendent of Schools:

Summer programs that were held at the schools have gone well. The schools had a strong recommendation that masks be worn while in the program. Towards the end of the summer programs there were two cases of COVID positive, that required contact tracing. The school committee has met and said that if DESE requires a mask mandate then they will also. Masks will be required on school buses and in the nurse's office. At this time the distance guidance from DESE has been removed, the schools intend on having an every other seat set up for most of the building and assigned seating for lunches to assist with contact tracing. DESE has strongly recommended that the unvaccinated wear a mask, while fully vaccinated can be unmasked. All are welcome to wear a mask if they choose to. Testing is also going to continue within the schools as well as a potential new plan called "Test and Stay". The next school committee meeting is 8/16/2021. Dr. Daly has thanked the working group and appreciates the fact that he has been able to work so closely with the Board of Health.

Public Health Nurse Report:

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Board of Health

There was a two week period that we had no cases stating on July 1, 2021. The numbers July 1-August 12, 2021: Royal Meadow Nursing Center has had no cases. The community has had 26 new cases of unvaccinated persons and 24 cases that are break through cases, meaning those that have been fully vaccinated, for a total of 50 cases being monitored.

0-11 years unvaccinated 3 cases

12-15 years unvaccinated 0 cases, vaccinated 0

16-19 years unvaccinated 2 cases, vaccinated 4

20-29 years unvaccinated 8 cases, vaccinated 1

30-49 years unvaccinated 5 cases, vaccinated 8

50-64 years unvaccinated 6 cases, vaccinated 8

65-74 years unvaccinated 1 cases, vaccinated 0

75 and above unvaccinated 1 cases, vaccinated 3

No hospitalizations that PHN Mrs. Hovey is aware of and 0 deaths. At this time there seems to be mostly family transmission.

Health Director Report:

Mr. Bracey reported that within the community our numbers are going up for vaccinated persons. Individuals with one dose 67%, an increase from last week's 66%. Fully Vaccinated 63%, an increase from last week's 62%. As of last week the overall State average for one dose is 72% and fully vaccinated 64%. At this time the age category that is concerning is 12-15 year olds, one dose 62% and fully vaccinated 53% as of today those numbers are one dose 65% and fully vaccinated 55%. 16-19 year olds, one dose 77% and fully vaccinated 70% all the older categories are above 70%.

Food Protection: Mr. Bracey has been able to get back out to do inspections. Nicks Pizza: still doing construction there and hope to have a final inspection there soon. Subway on Lowell St and the Speedway have had changes of ownership.

Title V: going well, nothing to report at this time

Mosquito Control: The Town is at a risk level of low and moderate risk level for EEE. No human cases

Tobacco control: Mr. Beauregard will be getting back out to do compliance checks before the end of the year.

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Public Comment:

Jim Collins- 4 Fairview St: At this time the Governor is leaving it up to the Towns to decide on mask mandates our children. Dr. Daly are you going to make a mandate or does the Director of Health over rule and/or supersede you?

Answer via Chair Mr. Hunt: Directives, Orders and such stand as Board of Health gets delegated authority from the State and that supersedes the Schools. Answer via Dr. Daly: I would make the recommendation and the school committee would then vote on the matter.

Mark Brown- 99 Central St: Raised concerns about the use of masks and what they are rated. He would like to see the use of other strategies before masks are mandated for children. Stating concerns with social aspects, facial expressions and hearing others talking. If people wish to wear them, then that is ok.

Laina Simone- 7 Deerfield place: Based on the numbers stated here 9 cases which is 0.0005% of children here. She is not in favor of masking the students stating that the masks do not block out the virus and can cause headaches, attention issues, sleep troubles and added other fears. At the height of the Pandemic there was very low cases in children.

Peter Antonuccio- 61 Haverhill St: Mr. Bracey said that we followed the State and that allowed North Reading to do the same, but this time we have a choice. We need to not mask our students and abuse them. How much time in your meetings did you spend investigating the adverse effects of masks vs how much time to mask our children?

A: Mr. Hunt: The Board met on a weekly basis though the duration of this Pandemic. We have medical professionals on staff as well as sought guidance from others, such as DPH and CDC. We have the best interest of the community in mind.

Richard Harrington- 6 Hemlock Rd: Have you gathered data on the adverse effects on kid's social emotional wellbeing such as suicide? He feels that with the masks we are making kids afraid of the air of being outside.

Paul Moriarty- 2 Apsen Rd: Dr. Daly will kids in middle/ high school change classes or will the teachers move? Do you see this changing during the year? Donna: what have you done as far as mental health of the kids, whom has had counseling, depression segmented by age? Paul feels that the students should not have assigned seating at lunch that this is taking away from their social interactions. Wants to see parents have the choice for masks or not.

A: Dr. Daly- looking at making the contact tracing easier for the schools and will look at various solutions. The school year will be expected to be a regular year.

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A: Donna Hovey- There certainly has been some effects on everyone. People have kept to a smaller social bubble. Know that we are looking at how to address mental health needs in the future. Know that in all decisions we have the best interest of community in mind.

Courtney Green- 18 Magnolia St: Dr. Daly, my kids are in elementary school and in the past they have had the four desks together, will they be in rows again this year? There will be some built in measures. At this point it is normal that some are in a mask vs not. Feels that the parent's job is to say that someone wearing a mask you should give the person a little more space. The flu even with the vaccine kills more kids than COVID. A: Dr. Daly- the recommendation is to have as much distance as possible. When unmasked yes they will be forward facing.

Joesph Boccelli- 31 Cedar St: No hospital from July1, so no strain on the hospital system, bedrest, same equivalent as the flu. People that are in higher risk groups have been vaccinated by choice. The picture of the kids spaced out is not normal. The mental effects are worse. We need to figure out what is best for our kids, it should be up to the parents.

Richard Harrington- 6 Hemlock Rd: Stated the kids are not the most vulnerable. Mr. Hunt it lets you know that they take it seriously, that is not the job of kids to put certain adults at ease. In years before with the flu we would never have had this discussion, as a Town to say that we are going to line up behind our healthy children, to use them as a line of defense to make us feel safe is shameful. Any restriction is shameful.

Paul Moriarty- 2 Apsen Rd: Shameful is an inappropriate word to use but he raises some good points. Donna you said that there are as many studies for as there are against. Billionaire John Henry has had 10 nights of events with 30,000 people in attendance without masks that do not know each other, why are we talking about children in North Reading who know each other while he can remain open. Bob Kraft is able to do the same tonight. Understand that they are outside venues, but the Garden has been open as well and that is inside. How should we as parents make sense of having mask mandates for our children yet billionaires are able to have their business without the threat of mask mandates and contact tracing. What should we think?

Mr. Hunt: Thank you all for your time and comments. All of the questions/comments heard tonight will be transcribed and considered. This Board does take the communities feedback into consideration when making decisions for the Town. This Board in the past 18 months had made decisions that were not always popular, but that is not what we are here for. We are here to protect the public health of the citizens as we will be held accountable and we fully realize that responsibility.

Mr. O'Leary: I think that the information that was gathered here tonight has been valuable. The Board has handled everything extremely respectfully. The Select Board would like to offer our

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support for all of the thoughtful consideration and time that you have put in over the past 18 months and what is to come.

Administrative Assistant Report:

The Health Department recently had the opportunity to get adult epi pens via Department of Public Health. We requested 6 packs, giving us 12 doses. Our request was approved and the Epi pens were delivered 8/11/2021.

Permiteyes- This is the online permitting system that the Town has moved over to. At this time it seems to be working well.

Color- the Health Department has completed the on boarding paperwork for this platform. This is going to replace PrepMod for scheduling and registration of vaccine clinics. This platform is also able to support Flu clinics. Onboarding should be completed by the end of the month.

Healthy Hornet Facebook:

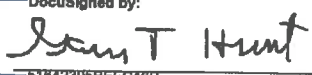
Karen has continued to post to the page as needed. The Board discussed other topics to include on the page such as food, mosquito control, scams and overall general health related topics.

Next Board of Health Meeting is scheduled for 8/26/2021 @ 7pm.

Gary Hunt motioned to adjourn the meeting at 8:30 pm.

Motion seconded by Pam Vath.

All members voted unanimously in favor.

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Gary Hunt

DocuSigned by:

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Pamela Vath

DocuSigned by:

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Karen Martin

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