



BOARD OF HEALTH
Topsfield Town Hall
8 West Common Street, Topsfield, MA 01983
*****VIDEO/TELE CONFERENCE*****

December 16, 2020

6:30 PM

Board Members present: Chairperson Sheryl Knutsen RN and Board Members Mark Rizza and William Hunt Esq. Also in attendance: Health Agent Wendy Hansbury, Senior Administrative Assistant Susan Winslow and Selectman A. Richard Gandt. Board Members Larry Fixler RPH and Anthony Alley RN were not in attendance.

COMMONLY USED ABBREVIATIONS:

ADA: Americans with Disabilities Act

BOH: Board of Health

BOS: Board of Selectmen

MAVEN: Massachusetts Virtual Epidemiology Network

MDEP: Massachusetts Department of Environmental
Protection

CDC: Center for Disease Control

CEU: Continuing Education Unit

CEMP: Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan

COIN: Community Outreach Information Network

DPH: Department of Public Health

EEE: Eastern Equine Encephalitis

EDS: Emergency Dispensing Site

ESHW: Estimated Seasonal High Water Table

EP: Emergency Preparedness

FDA: Food & Drug Administration

HHS: Health and Human Services

HMCC: Health & Medical Coordinating Coalition

LSAC: Local State Advisory Committee

MDPH Mass. Dept. of Public Health

MEMA: Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency

MRC: Medical Reserve Corps

NEMMC: Northeast Massachusetts Mosquito Control

PHEP: Public Health Emergency Preparedness

POD: Point Of Dispensing

RN: Registered Nurse

RS: Registered Sanitarian

SAS: Soil Absorption System

TBOH: Topsfield Board of Health

TRMRC: Topsfield Regional Medical Reserve Corps

VNA: Visiting Nurse Association

WNV: West Nile Virus

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Sheryl Knutsen called the meeting to order at 6:36 pm.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Chair Sheryl Knutsen made the following announcements:

Pursuant to Governor Baker's March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §18, and the Governor's March 15, 2020 Order imposing strict limitation on the number of people that

may gather in one place, this meeting of the Topsfield Board of Health will be conducted via remote participation to the greatest extent possible. Specific information and the general guidelines for remote participation by members of the public and/or parties with a right and/or requirement to attend this meeting can be found on the Topsfield Town Website at www.topsfield-ma.gov. For this meeting, members of the public who wish to listen to the meeting may do so in the following manner: join the ZOOM audio-video conference call (see information below). No in-person attendance of members of the public will be permitted, but every effort will be made to ensure that the public can adequately access the proceedings in real time, via technological means. In the event that we are unable to do so, despite best efforts, we will post on the Topsfield Board of Health website an audio or video recording, transcript, or other comprehensive record of proceedings as soon as possible after the meeting.

Topsfield Town is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Topic: Board of Health

Time: Dec 16, 2020 06:30 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86906093727?pwd=MFYxOE9KWVR5RVBOMmJR1FKbkITdz09>

Meeting ID: 869 0609 3727

Passcode: 249423

Dial by your location

+1 929 205 6099 US (New York)

Susan Winslow is taking notes for Minutes of this Meeting.

PUBLIC HEARING TO BE CONTINUED The Public Hearing on R: 1-2 Supplemental Regulations to 310 CMR 15.00 The State Environmental Code duly advertised in the January 16, 2020 and January 23, 2020 and opened at the February 19, 2020 Board of Health Meeting will be continued per Section 17 of Ch.53 of the Acts of 2020 to the first hearing date following the termination of the state of emergency or to a date otherwise prescribed by law.

APPOINTMENTS

There were no appointments at this meeting.

MEETING MINUTES

November 18, 2020

VOTE: Mr. Rizza made a motion to approve the November 18, 2020 Meeting Minutes as written. Seconded by Mr. Hunt. Chair Knutsen called for a roll-call vote:

Knutsen – yes

Rizza – yes

Hunt– abstain (Mr. Hunt was not at the November 18, 2020 Meeting)

The motion passed in a vote of 2-0-1

COVID-19

COVID Command Center Conference Calls

Chair Knutsen gave the Board an update on seven (7) COVID Command Center Conference Calls she has participated in since the November 18, 2020 Board of Health Meeting. Chair Knutsen read the following information into the record:

For 12/16/20 TBOH meeting: **Inter-agency Local Boards of Health COVID-19 webinars**

There have been seven Inter-agency Local Boards of Health COVID-19 webinars since our last Topsfield BOH meeting. From 400 to 700 people join these calls every Tuesday and Friday. The following is a summary of my notes from these calls.

11/20 MA residents are urged to **limit the risk of exposure to COVID during holiday activities** by limiting in-person celebrations to household members only, postponing or cancelling travel and following the current gathering size limits and sector-specific workplace safety standards. On November 18th **Quarantine guidance was changed** to allow those who have been exposed to COVID to test out of quarantine after 10 days if certain parameters are met. The new guidance is evidence-based and is a health equity issue. In response to a statewide surge in cases and a delay in contact tracing the Contact Tracing Collaborative (CTC) is prioritizing cases, adding an immediate text message to contacts with information about quarantine guidance, and hiring additional staff. **At-home COVID-19 tests** are on the horizon. In the short term, this will be a challenge with regard to contact tracing. But at some point we will not count every case of COVID. People will need to understand for themselves how to do Quarantine and Isolation.

11/24 MDPH Commissioner Monica Bharel reinforced the message about the **importance of gathering safely**, of making good decisions and doing the right thing so that holiday gatherings do not become super-spreader events. Municipal Leaders can use **Cares Act funding to set up local COVID testing sites**. Newly hired **Contact Tracers** attend a week-long training program, which is also available to LPH staff. **EMS providers and first responders** are reminded that they are not required to quarantine following an exposure to COVID-19, provided they remain asymptomatic. A new **“Get Back Mass” public messaging campaign** responds to research revealing that “COVID Carefree” people do not want to be told what to do; instead they want to get back to the way things used to be, hence the slogan “Let’s #GetBackMass.” The State Epidemiologist, reviewed results of an **Abbott BinaxNow validation study** which was done at several MA hospitals, and concluded that this antigen test performed solidly and was relatively easy to use. The Director of the MDPH Immunization program described the latest information about the **phased distribution of the Pfizer and Moderna COVID-19 vaccines**, which are expected to receive Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) soon from the FDA. Local Health Departments will be involved in phases 3 and 4 which will likely be in the spring.

12/1 MDPH DLS (Department of Labor Standards) issued a **holiday shopping and COVID-19 Workplace Safety Standards Advisory** to all retail businesses reminding them to maintain safety measures during

the holiday shopping season. Local health officials are encouraged to take advantage of **support services, coaching opportunities and webinars** offered by CMG Associates. LHDs that are struggling with the rising volume of COVID-19 cases are encouraged to use the CTC or the Academic Volunteers for help. A backlog of 19 questions were asked and answered.

12/4 The **CDC updated its quarantine guidance**, creating new options to reduce the length of quarantine in order to reduce the time that people must remain out of work and to lessen the stress on the public health system, especially when new infections are rapidly rising. CDC also issued **critical infrastructure worker guidelines**. The **COVID Community Impact Survey (CCIS)** had over 32,000 respondents; data is being analyzed. The **Contact Tracing Collaborative** receives 60% of all MA cases and are using a **surge protocol** to prioritize cases by testing date, and referring new cases to a new website www.mass.gov/isol8 which will explain in simpler language how to isolate or quarantine while people are waiting for a call from contact tracers, and/or to immediately take action by calling the CTC. Many questions were asked about **COVID-19 home test kits or “point of care” tests**. Results of school-based testing using BinaxNow must be reported to MDPH. MDPH is working toward developing recommendations and protocols for using these other home tests.

12/8 MDPH has now **aligned its quarantine recommendations with the CDC guidance** that was issued last week. The new guidance is based on recent CDC data showing that **shortened quarantine periods** result in only a small chance that someone may develop COVID-19 after leaving quarantine. This small risk is outweighed by the expected benefit of the increased cooperation with adherence to the quarantine. **Isolation guidance** (for a person who has tested positive for COVID-19) **has not changed**. MDPH has also issued **Return-to-Work Guidance for Critical Infrastructure Workers**, using the Critical infrastructure worker list that was put out by CDC. In response to the surge of cases, today the Governor announced a **statewide rollback to Phase 3, Step 1** of the Reopening Plan. This will take effect December 13th. 25 questions were asked and answered.

12/11 **Details of the Rollback to Phase 3 Step 1** were reviewed. It will include limiting outdoor gatherings to 50 people, and organizers for events with more than 25 people need to notify the LBOH in advance. Indoor theaters and performance venues and some indoor recreation businesses will be closed. Capacity will be reduced from 50% to 40% for several industry sectors such as libraries, gyms, museums, retail, offices, places of worship, lodging common areas, golf, and movie theaters. People need to wear a mask at all times in gyms, office spaces (when not alone) and restaurants when not eating/drinking. Food court seating is closed and musical performances at restaurants are prohibited. There is a 90-minute time limit on restaurant table seating and there can be no more than 6 diners per table, preferably members of the same household. Religious services or political gatherings held outside are not subject to gathering size limits, but there is no exception to the requirement for masks and social distancing. The state is focusing on **meeting the demand for testing** at the regional level and testing is no longer based on the positivity rate. There are free testing sites in regions across Massachusetts to help stop the spread of COVID-19. These sites support the testing of asymptomatic individuals and are free for all Massachusetts residents. Also short term testing resources are available for clusters. The Director of the MA Immunization Division of the Bureau of Infectious Disease and Laboratory Sciences (BIDLS) gave an **overview of the MA COVID-19 Vaccination Program**. MA is expected to receive a total of ~ 300 thousand doses by the end of December. Both Pfizer and Moderna vaccines require two doses and special cold storage. MDPH has been working on COVID-19 planning since early August, building on existing Infectious Disease Emergency Response plans and pandemic planning. The target is to vaccinate 80% of the population, initially those over age 14. The Massachusetts Immunization Information System (MIIS) which serves as the state’s vaccine registry, ordering and inventory system has been enhanced to prepare for COVID-19. The MA COVID-19 Advisory Group, leaders from healthcare, epidemiology, community organizing and local government, has developed recommendations for priority groupings for

vaccine prioritization. They took a strong stand on equity, prioritizing all COVID-facing individuals in healthcare settings, including food service, environmental, and home health workers, as well as communities with high social vulnerability. Details of the 3 phases of vaccine administration, locations of vaccination sites, vaccine shipments and allocations and a public messaging campaign can be found at www.mass.gov/covidvaccine. The vaccine will be provided free of charge to all individuals by the federal government. The FDA and the CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) will review all vaccine data to ensure any vaccine is both safe and effective.

12/15 *The MA COVID-19 Response Command Center provided updates on **Isolation and Recovery Sites** which are provided for individuals who are homeless, experiencing housing instability, or who need a safe place to isolate but are living in crowded conditions and are low income. The **CTC** will be fully staffed up by December 26th, targeting about 2,000 FTE workers who are handling calls 7 days a week from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. in order to handle the surge volume of about 3,500 average new cases daily.*

Editorial comment: Contact tracing and disease investigation is part of the routine work of Local Boards of Health such as Topsfield which employs a Public Health nurse via a contract with the VNA, and has just joined with Middleton and Boxford to hire a Pandemic Nurse who will help coordinate between the Tri-Town health departments and the schools, in response to a surge in cases locally.

Board Members thanked Chair Knutsen for the time and effort she has put into attending and reporting on these meetings. Chair Knutsen emphasized the importance of an historic record of the response to the COVID-19 pandemic for future generations.

Health Agent Wendy Hansbury informed the Board regarding the following:

- The Tri-Towns have hired a Public Health Pandemic Response Nurse for contact tracing, focusing primarily on school contacts. In addition to managing contact tracing, the Public Health Pandemic Response Nurse has access to MAVEN and will serve as a central hub for the dissemination of COVID-19 related information throughout the public schools in Topsfield, Boxford and Middleton. The position is funded through the CARES Act through the end of December, 2020, and the Health Agent is looking into possible future funding through FEMA and MAPC.
- Ms. Hansbury continues to assist the public with questions and concerns related to COVID-19.
- At present, the State has not indicated the level of involvement required from Local Boards of Health in the COVID-19 vaccination program.
- Health care workers, employees/residents of long term care facilities, home health workers and those in congregate living facilities will receive the first vaccines.
- The Essex Agricultural Society has offered the Topsfield Fair Grounds as a staging area for a COVID-19 vaccine clinic. This will be a combined effort with the State, local Police and Fire, Public Health and a clinical partner to be determined.

NEW BUSINESS

Ms. Hansbury informed the Board regarding the following:

Title Change

The Board of Health request approved by a vote on at the November 18, 2020 Meeting to change Ms. Hansbury's title from Health Agent to Health Director is currently in process in the Town Administrator's office.

Holiday On The Green

Due to COVID-19, the December 5, 2020 Holiday On The Green was a virtual event this year. Ms. Hansbury informed the Board that event organizer Lynne Bermudez and her team of volunteers worked hard to provide a successful evening hosted by Select Board Member Marshall Hook. The event included a door decorating contest, visit by Santa, tree lighting, community dance video and caroling.

Trash and Recycling

Ms. Hansbury, Ms. Winslow, Highway Superintendent Gary Wildes and Town Administrator Kevin Harutunian are scheduled to participate in a ZOOM Meeting December 21, 2020 to discuss moving the trash and recycling programs to the Highway Department.

FY22 Budget

Ms. Hansbury attended a preliminary meeting to plan the FY22 Budget with Town Administrator Kevin Harutunian on December 16, 2020. The line items for sharps collection and vaccine purchase will experience FY21 shortfalls due to unexpected expenses. The volume of sharps collected at the kiosk at the Topsfield Fire Department has doubled since the start of the pandemic. This is attributed to the large number of people working from home, using the local sharps collection bin. The expense for flu vaccine increased because the State has mandated that all school children must be vaccinated for the flu and a large number of Senior Citizens attended flu vaccine clinics this year. The high-dose vaccine used for Senior Citizens is more expensive than the vaccine used for the general public. A significant portion of this expense will be recouped through the Commonwealth Medicine Vaccine Reimbursement Program, but all funds from that program go directly into the Town's General Fund. The Board of Health was allotted \$3,700.00 for the purchase of flu vaccine, but the expense was closer to \$8,000.00 for the two flu vaccine clinics hosted by the Topsfield Board of Health.

Ms. Hansbury informed the Board that VNA Care may wish to change their contract for FY22 and the Board may anticipate an increase in the expense for the line item for Public Health Nurse.

Septic Loan Program

Ms. Hansbury will ask the Select Board to place this item on the Town Warrant again this year for implementation in FY22. Last year, the Select Board opted not to move forward with this item on the Warrant. Ms. Hansbury informed the Board that this year, the Veterans Service Agent has written a letter in support of this program, citing the community need for low-interest loans for people facing the cost of septic repairs.

Business As Usual

Ms. Hansbury informed the Board that the office remains busy, with the regular business of soil testing, building permit reviews, septic application reviews, Title 5 Inspection Reports, septic installation and repair inspections, responding to resident requests and questions. Ms. Hansbury will be taking some vacation days during the Christmas holiday.

ADJOURN

VOTE: Mr. Hunt made a motion to adjourn at 7:30 PM. Seconded by Mr. Rizza. Chair Knutsen called for a roll-call vote:

Knutsen – yes

Hunt - yes

Rizza – yes

The motion carried in a vote of 3-0.

Respectfully Submitted,

Susan Winslow

Recording Secretary

Items distributed:

1. Agenda
2. Board of Health Meeting Minutes of November 18, 2020
3. Synopsis of LPH COVID Command Center Conference Calls

These Meeting Minutes were accepted at the January 20, 2021 Board of Health Meeting.