



**TOWN OF NORTH READING**  
*Massachusetts*

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**Board of Health**

**North Reading Board of Health Meeting Minutes  
October 7, 2021  
Teleconference/Virtual**

**Members Present:** Gary Hunt, Chairman  
Karen Martin  
Pam Vath

**Others Present:**

Robert Bracey, Health Agent	Stephanie Connolly
Donna Hovey, Public Health Nurse	Dr. Daly Superintendent of Schools
Steven O'Leary	Christine Doolin
Michael Gilberto, TA	Amy Dichara
Mary Samost	Mr. Scolfield

**7:00 PM**

Mr. Gary Hunt opened the meeting.

**Minutes**

Previous minutes being reviewed, signed and posted to the Board of Health/Health website.

**New Business:**

Chair, Gary Hunt opened the Board of Health meeting with acknowledging Stephanie Connolly for her time and hard work to the Board of Health Department and Public Health Nurse, Donna Hoovey for her time and service to the Board and Health Department.

**Dr. Daly Superintendent of Schools:**

Dr. Daly stated that school has been open for several weeks, there was a mask mandate through October 1 that has been extended now through November 1. Next step for us to investigate whether we are to move beyond that mask mandate is to see whether are buildings are at 80% vaccination rate. Because it's a combined middle school/high school the whole building would need to be at the 80% range. Dr. Daly is going to start collecting that information where we are working now to get the information from the MIIS data base to integrate with our system to see the number of students who are vaccinated, the schools are going to start collecting that information voluntarily from staff at this point. When the numbers are compiled, Dr. Daly will

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share that with the Board/ Health Department. If at that point the school have achieved the 80%, they will start the conversation of unmasking. At this point we are probably not going to be there by November 1, 2021. There are also some concerns about the connection between unmasking and vaccination. This has been expressed in our School Committee meetings as well as by DESE (Department of Elementary and Secondary Education), having students be masked vs unmasked will directly reveal if a student has been vaccinated or not. Since school began there have been 27 cases of positive individuals these are individuals that tested positive outside of school, and we have zero indication of any transmission within school. The breakdown of September was 22 students who were positive and two staff members and in October thus far there's been two students and one staff member.

We have moved ahead with the different testing protocols. We have three different tests.

We have symptomatic testing which is for individuals that have symptoms and the purpose for this is to get out ahead of a positive case, we are able to get results in 15 minutes.

The newest thing the schools have in place is test and stay protocol, which allows close contacts to remain in school if they are tested daily and remain negative. The schools have also continued pool testing. The school district are getting out ahead of some of these cases and we have over 100 staff and over 600 students participating out of 2300 students. This week pool testing came back negative. Starting next week, the schools will be changing to a different protocol. Double swabbing will take a little longer to collect the sample but instead of the school district having to provide the test the next day the lab will automatically do a follow up PCR test at the lab, one swab goes in the pool and one swab goes in the individual they never look at the individual vials unless the pool is positive. The turnaround time is great, the school district has been getting reports back about every 24 to 48hrs. There's a lot of work going into this but overall people seem to be happy with the school district providing an extra layer of support.

Gary Hunt asked, what is the mood within the student body and the parents regarding where we are now in the event we don't get to the 80% rate and have to continue with the mask mandate. Dr. Daley stated, in general people are really happy to be back in school. The mask push back has died down as far as correspondents with him and once the State came out and made it a rule that just silenced some of that for a while. Overall people want the mask off but more importantly people want kids in school 5 days a week. There's a lot of concern about the kids that are quarantined and in isolation, but we have a few things in place to try and assist, such as a daily remote check in so the kids are with their classmates. At each elementary school we are going to have an opportunity for the students to check in with someone during the day. Though we are not doing hybrid learning like we did last school year. At the secondary level the students are able to interact with their teachers in more of an office hour's setup, and at the high school there is a part of the day called power block where students can interact with their teachers. Right now things are going fairly well.

Pam Vath asked have you heard whether or not the students or staff are getting very ill or are they symptomatic. Dr. Daley stated what I'm hearing consistently is definitely not hospitalization and not severe symptoms it's more like a bad case of the flu but nothing serious like I can't

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breathe. Mr. O'Leary asked as far as participation level in the pooling with the staff are you seeing 20% or 25%. Dr. Daly stated it's about less than a third that are involved I'd say it's mostly teachers and para professionals that are involved. Out of that number that about 90% are vaccinated so it's just extra they are looking to do. Mr. O'Leary asked do you have statistics percentage of vaccinated and unvaccinated staff. Dr. Daly stated, I don't know for sure but that's what we are collecting in the next few weeks and I'll be reporting that to the Department of Ed. I suspect that number is going to be very high, a lot of our staff were very eager to get vaccinated. Mary asked do you anticipate that we are going to have a teacher or staff shortage from people not vaccinated, not meeting the requirements. Dr. Daly stated there is no mandate that they have to get vaccinated, they just have to remain masked. The federal mandates do not apply to the Municipalities and the Schools.

### Public Health Nurse Report:

July 1 to October 7, 2021 COVID - 19 Data

Total of cases 282

3 # of new cases at Nursing Homes (staff)

167 # of new cases of unvaccinated residents

115 # of cases of vaccinated residents – Breakthrough cases

- 80 # of Pfizer
- 25 # of Moderna
- 10 # of Janssen

Ages - Years	Unvaccinated	Vaccinated		Comments
< 11	40	0		
12 - 15	6	3		
16 - 19	11	8		
20 - 29	31	15		
30 - 49	38	40		
50 - 64	25	30		
65 - 74	10	9		
75 and older	6	10		
Total	167	115		282 Cases

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Gary Hunt asked question up top where you have the number of break throughs by vaccination type is there any way we can get the total number of Pfizer and Moderna in town, because this data could be misleading. Donna stated let me talk to Mr. Bracey about that, there are a number of variables that could impact those numbers.

Pam stated that data should be available off Maven. Donna said she would have to check on that.

Mr. Bracey stated I don't know if that information is broken down on Maven or State public health web sites but we can definitely research. Mr. Bracey stated, I know the clinics we did were all Moderna and the majority of those people that did get Pfizer or Jannsen went out of town to other clinics.

Donna stated the recommendation is that if you get the two doses of Pfizer your booster should be Pfizer and if you get the two doses Moderna your booster should be Moderna and if you get the one dose of Jannsen once they get the authorization for their booster you should stay with the same vaccination.

Mr. Bracey stated the clinic that we put on Saturday, the 3 in 1 clinic where you could get the influenza, COVID or COVID booster, they were not allowing folks who got the Moderna vaccine to get the Pfizer booster, so you had to come in with your vaccination card to show that you actually did get the Pfizer vaccine in order to get the Pfizer booster shot.

Donna stated that this is still a work in progress and the reason they won't give another brand is because it hasn't been approved. There's no evidence out there about crossing the vaccines it's very strict.

Mary asked Donna on the data do you have a sense of hospitalization because it would be really helpful for the community to understand, I'm seeing from a hospital perspective that the people requiring hospitalization are those that are unvaccinated

Donna reported that since July 1, there have been two deaths in town due to COVID-19.

**Health Director Report:**

Mr. Bracey reported the number of cases with in the last 14 days from the DPH website we have 50, which would give us a positivity rate per 1000 at 21.4%, the daily positivity rate over the last 14 days is 3.3%, residence with one or more dose 69%, fully vaccinated residence 65%, at 3.3% we are a little bit above Middlesex County and the Commonwealth.

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At this time the age category for 12-15 year olds, as of today those numbers are one dose 72% and fully vaccinated 66%. 16-19 year olds, one dose 81% and fully vaccinated 74% all the older categories are above 70%-80%. Vaccination rates are pretty steady.

Pam asked are these number of the break down, include all to the nursing home residence. Mr. Bracey stated, yes as of July 1. Mr. Hunt asked at our last clinic how many additional COVID vaccinations did you get from that clinic? Mr. Bracey stated a total of 107 residence, 15 were COVID booster shots, the rest were flu.

Amy Dichiara asked out of those 200 cases since July, how many of those cases have recovered and how many of those cases are active right now. Ms. Hovey stated that we have approximately 43 cases that we are still monitoring and still recovering.

Ms. Samost asked how do you think we can start moving the needle and get a higher population of people that are vaccinated and have we partnered with our clergy? Mr. Bracey said there's a lot of variables with that, but we continue to promote it. Mr. Bracey thinks the clergy is a good suggestion and something we can look into. Mr. O'Leary asked about the people that were vaccinated at the clinic held at the Hillview, when the Moderna booster becomes available will the Health Department reach out to them? Mr. Bracey stated that is the intention. Mr. Bracey stated we are going to generate a list of homebound people as well in the hopes that we can accommodate them.

Mr. Bracey gave an update that there were a few establishments that had some rodent activity on the outside of the building, but those establishments are maintaining their integrated pest management control plan in accordance with the Board of Health rules and regulations. Mike's Roast Beef is still under construction and we are waiting on them to call for an inspection, as well as the brewery. The Horseshoe is under new management and we are going to be working with them to complete the application and permit process.

### Title V

Mr. Bracey stated that the GEO Mat system is a new alternative, innovative technology that has been MassDEP approved back in 2017. Most recently some of the engineers and installers have started to use this system. We have some local regulations that require innovative technology to be at a minimum 600 square feet for a soil absorption field our local regulations for new construction is 800'. With the GEO Mat system you only need a minimum of 400'. Mr. Bracey is going to get more information from Mr. Scolfield, then present it to the Board at a later meeting. Mr. Scolfield is a representative from the company manufacturing these types of systems. Two systems have already been put in and a third going in.

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Mr. Hunt asked Karen and Pam how they would like to proceed and we would like some more data on these new system. Karen asked how they were able to install these new system without approval from the Board. Mr. Bracey stated that we are learning about it and bringing it to the Board's attention. It was brought to our attention by the plan reviewer and supported by the installer and engineer, they started using them but they have been informed that Mr. Bracey would be speaking to the Board about this and to hold off until the Board decides if this type of system should be allowed. Gary Hunt stated that he would like Mr. Bracey to instruct the plan reviewer to not approve any more plans with the 400' fields until we have more data.

Mr. Scolfield was present and stated he would be happy to provide the Board/ Health Department with the data on the system. Gary Hunt stated to Mr. Scolfield that we will have a meeting to only discuss this topic.

**Public Comment:**

None

**Healthy Hornet Facebook:**

Karen stated she posted on the Healthy Hornet the other day and there were a lot of positive comments regarding the clinic. Karen will continue to advertise the clinics.

Next Board of Health Meeting is to be scheduled for November 18<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 PM.

**Gary Hunt motioned** to adjourn the meeting at 9:00 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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