

BOARD OF HEALTH

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83369895595?pwd=M21SK0hOTk12eTQ5b0F5L0FlaCtaQT09>

Meeting ID: 833 6989 5595 Passcode: 218470

January 20, 2022 Minutes

BOH Members Present: Dr. Joanne Levin; Dr. Suzanne Smith; Dr. Cynthia Suopis; and Dr. Laurent Levy
Staff: Merridith O’Leary, Director and Kelly Constantine, BOH Clerk; Vivian Franklin, RN, Amy Hutchins, Assistant Director

Public Comment Session: Dr. Levin announced that public comments would be limited to two minutes per person and that the meeting was being recorded. Several members of the public spoke.

I. Meeting opened January 20, 2022 at 5:54 pm by Dr. Levin.

Motion: Motion made to open the meeting by Dr. Suopis, seconded by Dr. Smith. All in favor (4-0).

II. Old Business

a. **COVID-19 Update:** Vivian Franklin, Public Health Nurse presented current COVID-19 data. The total number of confirmed and probable cases has been 3,394 since March 2020.* There have been 135 total hospitalizations and 109 total deaths in Northampton.**

*Confirmed cases are cases that have laboratory molecular/PCR tests. Probable cases only have positive antigen tests without PCR testing (does not include self-tests performed at home).

**Hospitalizations and deaths rely on data collection from individual case interviews, medical records, and vital statistics. Data may therefore be incomplete or undercounted.

b. **Consideration of granting emergency power to Health Director** – Dr. Levin brought up the topic as the Board generally only meets once a month. Dr. Levin pointed out that Director O’Leary does have the power as Health Director to intervene where public health clearly needs an intervention; however, Dr. Levin was not clear on which topics need the Board’s power and which do not. Director O’Leary indicated that she can make strong recommendations and the Board makes policies. The Board decided to give the Director the power to make policy decisions at the start of COVID when things were rapidly developing and policy decisions needed to be made quickly. The Board was to be notified within 24 hours. That power was withdrawn when the Massachusetts Public Health emergency was discontinued around June 2021. Director O’Leary indicated the current surge seems to be heading for a plateau and recommends continuing as business as usual.

c. **Review of mask mandate** – Director O’Leary recommended that we continue the mask mandate at this time.

III. New Business:

a. **Discussion of short term public health strategies to reduce COVID 19 transmission**

1. Capacity limits in large indoor venues

Director O’Leary indicated that she asked the Board to think about the large indoor venues where people are seated watching a performance and having concessions. She suggested having or amending the mask policy such that it would prohibit eating and drinking in those type of venues. The Academy of Music already does that. Dr. Levin wondered how to clarify that we mean the

larger venues where people are seated close together. Director O'Leary indicated she was thinking about auditorium seating where people are seated shoulder to shoulder. Assistant Director Hutchins had a list of venues that fit the category: The Academy, The Calvin, and Pearl Street. Dr. Levin asked the Board if they wanted to make a recommendation as opposed to a regulation. Director O'Leary suggested that the recommendation include strongly encouraging the use of higher quality masks such as N95 or KN95 or surgical masks and discouraging simple cloth masks. Director O'Leary indicated that the Health Department, through Amy Cahillane, had delivered KN95 masks to downtown businesses. Dr. Levin proposed that if the venue does not separate food and drink serving from the main concert area then they should either not serve food and drink or they should set a different area aside. Dr. Levin indicated that she would work with NDPH to propose best practices, and possibly form a sub-committee to work on that.

- b. **Consideration of Policy for Public Comment Session** – Dr. Levin presented the recent rule adopted by City Council on Public Comment dated January 2, 2022. Dr. Smith and Dr. Suopis indicated that they would like to keep the time limit per person and have a name and address. Dr. Levin indicated that she would like to know the name of the town where the person lives.

Motion: Motion made by Dr. Smith, seconded by Dr. Levy, to adopt rule by City Council, changing City Council to Board of Health; without the sentence about the public comment limitation and without the sentence about language translation; and adding the sentence about civility and respect. All in favor (4-0).

IV. Review Minutes

A. Meeting Minutes from December 16, 2021.

Motion: Approved as amended: Motion made by Dr. Levy to accept the minutes as amended, seconded by Dr. Suopis. All were in favor (4-0).

B. Meeting Minutes from December 28, 2021.

Motion: Approved as amended: Motion made by Dr. Levy to accept the minutes as amended, seconded by Dr. Suopis. All were in favor (4-0).

C. Meeting Minutes from January 13, 2022 were tabled to the next meeting to allow for review.

Meeting Closed: Motion to Close Meeting: Motion made to close the Board of Health meeting by Dr. Suopis, seconded by Dr. Smith. All in favor (4-0)

Meeting closed at 8:18 PM.

The next scheduled Board of Health Meeting: February 3, 2022

Kelly Constantine, BOH Clerk

BOARD OF HEALTH

Date: January 20, 2022

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Meeting Document List

The following documents were available to the Board of Health during their scheduled meeting.

These documents are available for review at the:

Northampton Health Department, 212 Main Street, Northampton, MA 01060

- Meeting Agenda
- December 16, 2021 Minutes
- December 28, 2021 Minutes
- January 13, 2022 Minutes