



**TOWN OF NORTH READING**  
*Massachusetts*

**Board of Health**

**North Reading Board of Health Meeting Minutes  
December 15, 2021  
Teleconference/Virtual**

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

**Others Present:**

Robert Bracey, Health Agent  
Steven O'Leary  
Michael Murphy  
Doug Richards

Stephanie Connolly  
Christine Doolin  
Abigail Hurlburt

RECEIVED  
2022 FEB -9 PM 1:22  
TOWN CLERK'S OFFICE  
NORTH READING, MASS.

**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:**

none

**Public Health Nurse Report:**

July 1 to December 13, 2021 COVID - 19 Data

Total of non-nursing home related cases: 595

Total number associated with nursing home: 5 (no change) (only nursing home staff)

Complete total of cases as of 12/13/2021 600

5 # of new cases at Nursing Homes (staff)

0 # of new cases associate with nursing home

346 # of new cases of unvaccinated residents

249# of cases of vaccinated residents – Breakthrough cases

- 176 # of Pfizer

235 North Street, North Reading, MA 01864

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- 55 # of Moderna
- 18 # of Janssen

Ages - Years	Unvaccinated	Vaccinated		Comments
< 11	91	1		
12 - 15	23	8		
16 - 19	14	13		
20 - 29	65	32		
30 - 49	75	90		
50 - 64	50	72		
65 - 74	18	16		
75 and older	10	17		
Total	346	249		595 Cases

### Health Director Report:

Since November, 1074 people have been vaccinated of that 392 pediatrics since mid-November. Mr. O'Leary asked about the vaccination clinics how many of those are local residents and how many are out of towners? Mr. Bracey stated probably about 95% were North Reading residents. Mr. Bracey reported that we partnered with Andover and a few other communities to get a grant funded position for contract tracing. As of this week we have been utilizing this with Pam but also there has been some new guidance that came out from DPH and that guidance is that local Health Departments now should focus on public messaging and vaccination. We are working with the Town Administrator and Director of Public Safety and the schools, on a plan how to transition into this and still help support the community and especially the schools. Mr. Bracey stated we are having a lot of discussion on this and he has communicated with Leah from Vaccinate to schedule additional clinics between now and the end of March and April.

Mr. Hunt asked why do you think the DPH has a change in priority, is this change in priority based on the data that is out there? Mr. Bracey stated the justification that he read was that because 82% of the population and the Commonwealth have received at least one dose and they felt the more effective approach is public messaging and getting people vaccinated. Mr. Hunt asked if we are not obligated now to do contact tracing. Mr. Bracey said the way he read it that it's not a priority at this point but to prioritize particular cases-clusters and look into those help assist the schools with some contact tracing.

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Mr. O'Leary asked what the reaction from the other Public Health Officials and Boards of Health in relation to the change of course guidance from the DPH. Mr. Bracey stated talking with his colleagues that people are going to focus on the public messaging and vaccination clinics.

Mr. Murphy stated that the schools are still doing contact tracing with the guidance of the Public Health Nurse. Nursing homes and child care facilities are still going to be investigated through the contact tracing.

Mr. Bracey stated that we have developed a flow chart that we are going to start using because one of the biggest concerns we have been hearing is when do I have to quarantine or when can I be released.

Mr. Bracey gave an update on the Public Health Nurse search. Mr. Bracey stated that we are not getting a lot of applicants applying. Mr. Bracey suggested that we repost the position for 24 hours like it was previously. Mr. Bracey said hopefully he will be working with HR soon and revise the job description. Mr. Bracey stated we had one applicant, the Public Health Nurse position pays up to \$82,000.00 and she wanted \$90,000.00 plus and she wanted to be remote 5 days a week. Karen stated if we are going to post it for 24 hours then it needs to stay at 24 hours, unless the new hire is willing to work the extra time needed for overtime pay.

### **Title V-Petition of the Board update**

Mr. Bracey meet with the Director of Public Safety and the Town Administrator, after the last meeting. Mr. Alex Parker was brought in to help assist with soil testing and that has worked out great. Mr. Bracey said he will be meeting again with the Director of Public Safety and the Town Administrator to go over the Board of Health budget. Mr. Hunt asked if he should keep the petitions that the board has received and table them. Mr. Bracey said we could table them but the process is moving forward and hopefully we can come to some resolution on those petitions. Mr. Hunt asked has there been any inquiries from the petitioners. Mr. Bracey said he has had some discussion with a few of the installers and explained to them this is the process that has to take place. Mr. Murphy asked the installers are looking for boots on the ground, waiting for inspections. Mr. Bracey stated with the onset of more work and extended seasonal times for Title V, there's only 8 hours in the day. Mr. Murphy said that he remembers being in front of the board for budget in 2019, with Bob and one of the biggest concerns was the back up, since then we have added 5 hours to Bob's time for inspections and Bob has set it up for Tuesdays and Thursdays for soil testing, also added was a plan reviewer and Alex Parker for soil testing. Mr. Murphy stated that he will support what's needed for the Community, but what does the department do when the times are not as busy because the select board is going to be asking those questions.

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Mr. Hunt stated he feels there is a need for more services for the Health Department it's not just inspections for septic and installations, Bob could use support across the board, someone who can help with food inspections because the pandemic has consumed all the resources we had. As a Health Department you can't anticipate emergency's that just happen. Overall we are down staff across the board in the Health Department from where we were. Mr. Hunt would like Bob, Pam and Karen to talk about the budget at some point and let Mr. Murphy, selectmen and Finance Committee look at it and go through the formal process.

Mr. Bracey gave a brief update on the GEO Mat system and that he has talked with the attorney and they were looking for a little more information as to what the Board wanted to review and hopefully we can have them on the agenda for January.

Mr. Hunt stated what we are looking for is, performance data on these system, what is the life time, what can the homeowner expect in terms of in maintenance and cost. Mr. Hunt would like to see hard data. Karen would like to understand the square footage and performance data as well. Mr. Bracey said that Wilmington uses these systems and it would be a good idea to have Shelly Newhouse from Wilmington come to our next meeting. Mr. Hunt said it is a dramatic decrease in the leach fields and we would like to make sure homeowners are getting the correct information. Brochures can say a lot of things but performance data can say different things. Part of it is education and part of it is wanting to insure the system being installed in Town aren't being sold something that looks great on paper.

Mr. Bracey gave an update on the food protection program, Nicks Pizza we are waiting to hear back from them on when they are looking for a final inspection. Hypothecary Brewery has opened and are up and running.

Mr. O'Leary asked is the Board given any thoughts on mask mandates. Mr. Hunt stated that the Board has not discussed this as a group yet. Mr. Bracey stated that it is a concern to us and this is why we monitor the numbers and watching and we would present something to the Board of Health for review and consideration.

### **Public Comment:**

Abigail Hurlbut stated that the community's that have a mask mandates, while everybody has seen increased levels of positivity test, those Communities that have mask mandate are seeing about half of the percentages of increases in as Communities that don't. I think we as a town should do more and I think we need to protect our citizens.

Ralph Simard, 90 Park St. The one thing I think that should be taken into consideration here about maybe trying to get some support on the food side. I think that's where Martin had tremendous amount of support. Bringing in somebody with more flexibility and I think it's easier

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to find somebody to support the Board of Health in that Department. It takes anywhere from 1 hour to 2 hours just for and inspect for our portion of the septic system. As far as trying to wait for an inspection two or three days it's difficult moving equipment and moving to another job to open up other jobs, it's not workable. Bringing in someone on the food side with some flexibility and they can get it done on their own time when restaurants are open.

Mr. Murphy stated that we have put an RFP out for food inspectors and we have done it three years in row, but we haven't gotten anybody to apply for the position. Mr. Murphy said we are going to come up with a better plan. Mr. Hunt stated that we had a sub contract with Essex North Shore Agricultural and Technical High School to do only food inspections. It was a sub contract to a professor and two of his students that is something we have done in the past when Martin was here. We are trying relief to assist with the septic inspections and climate change is extending the season, you can dig a lot deeper and a lot longer into the season now when you have 50 and 60 degree days in December.

### **Healthy Hornet Facebook:**

Karen stated she has posted on the Healthy Hornet regularly about the vaccine clinics. Over all the Face Book page has done really well. And Karen has seen a lot more people liking the page.

Mr. Bracey wanted to clarify the about the events that occurred Sunday December 12 and Monday December 13, at the clinics. At the November 22 clinic that was run and operated by the State Public Health Department at the Hillview, clearly wasn't up to the standards as to which the North Reading Health Department runs a clinic. After the clinic on November 22, Mr. Bracey did not feel compelled to have the State Public Health Department back to the Town to do those clinics. Mr. Bracey worked out an arrangement with the State that the North Reading Health Department would do that clinic. Unfortunately the third party did not cancel or retract the scheduling for the second doses. Nearly 400 residents got a notice that there would be a clinic on Monday, December 13, which there would have been nobody there. Thankfully Stephanie informed Mr. Bracey on that after she spoke to a resident at the clinic and Mr. Bracey was able to work with the State, the Director of Public Safety and the Town Administrator to get that situation squared away so that people would not be showing up to a clinic that nobody would be there. Through Karen's posting on the Healthy Hornet we were hopeful enough to capture most of those folks.

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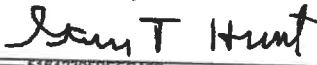
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Next Board of Health Meeting is to be scheduled for January 12 at 7:00 PM.

**Karen Martin motioned** *to adjourn the meeting at 8:40 pm.*  
**Motion seconded by Gary Hunt**  
**Karen and Gary voted in favor.**

DocuSigned by:  
  
516423958EFC45B...  
Gary Hunt

DocuSigned by:  
  
6A9AF14FEB4140B...  
Pamela Vath

DocuSigned by:  
  
182DA173D476497...  
Karen Martin

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