

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

Date:	Thursday, August 26, 2021
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ATTENDANCE:

BOARD MEMBERS	
Sheryl Knutsen RN Chair	yes
Mark Rizza	Yes
William Hunt Esq.	Yes
Ellen Eaton RN	Yes

STAFF MEMBERS	PRESENT
Health Director Wendy Hansbury	Yes
Susan Winslow, Minutes Secretary	Yes

VISITORS PRESENT: Amy Lischko MSPH, DSc, Town Administrator Kevin Harutunian

OPENING

The emergency meeting of the Topsfield Board of Health was called to order at 10:00 am on August 26, 2021 by Chair Sheryl Knutsen.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Chair Sheryl Knutsen made the following announcements:

Pursuant to Chapter 20 of the Acts of 2021, this meeting/public hearing will be conducted via remote means. Members of the public who wish to access the meeting may do so in the following manner: Zoom Meeting – see connection information below to join the meeting by Zoom videoconference or calling in by phone. 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 <https://www.topsfield-ma.gov/>. You may also reach out to the Topsfield Board of Health at health@topsfield-ma.gov or 978-887-1520 for information/assistance. No in-person attendance of members of the public will be permitted, and public participation in any public hearing conducted during this meeting shall be by remote means only.

Chair Knutsen announced that Recording Secretary Susan Winslow was taking Meeting Minutes and the Meeting was recorded by ZOOM. Ms. Knutsen asked if anyone else wished to record the meeting. There was no-one else who wished to record the meeting.

Chair Knutsen led the Board and Guests in a moment of silence.

NEW BUSINESS

Discussion: masks in public buildings including school buildings

- Chair Knutsen informed the board that on August 5, 2021, a meeting of the Topsfield Public Safety Team determined that a mask mandate in Town Hall Offices and the Library would go into effect immediately due to the increase in cases of COVID-19 and the Delta Variant.
- On August 19, 2021, Chair Knutsen and Health Director Wendy Hansbury met with Superintendent of Schools Scott Morrison and Charise Nelson. They expressed a desire to work with the Board of Health to develop guidelines to keep students in K-12 and teachers at reduced risk for the spread of the highly contagious COVID-19 Delta Variant.
- The Board of Health Office received eight (8) emails expressing concerns about the rise in COVID-19 cases including concerns about the increase in cases possibly resulting in a return to remote learning, family experiences with COVID-19, COVID-19 related deaths, stress and anxiety caused by the increase in cases.
- Ms. Knutsen referred to an article sent to the Board of Health that was published in the Wall Street Journal on August 20, 2021 titled, "Pediatric Pulmonologists Say Kids Should Mask Up" signed by sixty (60) pulmonologists across the country.
- On August 25, 2021, DESE and Massachusetts Commissioner of Education Jeffrey Riley announced a mandate that school children ages 5 and up must wear masks when indoors at school. School staff and visitors must also comply, although there are exemptions for those with medical or behavioral issues. The mandate is relaxed when students are eating or taking mask breaks. On October 1, 2021 state officials will review COVID-19 numbers and trends to determine if the mandate will be extended or lifted.
- Chair Knutsen asked Board Members if they would like to endorse the mandate.
- Member Ellen Eaton expressed support for the Board of Health to endorse the mandate.
- Member William Hunt expressed a wish not to endorse the mandate.
- With no consensus, the Board moved on to the next topic of discussion.

Discussion: Masks town-wide

Chair Knutsen reminded Board Members that many state and federal regulations offer basic minimum coverage, and Local Boards of Health can set policies and regulations to protect the public. Further, Boards of Health are responsible for efforts to prevent disease.

Health Agent Hansbury presented documents related to COVID-19 vaccination rates while noting that the populations numbers used by the State are taken from the 2010 census. The Board reviewed the following documents:

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County	Total Case Count	Case Count (Last 14 Days)	Average Daily Incidence Rate per 100,000 (Last 14 days)	Relative Change in Case Counts ¹	Total Tests	Total Tests (Last 14 days)	Total Positive Tests (Last 14 days)	Percent Positivity (Last 14 days)	Change in Percent Positivity ²
Barnstable County	15020	345	11.4	Lower	460819	13228	406	3.05%	Lower
Berkshire County	7023	266	15.0	Higher	440307	10407	236	2.33%	Lower
Bristol County	70142	1729	21.6	Higher	1487643	38939	1949	5.06%	No Change
Dukes and Nantucket Counties	3379	264	65.4	Higher	90488	3067	267	8.71%	Higher
Essex County	100883	1590	14.1	Higher	2476733	66590	1881	2.84%	Higher
Franklin County	2719	94	9.4	Higher	739681	6022	103	1.71%	Higher
Hamden County	55040	1517	23.0	Higher	1309498	36302	1737	4.78%	Higher
Hampshire County	9508	388	8.2	Higher	998626	15422	212	1.36%	Higher
Middlesex County	141021	3017	13.2	Higher	6646877	166607	1442	2.21%	Higher

Topsfield 8/14 total case count 450 case count 9 14 day av. incident rate (per 100k): 11.1 total tests 20,335 test total 2 wks 473 not provided 14 day percent positivity 2.33%

COVID-19 Cases in Fully Vaccinated Individuals

- COVID-19 cases in vaccinated people are counted as those who test positive more than 14 days after the final dose of vaccine*
- As of August 21, 2021 there were 4,449,267 fully vaccinated people and there were 15,739 cases in vaccinated people
- 571 of those 15,739 cases resulted in hospitalization and 131 cases resulted in death based on information reported to date

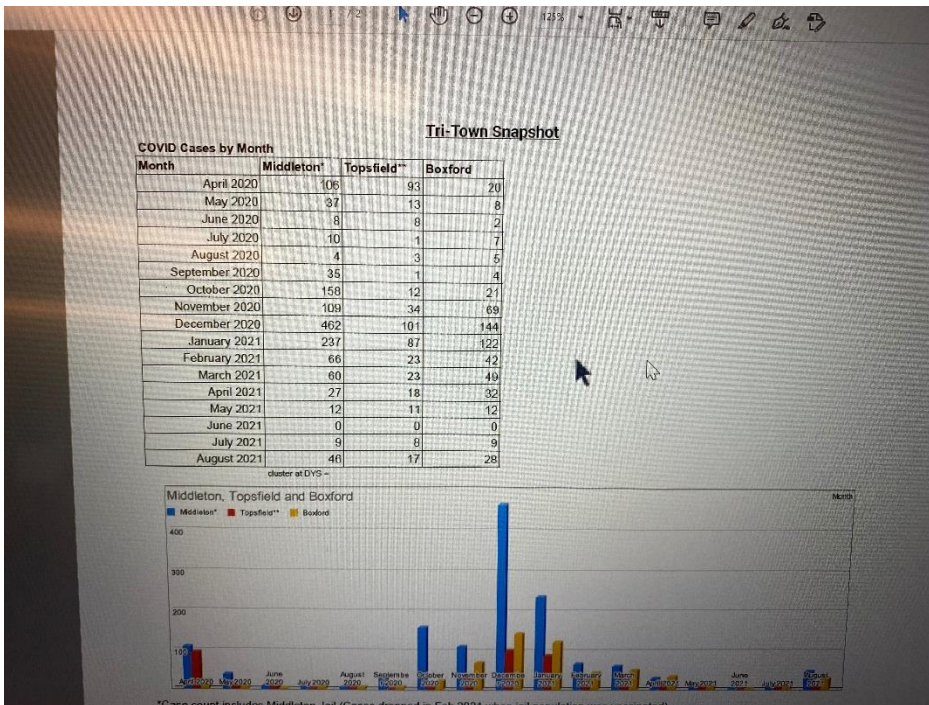
	Cumulative count through last week (reported 8/14)	Cumulative count this week (reported 8/21)	% of All Fully Vaccinated Individuals*
Cases	12,641	15,739	0.35%
Hospitalizations among cases	496	571	0.01%
Deaths among cases	124	131	0.003%

Note: Identification of cases in vaccinated people relies on matching data between the system of record for cases and vaccinations. The number of cases in vaccinated people may be undercounted due to discrepancies in the names and dates of birth of individuals, resulting in an inability to match records across systems. Hospitalization data is likely also undercounted as identification and reporting of hospitalized cases relies on that information being obtainable by case investigators through patient interview.

*Vaccination began December 14, 2020; the earliest date at which individuals would be considered fully vaccinated is January 19, 2021

Source: MIS Data, MAVEN data
 Confidential, Draft and Pre-Decisional

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- Ms. Hansbury informed the Board that Topsfield, the surrounding towns and the State have high vaccine compliance, but since June, when the number of cases was zero (0), the number of cases of COVID-19 has started to rise. In the past fourteen (14) days, the number of people testing positive for COVID-19 in Essex County has gone up with a daily incidence per 1,000 increasing by 11.1%.
- Ms. Hansbury also noted that the numbers for Middleton include forty-six (46) cases in the Department of Youth Services.
- Chair Knutsen informed the Board that eighteen (18) cities and towns in the Commonwealth have instituted town-wide mask mandates.
- Mr. Rizza pointed out that the cities and towns in that group have significantly larger populations than Topsfield. Mr. Rizza suggested that the rate of COVID-19 cases should be studied between August 26, 2021 and the next Board of Health Meeting on September 15, 2021 to determine a meaningful threshold before taking action on a town-wide mask mandate.
- The Board determined that Ms. Hansbury will continue to monitor trends related to COVID-19 cases, and the public will be invited to send written comments to the Board of Health related to the issue of a town-wide mask mandate.
- Chair Knutsen informed the Board that a town-wide mask mandate would be indoors-only.
- Amy Lischko suggested that the Topsfield Fair be added to the September 15, 2021 Board of Health Meeting Agenda related to the issue of mask mandates.
- Mr. Rizza suggested that in addition to compiling information on COVID-19 statistics prior to the September 15, 2021 Meeting, Ms. Hansbury should check with the Big E in Springfield to determine their policy on masking. Both Mr. Rizza and Mr. Hunt suggested that Ms. Hansbury should reach out to the Topsfield Fair management for the same information.

ADJOURN

VOTE: Mr. Hunt made a motion to adjourn at 10:40 AM. Seconded by Mr. Rizza. Chair Knutsen called for a roll-call vote:

Knutsen – yes

Rizza – yes

Hunt - yes

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Eaton – yes

The motion passed in a vote of 4-0.

Minutes submitted by: Susan Winslow.

Per the Open Meeting Law, the documents that were either distributed to the Board of Health before the meeting in a packet or introduced at the meeting were:

1. Agenda: August 26, 2021
2. Wall Street Journal Article Published August 20, 2021 "Pediatric Pulmonologists Say Kids Should Mask Up"
3. Emails received at Topsfield Board of Health

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

Pursuant to the 'Open Meeting Law,' G.L. 39, § 23B, the approval of these minutes by the Committee constitutes a certification of the date, time and place of the meeting, the members present and absent, and the actions taken at the meeting. Any other description of statements made by any person, or the summary of the discussion of any matter, is included for the purpose of context only, and no certification, express or implied, is made by the Committee as to the completeness or accuracy of such statements.