

Wellesley Board of Health  
Remote Meeting via Zoom  
Meeting Minutes.  
August 18, 2021  
12:05 PM

Present:

Board:

Shepard Cohen, MPA, Chair  
Marcia Testa Simonson, MPH, PhD, Vice Chair  
Linda Oliver Grape, PA-C, MPH, Secretary

Staff:

Wanda Alvarez, LSW, Community Social Worker  
Jessica Cliff, MHA, Environmental Health Specialist  
Deadra Doku Gardner, MS, Administrator  
Leonard Izzo, MS, RS, CHO, Director  
Cheryl Lefman, MA, Community Health Coordinator  
Ann Marie McCauley, RN, Public Health Nurse Supervisor  
Joyce Saret, LICSW, Senior Community Social Worker  
Vivian Zeng, REHS, RS, CP-FS, Senior Environmental Health Specialist

In attendance:

Shira Doron, MD, resident  
Leda Eizenberg, School Committee, Wellesley Public Schools  
Lisa Fico, resident  
Stephanie Hawkinson, Communications and Project Manager, Town of Wellesley  
Ashely Hulme, Director of Nursing, Wellesley Public Schools  
KC Kato, Town Clerk, Town of Wellesley  
David Lussier, Superintendent, Wellesley Public Schools  
Catherine Mirick, School Committee, Wellesley Public Schools  
Carl Nelson, resident, Wellesley Celebrations Committee  
Christina Scirica, MD, MPH, resident  
Ellen Subramaniam, resident  
Beth Sullivan Woods, Select Board

The meeting was called to order at 12:05 PM.

Citizens Speak

Christina Scirica reported that she is a parent of two children in the Wellesley Public Schools. Dr Scirica reported that she is hoping that masking will be required

at the start of school. Dr Scirica reported that the Delta variant is easily transmitted. While most children do not get terribly ill some do and some remain with very long-term side effects. Dr Scirica stressed that as a town she is hoping that we can protect Wellesley students, families, administrators, and teachers by being masked.

Ellen Subramaniam reported that she also a Wellesley Public School parent. She noted that has been watching the meetings between the Board of Health and School Committee as well as the most recent meeting of the Select Board. She wanted to note the board's transparency has been outstanding.

Ms Subramaniam suggested that a letter go out to all Wellesley Public School parents notifying them of the current vaccination rates in town and to provide encouragement to those who are unvaccinated. In addition, she requested the Board of Health provide a position statement on the mitigation measures at the start of school. She would like to ensure that there is clarification on school ventilation systems, testing, masking and off ramp measures, vaccination, and distancing (with specific clarity on lunchtime plans).

Ms Subramaniam encouraged that a member of the health department have a seat on the Wellesley Public School Health and Wellness committee.

#### Chairman's report

Shep Cohen reviewed the general agenda for today's meeting.

Mr Cohen also noted that the Board of Health will provide recommendations regarding mandatory school masking in writing and that the school committee will make the final decision as to how they will move forward.

#### Directors report

Leonard Izzo reported that he has drafted an indoor mask advisory for the community for those residents over the age of five. The Health Department will not be taking a position on masking inside town buildings.

#### 1. Community Health

##### a) Wellesley Public Schools – COVID

As noted at the last meeting Dr Lussier again reported that the use of masks continues to be a discussion factor as the school district approaches the start of the school year. Dr Lussier reiterated that both the American Academy of Pediatrics and the CDC are suggesting masking for all age groups. As he noted last week, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) and the Massachusetts

Department of Public Health (MDPH) recommend that masks be worn for grades K thru 6k. Currently there is no plan for a statewide mask mandate in place. At today's meeting, David Lussier reported that he would like the Board of Health recommendation for masking for the start of the school year which is September 1, 2021. Dr Lussier reported that he would like everyone masked regardless of vaccination status at the start of the school year. Leda Eizenberg reported that the school committee will be voting at next Tuesday's meeting and the Board of Health's recommendation is needed in advance.

Marica Testa Simonson reviewed the vaccination rates from various age groups and noted that the risk benefit of wearing a mask needs to be reviewed as well as the effectiveness of mask wearing. She noted the how people are wearing a mask and whether they wear it correctly to make it effective.

Linda Oliver Grape reported that the Board of Health will deliver the recommendation on the school committees time frame. She reported that she agrees with their logic and that she and the board are mindful of the school calendar noting that there is lots of time off in the beginning of September. The first few weeks of school will give an opportunity to review metrics and note where we are regarding infection rates. Linda Oliver Grape noted that she agrees with Marcia Testa Simonson that based on statistics that Wellesley is in a good place and masks do have an impact on well-being.

David Lussier confirmed that the preschool program continues to be at the high school allowing students to work with the children.

Leonard Izzo will be providing the school department with additional school guidance for opening. Mr Izzo noted that the health department staffing position on masking is that masks be mandated for PreK thru 12<sup>th</sup> grade. Ann Marie McCauley also reported that she is in favor of everyone being masked regardless of vaccination status.

Linda Oliver Grape provided the reminder that the Facilities Maintenance Department (FMD) has reported that all school buildings are at the maximum ventilation MERV level.

David Lussier reported that at the end of the school year the state had relinquished all restrictions on social distancing. Schools are not planning to use social distancing. Having school at full capacity social distancing cannot be accomplished due to space restrictions. Dr Lussier reported that this is one of the reasons that the schools are suggesting full masking. He also noted that there will be no remote learning. The schools will do the best they can to provide outdoor lunchtime and have children spend as much time as possible outdoor.

Dr Lussier also reported that in terms of testing WPS have been accepted into the state testing program and the school committee is reviewing the options.

Dr Lussier discussed the Kick-off meeting for all faculty and staff planned for next week. This is for approximately 400 employees with standing room only. Dr Lussier reported that there is no guidance for events of that size. There will be no social distancing, and everyone is to be masked attending the event.

David Lussier questioned a vaccination mandate for all staff. Shep Cohen offered his opinion that there should be a vaccine mandate in place as it protects staff and the community sending a strong message to all residents. Marcia Testa Simonson noted that this is a medical decision between an individual and their physician. It is difficult to mandate a vaccine that is not FDA approved.

Linda Oliver Grape stressed that there are a lot of implications on mandating a vaccine. She also noted that the Board of Health strongly recommends vaccination. Ms Grape reported that as a Board they are not at the point to mandate vaccine to all employees.

Leonard Izzo reported that there is very small percentage of town employees that have not been vaccinated. Mr Izzo reported that he will not move forward on this topic as it requires input from the town legal counsel and the Human Resources Department.

Ashley Hulme reported that as of today 85% of eligible students have been vaccinated with at least one dose. It was noted that medical providers who are not linked to MIIS do not record their patient information in the system as having been vaccinated. Ms Hulme believes that at the start of school she will have a better idea as to how many students have been vaccinated. Linda Oliver Grape also reiterated that MIIS only reports vaccinations that have been reported inside the state of MA. Many families go out of the state to medical providers and may have been vaccinated outside of the state. These individuals do not appear in the MIIS system.

Ashley Hulme also reported that she supports universal masking at the start of school.

b) Town advisory update

Lenny Izzo reported that there will be formal Board of Health vote at the next meeting on issuing an indoor mask advisory to the community.

c) Businesses and Town Buildings

Leonard Izzo reported that he will be preparing an advisory for masking should it be necessary to release to the local business and town buildings. Businesses will be able to set their own guidelines.

Linda Oliver Grape suggested that the advisory suggest language that strongly recommends vaccination to all eligible individuals.

d) Wellesley Wonderful Weekend

Shep Cohen again reported that the event is taking place in October. He noted that Environmental Health agents will work closely with the organizers to ensure that every remains safe.

e) Tobacco Appeal Hearing

At the last meeting of the Board of Health, Gary Aharonian, owner, B & P Auto reviewed the events that took place on July 30, 2021. Mr Aharonian acknowledged that an employee at B & P Auto sold a pack of cigarettes to a minor during a compliance check. He was seeking a reduction in the \$1000 fine administered to first time offenders.

At todays' meeting the Board of Health reported that decision will be addressed at the next meeting. Vivian Zeng reported that the board has thirty days to provide their decision.

f) Community Health Coordinator

The Board of Health and Leonard Izzo continue to work with the Human Resource Department to finalize the job description. No set date is available as to when the position with will be posted.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:06 p.m.

The next meeting of the Board of Health is tentatively scheduled for August 23, 2021 at 12 noon.

Respectfully submitted,

Deadra Doku Gardner

Administrator