



NEEDHAM PUBLIC HEALTH DIVISION



Board of Health Meeting Minutes COVID Focused Meeting

Date: August 12, 2021

Location: In-person and Remote via Zoom per Governor Charles Baker's COVID-19 Executive Order 3/12/2020 and amended as of 6/15/2021

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

Staff Present: Timothy Muir McDonald, Director of Needham Department of Health and Human Services; Tara Gurge, Assistant Director of the Public Health Division; Tiffany Zike, Assistant Director of Public Health; Hannah Whitehead; and Mary Fountaine

Call to Order

Dr. Partridge called the meeting to order at 6:00PM and initiated roll call. Present were Dr. Brown-Y, Dr. Cosgrove-Y (arrived late), Dr. Epstein-Y and Dr. Partridge-Y. Absent was Ms. Mathews.

The meeting is being conducted in-person and remotely using Zoom consistent with Governor Baker's March 12th executive order and as amended on June 15, 2021 regarding COVID-19. The materials for this meeting were circulated previously and are available on the Town website. This meeting is being recorded.

COVID-19 Update – Hannah Whitehead, Timothy McDonald and Mary Fountaine

Community Risk Levels

Ms. Whitehead presented the report on COVID-19 data as of August, assisted by Mr. McDonald. See attached PowerPoint Presentation for detailed information on the following data:

- a) Daily confirmed cases
- b) Covid-19 incidence
- c) Incidence and percent positivity rate in Needham and throughout state
- d) Covid-19 confirmed cases by age and average case age
- e) Breakthrough cases by age and vaccination status
- f) Vaccine uptake
- g) Vaccine uptake among youth
- h) State-level trends in cases and hospitalizations



NEEDHAM PUBLIC HEALTH DIVISION



- i) County-level trends in cases and deaths

Mr. McDonald introduced the new current CDC recommendations and presented by Ms. Whitehead:

- j) Current CDC recommendations
- k) Community transmission levels: July-August
- l) Final CDC recommendations and guidelines

Ms. Fountaine reported that the majority of cases were caused by out of state travel by residents or visitors and not household or community transmission. Discussion ensued on the various aspects of the above report.

CDC Recommendations and Needham's Response to COVID

Mr. McDonald began the discussion on Needham's response to COVID-19 in light of the new CDC recommendations. The joint health and safety committee met today to support a policy in the fall regarding masks and other defense and intervention measures for K-12.

Topics of discussion included surveillance testing offered by the state. Given the high vaccination rate of Needham residents, the low false positives of testing would be expected to outnumber true positive cases.

Also discussed was the state requirement to quarantine for fourteen days if symptoms of any kind are present. If the overall goal is to maximize health and safety of students and staff as well as maximizing time and learning for students, mandatory quarantine would have an adverse effect.

Following discussion it was agreed that Mr. McDonald would work with the town public information officer and economic development manager to develop signage to encourage mask wearing while indoors regardless of vaccination status for the protection of those unvaccinated in the community. Also of importance is understanding one's own personal and family risk level in order to make one's own informed decision. However, given the dynamic status of the pandemic, CDC and Board of Health guidance is subject to change.

The CDC also recommended that masking indoors be required for grades K-12. Since 16% of the town population is under 12 years of age, requiring masks in municipal buildings may also be considered. This information will be presented to the school committee for its vote on requiring all or some of its student population to mask indoors.

Mr. McDonald noted that the town is employing safety measures for its staff to assure workforce cohesion by means of skeleton staff assignments.

Next Meeting

Tuesday, August 17 – 6:00PM

Mr. McDonald will attend simultaneous Select Board meeting at which time the Board will take recommendations from the Town Manager outlining potential resources and recovery act funds needed



NEEDHAM PUBLIC HEALTH DIVISION



to support the Public Health Division's response to the pandemic including funding for staff contact tracers, epidemiologist and other pressing health services.

Ms. Zike reported that, in light of the fact that the state is phasing out contact tracing, application for a state grant had been submitted for regional contact tracing and case investigation services to include towns of Dover and Medfield.

Adjournment

Upon motion duly made by Dr. Epstein and seconded by Dr. Brown, it was unanimously voted to adjourn. Dr. Brown-Y, Dr. Dr. Epstein-Y, Ms. Mathews-Y, Dr. Cosgrove and Dr. Partridge-Y. Motion passed 5-0. The meeting adjourned at 7:10PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Christine Martin Barraford

Attachments:

August 12th Meeting Packet