

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

Date:	Wednesday, February 16, 2022
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ATTENDANCE:

BOARD MEMBERS	
Sheryl Knutsen RN Chair	Yes
Mark Rizza	Yes
William Hunt Esq.	Yes
Ellen Eaton RN	Yes
Amy Lischko MSPH, DSc	Yes

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

VISITORS PRESENT: Boxford/Topsfield Cable Television, James O'Brien, Greg Hochmuth PE, Richard Gandt

OPENING

The meeting of the Topsfield Board of Health was called to order at 6:32 pm on February 16, 2022 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 being recorded by Topsfield Cable Television. Ms. Knutsen asked if anyone else wished to record the meeting. No-one else wished to record the meeting.

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

APPOINTMENTS

207 Boston Street Gray Water Holding Tank

James O'Brien, General Manager of the Topsfield Fair and Greg Hochmuth, PE from Williams & Sparages LLC appeared before the Board with a request to approve the installation of a gray water holding tank at the Topsfield Fair Grounds, 207 Boston Street as outlined in the letter to the Board of Health dated January 4, 2022. Mr. Hochmuth presented a map of the Fair Grounds indicating the location of three existing gray water holding tanks at the Fair Grounds and the location of the proposed fourth tank as well as a septic design plan for 207 Boston Street dated January 4, 2022 which showed the location of the proposed gray water holding tank. Mr. Hochmuth explained that food booths will have feeder lines connecting directly to the tank which will eliminate the need for food vendors to haul Blue Boy tanks by hand to be emptied. Mr. Hochmuth informed the Board that this tank will be used only during the Fair, and will only be used to hold gray water. The tank will have an alarm and float system that will be tested yearly.

Ms. Eaton asked if the tank will be adversely affected if it sits dormant except for use during the 11 day run of the Fair. Mr. Hochmuth informed the Board that the tank will be fine with this type of use, and added that there is a manhole cover at grade for observation of the condition of the tank.

Mr. Rizza asked if checking the gray water holding tanks and alarm system is part of the Health Director's responsibility at the Fair. Ms. Hansbury replied that Kurt Schmakel, the Grounds Director at the Topsfield Fair, handles this responsibility, but she would be willing to accompany Mr. Schmakel when he checks the tanks.

VOTE: Mr. Rizza made a motion to approve the plan for the installation of a gray water holding tank at the Topsfield Fair Grounds, 207 Boston Street as indicated on the plan from Williams & Sparages dated January 4, 2022. Seconded by Ms. Eaton. After determining that there was no further discussion, Chair Knutsen called for a roll-call vote:

Knutsen – yes

Rizza – yes

Hunt – yes

Eaton – yes

Lischko – yes

The motion passed in a vote of 5-0.

MEETING MINUTES

January 19, 2022

Chair Knutsen asked the Board Members if there were any corrections/comments/questions regarding the Meeting Minutes of January 19, 2022. There were none.

VOTE: Mr. Rizza made a motion to accept the Meeting Minutes of January 19, 2022 as written. Seconded by Mr. Hunt. After determining that there were no further comments or questions, Chair Knutsen called for a roll-call vote.

Knutsen – yes

Rizza –yes

Hunt - yes

Eaton – yes

Lischko – yes

The motion was approved in a vote of 5-0.

NEW BUSINESS

R:1-2 Supplemental Regulations to 310 CMR 15.00 The State Environmental Code Title 5 Review

Health Director Hansbury informed the Board that the Board opened a duly advertised Public Hearing to review and update the septic regulations at the February 19, 2020 Board of Health Meeting. The Public Hearing was continued to the March 25, 2020 Meeting. Due to the Governor's Emergency Order limiting the number of people who could gather due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the March 25, 2020 Board of Health meeting and subsequent meetings were held via ZOOM. The Board determined that the Public Hearing would be continued until such time as the Governor's Emergency Order was lifted and people could gather once again in public. As the pandemic continued into 2021 and Board Membership changed, the Board made the decision to close the Public Hearing at the June 20, 2021 meeting and revisit the Regulations Review at a later date.

Ms. Hansbury has met with Board Members Ellen Eaton and Amy Lischko who have volunteered to assist with the Regulations Review. With the Town Clerk's office working on Codification of the Town By-Laws, it is the appropriate time to review and update the Regulations which will be included in the Codification project as an addendum.

Ms. Hansbury requested that the Board set the date of March 16, 2022 to open a duly advertised Public Hearing for the review of R:1-2 Supplemental Regulations to 310 CMR 15.00 The State Environmental Code Title 5 to update the regulations and delete those that duplicate existing Title 5 regulations.

The Board made a consensus to hold a duly advertised Public Hearing at the March 16, 2022 Board of Health Meeting via ZOOM. Ms. Hansbury informed Board Members that there is a helpful webinar on the Local Public Health Institute website that outlines the Public Hearing process. Ms. Winslow will send the information to Board Members. Ms. Hansbury informed Board Members that the Public Hearing will be advertised twice in the local newspaper as well as on the Town Website, Topsfield Cable Television, at the Topsfield Library and announced at the Select Board Meeting. Copies of blacklined Regulations and Draft Regulations will be posted on the Town Website and available at the Board of Health office. The ZOOM meeting will be accessible by computer or phone, open to 100 people. Ms. Hansbury reported that 15 people attended the Public Hearing in February, 2020, so accommodations for 100 people to attend by phone or computer should be sufficient.

COVID-19 UPDATE

Health Director Hansbury reported the following:

Ms. Hansbury reviewed the following documents:

2-2022 COVID19 update:

- *School mask mandates*
 - *DESE memorandum*
 - *Superintendents' emails*

- Relationships BOH has w/schools and public health

DPH and DESE worked together, but DESE made ultimate decision regarding schools. This created a conflict between LBOH and local schools because the public health primary considerations were ranked differently. Throughout, the Topsfield Elementary School Committee (TSC) has asked for our input and Superintendent Dr. Morrison initiated a weekly TTU call between public health and the school system to facilitate communication. The addition of the Tri-Town Pandemic Response Nurse enabled a clear chain of communication and coordination between the groups and the direction to every school nurse, principal, parent, and teacher was facilitated.

- Meeting of school committee if any decision on masking Feb. 15, 2022
 - Dr. Morrison will recommend the TSC proceed moving to mask optional on March 7th (just so kids are masked the week after the February vacation).
 - Sunsetting of BOH preK mask mandate because it is tied to the DESE mandate sunsetting on 2/28.

Mask use is 1 layer of primary prevention in virus transmission. There were markedly fewer cases of other diseases last year (flu, strep, colds, etc.) when masking and distancing were implemented

- School case rate
 - Review Julia's role with the schools and vaccination clinics
 - Work with 8 schools, transitioning to provide community wide services as pandemic work slows down and as part of deliverable for the PHE grant (example continued vaccinations and homebound outreach).
 - Shout out to vaccinators and volunteers
 - Case rates (not including positive home test kits not reportable to MAVEN):
 - Jan '22: 255 cases (27 elementary) v Jan '21: 87 cases
 - 39 cases in MS/HS
 - As of Feb 9: Topsfield 14 (2 in elementary) 4 cases in MS/HS
 - Feb 1-8 2021 – last year comparison 4 cases
 - Jan 1-8 2022 – last month comparison 118 cases

Notes from Tri-Town Public Health Nurse:

Vaccinated individuals continue to show more mild symptoms.

Case activity continues to decrease after winter surge.

Case activity remains primarily linked to household exposure, and from exposure at sports and gatherings (winter break).

Minimal evidence of school spread at this time, but not unexpected if it does occur, especially likely to occur in "best friends", lab partners, or when an individual is sick and still goes to school/work and is infectious.

Keep up best practices, cleaning, ventilation, spacing, sending sick kids home.

5 day isolation and quarantine guidelines announced from CDC 12/28, adopted by MA DPH and DESE. LBOH agreed to still require testing of some type on day 5 of quarantine to return to school (to date 2 parents have refused to test, children were not excluded from school for this). Guidelines are better received by people overall but 25- 31% of individuals are still infectious after the 5th day. Masking is meant to help capture residual risk.

I still tell people "you are infectious for 10 days, but you can discontinue isolation after 5 days if your symptoms have improved and you are fever free"

Shift from DESE/DPH to surveillance testing in schools. Will replace contact tracing on individual cases and eliminate the need for test and stay program. Symptomatic and pooled testing still in place. Still a need to monitor for cluster activity, cases reported should have similar threshold as determined previously by LBOH (IE 30% prevalence of case activity in 2 week window prompts testing of classroom).

- **Vaccination percentage rates As of 2/8/2022:**

AGE	Fully Vax'd	Booster
○ 5-11 years –	78%;	0%
○ 12-15 years –	93%;	31%
○ 16-19 years -	>95%;	55%
○ 20-29 years -	>95%;	54%
○ 30-49 years -	>95%;	70%
○ 50-64 years –	82%;	58%
○ 65-74 years -	>95%;	83%
○ 75+ years -	>95%;	74%
○ Total –	92%;	56%

Notes from Tri-Town Public Health Nurse:

Shift in defining “fully vaccinated” to “up to date” from CDC:

Fully vaccinated = receive initial series and has been over 2 weeks.

Up to date = receive initial series and has received a booster if eligible.

Vaccination remains a safe and effective way to help minimize the spread of COVID and reduce severity of disease. Vaccines reduce risk of severe illness, hospitalization, and death from COVID-19. Vaccines are not a “force field” and none are not 100%, vaccines are meant to minimize spread and reduce severity of diseases. Breakthrough cases do not indicate vaccine failure.

WRAP UP of COVID RESPONSE:

- *Constantly updated information on website (Sue)*
- *Responded to EVERY call or request for information/help/worries/complaint that came into office (Wendy and Sue) – we were not responsible for any social media per town policy*
- *Worked daily with Public Safety Team (Fire, Police, COA, Town Administrator) to respond to the emergency (status, information dissemination, planning and day to day needs), create protocols, and outreach to every senior, vulnerable population, businesses and citizen with concerns. Participated in weekly Public Safety calls to coordinate response.*
- *Outreach and MAVEN response for COVID positive and close contact follow up was handled by our long time Public Health Nurse, Joan Fitzpatrick and the VNA provided additional staff as needed during community outbreaks.*
- *Chair Knutsen and Agent Hansbury listened/participated in all state calls, webinars, and listserves with the state and federal governments as well as other relevant stakeholders.*
- *Worked with businesses and schools on reopening protocols from May of 2020 through May 2021 when state of emergency was rescinded.*
- *Created and staffed the Tri-Town Pandemic Nurse position in December 2020 with Boxford and Middleton to assist schools with contact tracing across 8 school buildings and personnel (2 superintendents, 8 principals, 8+ school nurses, thousands of parents). Included response to MAVEN cases under 18, communication of isolation/quarantine protocols to parents and teachers, and*

coordination between school administration and public health. Also coordinated and launched the “test and stay program” mandated for schools.

- Were first on the ground with providing vaccine to first responders in a regional setting (including Essex County Sheriff’s department and the Essex County Courts). Thank you to the Fairgrounds and Jamie O’Brien for donating facility, time and staff (Suzanne and Kurt). Utilized MRC to provide volunteers to continue staffing clinics (hampered by state vaccine availability) to seniors and successive tiers/phases of the vaccine rollout. Homebound vaccinations were completed in cooperation with Fire Chief Jen Collins-Brown.*
- Moved to smaller clinics staffed by local volunteers and staff to continue to provide vaccine during continued vaccine approvals and eligible groups.*
- Joined the regional Greater Cape Ann Community Coalition to facilitate vaccine management. (A group of 10 towns working to provide vaccination clinics to anyone in the state.)*
- Public Health Nurse, Tri-Town Pandemic Nurse and BOH staff responded to continued surges in cases throughout the pandemic (State of Emergency issued on March 12, 2020 and latest surge just slowed at the beginning of February 2022).*
- Applied for and received the Excellence in Public Health Grant through the state for the Tri-Town (Topsfield is the lead community). Have created an MOU between the three towns for shared public health services. Successfully created and transitioned to hire as a contractor the Tri-Town Public Health Nurse position (fortunately staffed by Julia Lobel, RN, BSN, the Pandemic Nurse). The Environmental Inspector position is currently posted as a contract position.*

- CONTINUED ACTIVITIES:**

- Provide vaccine to residents and surrounding communities through standing and popup clinic efforts.*
- Respond to every request for COVID information, assistance, and questions.*
- Investigate clusters and vulnerable groups, contact tracing with these groups, as well as follow up on all cases reported through MAVEN.*



Jeffrey C. Riley
Commissioner

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

75 Pleasant Street, Malden, Massachusetts 02148-4906

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MEMORANDUM

To: Superintendents, Charter School Leaders, Assistant Superintendents,
Collaborative Leaders, and Leaders of Approved Special Education Schools
From: Jeffrey C. Riley, Commissioner
Date: February 9, 2022
Subject: Update on DESE Mask Requirement

After consulting with medical experts and state health officials, the Commissioner will not renew the state mask requirement after it expires on February 28, 2022. Effective Monday, February 28, the DESE mask requirement will be lifted statewide. The Commonwealth's high vaccination rates and widespread availability of COVID-19 testing for school personnel and students support this decision.

Masking continues to be required on all school buses, per federal order.

DESE and DPH strongly recommend students and staff continue to follow the [DESE-DPH Protocols for Responding to COVID-19 Scenarios](#).

As always, any individual who wishes to continue to mask, including those who face higher risk from COVID-19, should be supported in that choice. DESE and DPH strongly recommend unvaccinated individuals should continue to wear masks in school settings.

The Commissioner will continue to monitor public health data, consult with medical experts and state health officials, and issue further guidance and/or requirements as needed.

More than 40 schools have already received approval from DESE to remove the mask requirement. With the removal of the statewide mask requirement, additional schools no longer need to apply.

DESE continues to recommend that districts and schools adopt a layered approach to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in school settings. DESE and DPH continue to strongly urge all eligible individuals to receive the COVID-19 vaccine and booster and continue to support schools with vaccination clinics. Other mitigations include participating in the statewide COVID-19 testing program, maintaining good hand hygiene practices, and staying home when sick.

-----Original Message-----

From: Harvey, Michael <MHarvey@masconomet.org>

Sent: Wednesday, February 9, 2022 11:28 AM

Subject: Re: DESE Mask Mandate - UPDATE

Dear Masconomet Community,

We have received the announcement this morning from Governor Baker and Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Commissioner Riley regarding the end of DESE's requirement that all students and staff remain masked while in school effective Monday, February 28, 2022. Per Federal Order, masks will still be required on school busses.

As I explained in my blog post last week, the Boxford Board of Health currently has an Emergency Face Covering Order in effect for all public buildings in Boxford, including Masconomet Regional Middle and High Schools. Last week, I asked Dr. Dick Taylor, the Chair of the Boxford Board of Public Health, to have the Board of Health consider a waiver for Masconomet from Boxford's Emergency Face Covering Order at their next meeting on Wednesday, February 16th. If the Boxford Board of Health votes to grant this waiver, we will make masks optional for students and staff in accordance with their decision. We will continue to work with our local public health officials and will let you know when we have more information.

Sincerely,

Mike Harvey

Superintendent

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Tri-Town School Union** <schoolbrains@tritownschoolunion.com>

Date: Wed, Feb 9, 2022 at 10:55 AM

Subject: DESE Mask Mandate - UPDATE

To: <smorrison@tritownschoolunion.com>

Good Morning Tri-Town School Union Families and Staff,

As you may be aware from the news earlier today, DESE Commissioner Jeff Riley indicated that the DESE State-Wide Mask Requirement for schools will expire on February 28th and the process will now revert to local communities.

As we have done throughout the entire pandemic, we will work with our Public Health partners about next steps locally and will communicate an update once that is available.

Scott Morrison

TTU Supt.

Ms. Hansbury reviewed the documents and emphasized that DESE will be sunsetting the mask mandate on February 28, 2022. The local mask mandate that the Board of Health instituted in September, 2021 for the local public school Pre-Kindergarten will also expire with the DESE mask mandate. However, school buses are considered public transportation, so masks will still be required on school buses. Following the end of the DESE mask mandate and guidelines, masking will be voluntary in the schools unless local Boards of Health institute local mandates.

Currently, the policy is that a child testing positive for COVID must isolate for 5 days, but may return to school wearing a face mask for days 5-10.

The Boxford Board of Health has jurisdiction over Masconomet Regional High School, and the Boxford Board of Health was meeting February 16, 2022 to discuss the masking issue.

Ms. Hansbury noted three emails received from the public following the February 9, 2021 Memorandum from DESE:

Emails Received Re: Masking

Hello TSC,

Happy 100th day of school for our elementary students! I wanted to reach out and inquire if the specific process to convert to mask optional will be discussed at the SC meeting next week? I see a line item on the agenda, however I wanted to ensure it would be detailing/outlining the specific process to do so versus indicating it's being worked on with no details shared. I'm sure you all, as well as all the teachers/faculty, parents and students, eagerly await the next steps to allow our youngsters the opportunity to enjoy school without a mask.

Hi Wendy,

I watched the press conference this morning where the DESE released that the state mask mandate will be lifted on Feb 28th. And it will be left up to local levels. I urge you to continue the masks for a little while longer. Although case numbers are dropping they are still high. And our youngest children can't not be vaccinated yet. In a few more weeks/months the weather will be warmer and the windows in the school buildings can be left open and the kids can have more learning time outside.

Thank you for your consideration.

Good Morning,

I'm reaching out as a parent, community member, and RN who has worked throughout this pandemic on an inpatient unit with COVID patients.

Please follow the DESE guidance and end the mask mandate at our schools on February 28th.

I am requesting to be given the right to choose what's best for my family.

One way masking works. This is practiced at the hospital. Staff wear masks but patients, including COVID positive, do NOT wear masks. In addition to this COVID positive patients are allowed visitors in this instance again the visitors wear a mask but the COVID patient does not. Families and staff who prefer to wear a mask, are still protected in their mask despite an individual around them not wearing one. I am confident that universal masking is not necessary.

Many cities and towns have announced their plan to move forward and masks will be optional at school. I am hopeful that Topsfield will move along with the state and make masks a choice.

Ms. Hansbury informed the Board that she will respond to the emails. Ms. Eaton suggested that if COVID numbers start to increase again, the issue of masking will be reconsidered.

OLD BUSINESS

Financial Update

Board Members reviewed the document, "Revenue Received Between January 15, 2022 and February 11, 2022". The total revenue received during this period was \$1,605.00.

Board Members also reviewed Bills paid during the period between January 15, 2022 and February 11, 2022.

HEALTH AGENT REPORT

Health Director Hansbury reported the following:

- The Board of Health office has remained busy throughout the pandemic.
- The State released a Press Release hours before this Board Meeting informing the public that Salmonella leading to human infection had been traced to gourmet dog treats made by a small company in Georgetown, MA and sold at the Essex County Co-Op. Humans had handled the dog treats which contained dehydrated raw chicken, and contracted Salmonella. Two Senior citizens and a baby were involved.
- The FY21 Board of Health Annual Report is due by March 10, 2022. Board Members reviewed the report. Ms. Hansbury informed the Board that further edits will be made to the Working Copy Volume Analysis to ensure that there will be no confusion about Regular Communicable Disease Investigations and COVID-19 Investigations.
- There have been multiple Adult and Pediatric COVID-19 Vaccine Clinics including a clinic scheduled at Topsfield Town Hall on February 17, 2022.
- Meetings continue regarding the Excellence in Public Health Grant.
- Ms. Hansbury and Mr. Rizza met with the Select Board regarding the FY23 Budget.
- Ms. Hansbury participated in a Council On Aging 'Coffee and Conversation' with a PowerPoint Presentation on the Board of Health response to the COVID-19 Pandemic.
- Renewals for Septic Installer and Hauler Licenses and Permits for Food, Tanning and Tobacco are ongoing.
- Septic and Building Permit Application reviews are ongoing.
- Flu Vaccine for next year's Flu Vaccine Clinics has been ordered through VNA Care.
- Public Safety and Department Head Meetings continue.
- Ms. Hansbury earned her REHS/RS. The Board offered hearty congratulations to Ms. Hansbury.

CORRESPONDENCE

There was no correspondence for this meeting.

ADJOURN

VOTE: Ms. Eaton made a motion to adjourn at 8:07 PM. Seconded by Mr. Rizza. Chair Knutsen called for a roll-call vote:

Knutsen – yes

Hunt - abstain

Rizza – yes

Eaton – yes

Lischko – yes

The motion was approved in a vote of 4-0-1.

Minutes submitted by Susan Winslow. These Minutes were reviewed and approved at the March 16, 2022 Board of Health Meeting.

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

1. Agenda: February 16, 2022
2. Meeting Minutes: January 19, 2022
3. Map – Topsfield Fair Grounds
4. BOH Meeting Minutes April 26, 2012
5. 207 Boston Street Letter dated January 4, 2022 – Greg Hochmuth RS, Williams & Sparages
6. 207 Boston Street Application for Disposal System Construction
7. 207 Boston Street Septic Design Plan dated January 4, 2022
8. 2-2022 COVID-19 Update
9. 2/9/22 Email from Michael M. Harvey, Ed. D, Superintendent Masconomet Regional School District
10. 2/9/22 Email from Dr. Scott Morrison, Tri-Town Union Superintendent
11. 2/9/22 DESE Memorandum: Update on DESE Mask Requirement
12. Emails Received at BOH regarding Masking
13. Revenue Received January 15, 2022 to February 11, 2022
14. Bill Schedules dated 1/25/22 and 2/8/22
15. FY21 Board of Health Annual Report
16. FY21 Board of Health Working Copy Volume Analysis

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.