

Meeting Minutes of the Chelsea Board of Health
February 22, 2022

Attendance: Names of members and Participants

Board members, City of Chelsea staff and guests were introduced.

Board Members:

- Ola Bayode
- Corinna Culler
- Allen Jackson

City of Chelsea Staff:

- Dr. Flor Amaya, Director of Public Health
- Tom Ambrosino, City Manager
- Paula McHatton, Public Health Nurse
- Mike Sandoval, Dept. of Public Works
- Stephon Treadway, Asst. City Solicitor

Guests/Members of the Public:

- Rigoberto Chavez
- Barry Keppard, Metropolitan Area Planning Council
- Ann Kissel, North Suffolk Public Health Collaborative

Adoption of the Minutes of the October and November Meetings

A motion to adopt the minutes from the January meeting was unanimously approved.

Correction of scrivener's error in the recently adopted Tobacco Control Regulations

Stephon Treadway, Asst. City Solicitor led a discussion of the recent tobacco control regulations. In the discussion of the regulations, the Board intended to change the definition of blunt wraps to adopt the recommended change as the Association of Boards of Health recommended. Due to an error in recording, the Board's decision to adopt that new suggested language was not recorded and did not make it into the final version of the regulations that were adopted.

Treadway continued that many manufacturers were attempting to avoid blunt wrap regulations by changing them slightly so they would be considered cigars. The modified definition prevents that evasion.

A motion to change the definition of blunt wraps to conform to the recommended language as forwarded by the City Solicitors office was unanimously approved.

Public Hearing re: hens at 121 Clark Ave.

No members of the public attended to give comments on Rigoberto Chavez's request to keep more than two hens at his residence. The public hearing was posted in the Chelsea Record. However, due to a miscommunication, notification to the residents

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abutting his property has not happened. Stephon Treadway noted that the hens have already been at Mr. Chavez's residence and continued that the board could vote to issue a permit for Mr. Chavez's hens, absent concerns from the abutters, and emphasized that this would be only for the public health permit and would not cover any concerns the City's Inspectional Services Department may have.

Mr. Chavez reported that since the last meeting, one of his hens is missing, so he now has only 3 hens.

The Board voted unanimously to approve the public health permit, conditional on there being no concerns from abutting property owners.

Chelsea Case Incidence and Booster Rates

Ann Kissel, Regional Epidemiologist with the North Suffolk Public Health Collaborative gave a presentation on incidence rates and vaccination booster adoption in Chelsea.

Highlights included:

- The weekly incidence rate of new COVID-19 infections has fallen from its high in early 2022 and has decreased significantly and now stands at levels like previously observed pre-spike infection rates.
- As of 2/15/2022, 84% of Chelsea residents are fully vaccinated, and 32% have received COVID booster shots.
- Between 12/5/2021 and 1/8/2022, there were 341 cases of COVID-19 among residents who had received their COVID booster shots, where there were 1,943 cases amongst the unvaccinated during that time. Boosted individuals has 82% less risk of COVID-19 infection compared to the unvaccinated.
- COVID-19 began as an epidemic, but may be moving toward an endemic disease state, where there is a baseline of COVID-19 that is regularly present in a community.

Kissel also presented a color-coded COVID-19 risk mitigation framework that considers individual and community mitigation efforts and assigns a color (in order of decreasing infection risk: Red, Orange, Yellow and Blue) to the different risk categories that communities may find themselves in. According to this framework, Chelsea is currently in the orange risk level.

Ola Bayode wondered what happened between 2/1/22 and 2/15/22 that caused the surge in booster uptake. Kissel responded that there is usually an uptick in booster adoption every two weeks.

Draft Rodent Control Regulations

Stephon Treadway stated that the ordinances, based on similar ordinances in Lynn and Peabody, were intended to address concerns by the public that construction sites are disrupting rodent nests. The regulations would require a pest management plan in the permitting of certain building projects.

Treadway suggested the Board move to advance the regulations to a public hearing at the next Board of Health meeting, and suggested Board members contact the City about questions and concerns the Board may have about the regulations.

Dr. Amaya has submitted a notice to the Chelsea Record on the draft rodent control regulations to ensure the public hearing notification requirements are satisfied.

A motion to hold a public hearing on the draft rodent control regulations at the next Board of Health meeting was unanimously adopted.

Public Health Updates

Paula McHatton, Public Health Nurse's overview included:

- There were 2 enteric diseases last month: One case of shigella, and one case of a shiga toxin producing organism in a traveler from Honduras. There were no TB cases reported and 20 cases of flu.

COVID-19 Updates

- Chelsea currently has 15,140 confirmed cases, including 12 new cases since Friday.
- Infections have decreased from 1.209 at our last meeting to 31 last week.
- The positivity rate has decreased from 29.68% at our last meeting to 3.18%.
- The incidence rate has decreased from 538.3/100,000 population at our last meeting to 22.4/100,000 currently.
- DPH is now considering COVID-19 in the same category of diseases as flu and other communicable diseases.
- As of 2/15/2022, issued a new mask advisory that advised that fully vaccinated persons should continue to wear a mask indoors if they have a weakened immune system or are at increased risk of severe disease progression.

Dr. Flor Amaya, Director of Public Health added that:

- Rapid tests distributions have occurred at the City's 10 senior housing complexes, food pantries and other community-wide distribution opportunities.
- The City continues to host vaccination clinics at the senior center, in schools and recently La Collaborativa is hosting pediatric vaccination days on Tuesdays and Thursdays.
- The City is in the process of hosting a health equity form in mid-March focused on analyzing the lessons learned through COVID-19 and how they can be used to advance health equity in the City.

Follow-up from Previous Meetings/Public Comments

Tom Ambrosino, City Manager advocated that the City should drop its public health Mandate before the Board of Health meeting on March 8, noting the drop in cases and infection rates. He noted that other localities would be lifting their mask mandates and that would disadvantage Chelsea.

Corinna Culler added that there has already been one week where there already less than 35 cases and suggested that the mandate should be lifted if the current and

following week saw less than 35 cases, as had been discussed in the meeting where the mandate was put into effect. Ambrosino suggested March 4 as a date to lift the mandate, as the Board would have three weeks of data to consider. Ola Bayode and Allen Jackson supported City Manager Ambrosino's suggestion.

Paula McHatton noted that she can give City Manager Tom Ambrosino a report on the relevant public health data on Thursday.

McHatton reported that the Board agreed to consider rescinding the mask mandate when there are less than 35 cases/week for 3 weeks and the incidence rate is less than 5/50,000 population, and that the positivity rate has dropped from 29.85% the fourth week in January to 3.18% in the 3rd week in March.

Ambrosino added that the wastewater monitoring numbers were currently at the lowest levels they have been at since last summer.

A motion to lift the City's mask mandate on Friday, February 4 conditioned on the case numbers being less than 35 cases per week for 3 weeks, and the incidence rate is less than 5/50,000 population was passed unanimously on a voice vote.

Next Meeting,
March 8, 2022, virtually.

The meeting adjourned at 7:10pm.



Allen Jackson, Clerk

3/8/2022
Date