

Winchendon Board of Health

109 Front Street
Winchendon, MA 01475

Minutes

Regular Meeting

Monday January 9, 2023

4th Floor Conference Room

Members Present: Keith Kent, Lionel Cloutier, Edward Bond, Tina Santos

Members Absent: Glenn LaRochelle

Others Present: James Abare, Health Agent, Robert Sylvia, Septic Preservation Specialists

Meeting called to order: 6:00 pm

Pledge of Allegiance

Chair Report:

Chairman Kent reported the following:

Area illness rates skyrocketing. Hospitals nearing capacity.

Current Triple-demic rates of COVID-19 / The Flu / & RSV infections are causing significant stress on both Local and Commonwealth wide hospitals and secondary healthcare facilities, which are now asking for the public to please take common sense precautions and measures with their health as systems are nearing or now at full capacity depending on location. Patients from both the Chair City and North Quabbin areas are continuing to be showing up at times on social media reported by their families transported to out of state hospitals just to get a bed for treatment as needed on a case by case basis.

All indicators are up -- According to the Mass DPH, as of Thursday, January 5, the Commonwealth 14 day average per its latest report has increased to 11.94%, with the more accurate up to date 7 day average increasing to 13.39% positivity.

Nine of Ten local towns in Viral double-digits - Locally in our immediate Ten Town Area of North Worcester County, "9 of 10 towns" are now at double digit COVID-19 or SARS-CoV- positivity. In just the last 7 days based on the newest Massachusetts Department of Public Health report released Thursday, January 5, our 10 town area traveling just 2 towns in any direction south of the State of NH border from Winchendon, has increased in viral positivity from 10.93 to 14.30 percent positivity average, a 24% one week jump, and has now almost nearly doubled in COVID-19 positivity from 7.57%, just 2 weeks prior.

Beginning with Winchendon at 10,500 residents which this week actually dipped from 13.29 to 10.42%, Toy Town was only 1 of 3 area towns to realize a slight decrease. Those joining it were Hubbardston dropping from a very high 13.83 to a still high 13.43% positivity, and the Town of Athol with nearly 12,000 residents, still above eight percent, lowering from 8.56 to 8.01% positivity based on 395 molecular tests.

Local Municipalities on the rise - Others all on the on the SARS-CoV-2 rise were Ashburnham moving from 10.62 to 11.76%, and its school district partnering Town of Westminster increasing from 6.25 to 12.32%. In the Narragansett Regional School District to Winchendon's south, Templeton realized a significant surge, trending up from 7.30 to 15.65% positivity, and its partnering town Phillipston, increasing from 14.29 to 18.18% positivity. Ashby to Ashburnham's east increased from 10.62 to 14.93%, and Royalston to Winchendon's west and also a joint school district member with Athol, jumped from 14.3 to 25.00 percent. Lastly, in the Chair City, the City of Gardner with 21,000 residents jumped from 8.75 to 12.85% positivity. Again it should be noted, "NONE OF THESE NUMBERS INCLUDE ANY STORE BOUGHT OR GOVERNMENT PROVIDED HOME ANTIGEN TEST KITS" which are not mandated for reporting to the Mass DPH for calculations, and according to it, add at a bare minimum at least if not more, 5 percent or better.

The following is a press release I will also be reading in to public record at this meeting, I obtained from Mrs. Dawn Casavant of Heywood Hospital, per request of my self, the Chair of the B.O.H.

"Heywood Healthcare, along with health systems across the Commonwealth, is experiencing a surge of high acuity patients, including a high prevalence of COVID-19 and influenza, resulting in a lack of inpatient beds statewide. Currently there are 23 COVID-19 inpatients in the Heywood system, and a handful of influenza patients. Wastewater data is indicating a potential peak during the month of January.

"In an effort to optimize access to healthcare for residents of our community, we have to prioritize inpatient beds for those with urgent and emergent needs. There is no interruption to elective outpatient, urgent or emergent surgeries. Due to the higher volume of inpatient admissions, capacity for elective inpatient surgeries is evaluated daily. Unfortunately some patients scheduled for elective inpatient surgery had to be rescheduled. We provide as much notice as possible, understanding the considerable planning and preparation taken on behalf of our patients scheduled for surgery," stated Rozanna Penney, Vice President of Ambulatory and Perioperative Services for Heywood Healthcare.

Community members can help by contacting your primary care physician upon onset of symptoms, and by accessing the right level of care at the right place. Residents experiencing more mild symptoms may be best evaluated at an Urgent Care Center, such as Heywood Urgent Care (Gardner) and Tully Walk-In Care (Athol). Patients experiencing severe symptoms should seek emergency care. Residents can also help by avoiding public places if they are sick and by wearing a mask to avoid transmission to others".

Dawn Casavant, Vice President of External Affairs
Executive Director, Heywood Healthcare Charitable Foundation
Heywood Healthcare

Mr. Bond stated the increase is due to the holidays. The slope down of disease is expected in the 2nd or 3rd week of February.

Motion to take agenda items out of order Bond/Cloutier, 4-0 Approved by roll call vote.

New Business:

Mr. Robert Sylvia is in attendance to educate the Board on a newer style of septic system that is planning on being installed at the Route 140 Irving gas station/Dunkin Donuts location. This type of system takes up 50% less ground space than the traditional systems that have been used. Also, the rate of failure is almost non-existent. Other parts of the state are utilizing this system, mostly in coastal communities on Cape Cod, and the North and South Shores. This technology is not new, and was first initiated after World War II. In the 1950s and 1960s the technology was privatized and started appearing in the Great Lakes and Mid-West regions of the United States. In the early 2000s it was migrating to the Northeast. Mr. Sylvia explained the country is in an epidemic of premature septic failures, and he feels in his lifetime there will be an end to conventional septic systems. These new systems are now removing nitrogen and phosphorus, stopping the ongoing pollution of our drinking water, ground water, and estuaries. The average family home has residential strength organic waste of 350 parts per million. Commercial strength organic waste has 2000 to 3000 parts per million, due to fats, greases, coffees and more. It is not digested organic waste and is creating issues. A commercial system needs to have a PH of 7 with aerobic active bacteria to assist in the breakdown process. The three most common systems in Massachusetts are the White Knight System, Advantex, and Singulair. The White Knight System allows for infinite flexibility, utilizing any size tank and is configurable. The ultimate goal is to get commercial waste down to a residential waste grade. In order to do so, the oxygen level must remain above .2 to maintain aerobic activity, aiding in the breakdown process. This is the type of system slated to be installed at the Irving gas station/Dunkin Donuts location. This system is currently being used at a Honey Farms in Orange, MA. Mr. Sylvia stated these systems extend the useful life of the septic system and leach field, and if Title 5 does not pass, a refund is issued. He has not experienced any failures. Approximately 1500 systems have been installed. Massachusetts, in terms of clean environment measures is ahead of the curve. The ultimate goal is to protect drinking water.

Minutes:

Minutes of the December 5, 2022 meeting were presented. *Motion to accept minutes Cloutier/Santos 3-0 Approved by roll call vote, 1 abstention (Bond)*

Permits:

Food:

#2297-The Winchendon School, \$100 fee paid, no notes or violation. *Motion to approve permit # 2297 Bond/Cloutier 4-0 Approved by roll call vote.*

#2298-Sellia Group LLC, DBA McDonalds, \$100 fee paid, no notes or violations. *Motion to approve permit # 2298 Bond/Santos 4-0 Approved by roll call vote.*

#2299-Walgreens, \$100 fee paid, no notes or violations. *Motion to approve permit # 2299 Cloutier/Bond 4-0 Approved by roll call vote.*

#2301-Immaculate Heart of Mary Church, no notes or violations. *Motion to waive fee and approve permit # 2301-Cloutier/Santos 4-0 Approved by roll call vote.*

#2302-Smith's Country Cheese, \$100 fee paid, no notes or violations. *Motion to approve permit # 2302 Cloutier/Bond 4-0 Approved by roll call vote.*

#2303-CVS Pharmacy \$100 fee paid, no notes or violations. *Motion to approve permit # 2303 Cloutier/Santos 4-0 Approved by roll call vote.*

Tobacco:

T#23-08 Cumberland Farms, \$150 fee paid. *Motion to approve permit T#23-08 Cloutier/Santos 4-0 Approved by roll call vote.*

Family Dollar is still outstanding. Mr. Abare will reach out to regional manager.

Invoices:

Two invoices were presented. The first was for Health Agent James Abare. This is an annual reimbursement for the Massachusetts Health Officers Membership. *Motion to approve invoice for James Abare, Cloutier/Santos 4-0 Approved by roll call vote.* The second was for Recording Secretary Jenelle Sroczynski for the December 5, , 2022 meeting in the amount of \$75.00. *Motion to approve invoice for Jenelle Sroczynski, Cloutier/Bond 4-0 Approved by roll call vote.*

Mr. Kent stated there are still plenty of COVID-19 test kits located in the Health Office for Winchendon residents. He and Mr. Abare have secured 11 more cases of 90 tests with a July 9, 2023 expiration date for the town.

Adjournment: *Motion to adjourn: Bond/Cloutier 4-0 approved by rollcall vote at 7:23pm.*

Meeting Adjourned at 7:23 pm.

Respectfully submitted by:
Jenelle Sroczynski
Board Secretary

Minutes Approved By:

