



NEEDHAM PUBLIC HEALTH DIVISION



Board of Health Emergency Meeting Minutes

Date: April 28, 2020

Location: Zoom meeting, per Governor Baker's March Stay at Home Order

Members: Kathleen Ward Brown, ScD, Chair
Edward Cosgrove, PhD, Member
Stephen Epstein, MD, MPP, Member
Christina S. Mathews, MPH, Member
Robert A. Partridge, MD, MPH, Vice Charge

Staff present: Timothy Muir McDonald, Director of Health and Human Services; Tara Gurge, Assistant Director, Environmental Health; Tiffany Zike, Public Health Nurse

Meeting called to order at 3:00 p.m. by Dr. Kathleen Ward Brown, Chair of the Board. Meeting was called to discuss emergency order about face coverings.

Draft Regulation Public Health Emergency Order Mandating Face Coverings

The Board had reviewed a draft order for Needham, regulations from other towns and cities in Massachusetts, and all public comments received by 2:00 pm on April 28.

A wide-ranging discussion ensued. Possible amendments were also discussed.

In answer to Board inquiry, Mr. McDonald noted the town does not have enough personal protective supplies for all residents who request them, but will continue to provide information and guidelines for making masks. The first priority continues to be essential workers. The Public Health Division will encourage the community groups who are making masks to donate to those who need them. The exception will be the election on May 26, where masks will be provided to help meet the essential government function of holding an election.

Overview

Recommended changes to the emergency order after long discussion included:

- Face covering of any kind are recommended, but continue to reserve medical grade supplies for front line health care workers
- The youngest required to wear masks will be 5 years-old rather than 2 years-old.
- The Board, after discussing a sunset provision, decided that the emergency order will be in place for 45 days. This will allow the Board to revisit the emergency order at its regularly scheduled June 16 meeting.
- New scientific rationale for the need to cover face in indoor public spaces was discussed. New models are showing droplets remain in closed spaces, such as elevators, longer than originally discovered.
- Need signage in commercial and large residential buildings explaining face covering requirements based on new order.

- The regulation will be difficult to enforce without defined consequences and dedicated enforcement staff, but still makes a very strong point. The Board and staff discussed that most businesses have been cooperative and proactive of their own accord. This order will increase the willingness of residents and businesses to do their part in preventing the spread of COVID. In answer to a Board question, Mr. McDonald said that the Board retains authority to deal with any business that flouts the emergency order.
- The Board also discussed the protocol for a retail establishment refusing to serve a patron or customer without a face covering. The emergency order allows a business to use its own discretion in refusing service to someone who is not wearing a face covering.
- The emergency order does not require face coverings in outdoor spaces where social distancing guidelines can be maintained. Residents can choose to wear them outdoors, especially in situations where social distancing cannot be maintained.

Mr. McDonald said that the Public Health Division will need time to educate the public about the emergency order. He would like two days of public information before the order goes into effect.

The Board will review permit guidelines for ice cream trucks and mobile food trucks at a future spring meeting to incorporate Public Health staff input on safe operating guidelines, including social distancing protocols during COVID.

A motion to approve the Amended Regulation for Public Health Emergency Order Mandating Face Coverings was made by Dr. Cosgrove. The Motion was seconded by Dr. Partridge. The amended regulation was approved unanimously by voice vote.

There was no new business.

The next two Board meetings are:

May 12, 9:00 a.m. via Zoom

June 16, 9:00 a.m. via Zoom

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Dr. Cosgrove. Dr. Epstein seconded. Unanimous decision by roll call vote to adjourn. Meeting adjourned at 3:45 p.m.

Minutes submitted by:

Faith Crisley
Recording Secretary