



Town of Adams • **Massachusetts 01220**

Board of Health Department

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Approved

Adams Board of Health – Public Meeting Minutes

1st Floor Mahogany Room and Zoom

Wednesday, February 2, 2022

BOH Members Present: Chairman Dr. David Rhoads, Vice-Chair Joyce Brewer, Member Dr. Peter Hoyt

Others Present: Mark Blaisdell-Code Enforcer, Deborah Dunlap-Administrative Assistant, Howard Rosenberg-BOS Member, Atty. Edward St. John – Town Council, Brian Rhodes-iBerkshires

Call to Order: Chairman Rhoads called the meeting to order at 4:00pm and read the notice on the recording of the meeting

In person or virtual participation in this meeting is allowed by Ch.20 of the Acts of 2021 suspending certain provisions of the Open Meeting Law, MGL c.30 §20. The Zoom information is given below. This meeting will be recorded via Zoom; a copy can be provided upon request.

Notices on Recording & Post-Pandemic Waiver to Conduct Public Meeting Virtually (Above)

Note: if you are having trouble joining, please call David B Rhoads, PH.D. BOH Chair, at 781-507-1627.

Direct link: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/82272512749?pwd=TGptUGhMVUNIM0VJbm5NS2dzMVN4QT09>

or go to “zoom.us/join” or call 1-929-436-2866 (New York) and enter meeting information

Meeting ID: 822 7251 2749

Passcode: 915367

Covid-19 Report: Recent report (#16), other Covid-19 news, input from community; consideration of an indoor mask mandate:

Dr. Rhoads shared the latest Covid update that continues to be posted on the website regularly. Dr. Rhoads called out a couple of things regarding Booster information. Dr. Rhoads mentioned that he did not receive any feedback from local businesses. He did receive one letter on February 1, which he had circulated to the Board and would critique later, as well as a follow-up that morning from the same individual identified as “L”, which he did not circulate because it contained inaccuracies, irrelevant information and a shocking image without sufficient context. No clinics are coming up. Vaccines are still available through local pharmacies. Covid cases are declining some according to the report but may not include all data. However, deaths are not declining. The vaccination reports are showing 70% of the Adams population are fully vaccinated (2 shots Moderna/Pfizer or 1 shot J&J) and currently 35% have been boosted.

Community Input from 16 respondents, all private citizens:

- Masking: Most wanted to see more public masking. For a mandate, there were 6 for it and 1 opposed; 6 others wanted a strong advisory
- Vaccinations: Many noted that they were vaccinated; no one was opposed. Several expressed the importance of being vaccinated.
 - Vaccine requirement for indoor activities – 1
 - More vaccine clinics in town – 2; Dr. Rhoads commented that the mobile van does make its rounds and there are places to get vaccinated in town.
- Other specific comments:

- Shopping elsewhere – 4
- More public awareness = 4 (2 noting information on mask type); Dr. Rhoads commented that there has been enough information out there, we should be aware.
- Engage businesses
- People should be aware of the need to comply
- Feels let down by Adams
- No indoor dining
- Adams should distribute masks
- Adams should institute a testing program
- Several respondents were detailed in their recommendations. For instance, a public awareness campaign should include all means available: town calendar, social media groups, etc.

Dr. Rhoads received 2 letters in the last 2 days from an individual he referred to as “L”. There was much detail and information in the letter. Dr. Rhoads offered several critiques from the letter.

- The letter listed multiple studies regarding the effectiveness of masks. However, all were studies conducted before the coronavirus pandemic using the influenza transmission as the endpoint. Dr. Rhoads disagreed with L’s interpretations on 3 grounds:
 - The coronavirus is transmitted much less effectively via surface contact than the influenza virus
 - Study venues – household, clinics, workplaces – were not analogous, where we know that coronavirus is easily transmitted masking or not. Our concern is with public venues
 - Mask type does matter, i.e., synthetic vs. fabric, particularly with omicron.
- Active cases between Vermont and Wyoming and both of those states are roughly the same population of around 600,000. Vermont had a large surge a couple of months ago and Wyoming’s surge was last winter. Vermont was one of the first states that had a large percentage vaccinated. So now the immunity months after vaccination is much lower for those that did not yet get boosted which may have caused the recent surge. The pertinent unmentioned fact is that the number of deaths in Wyoming was more than 3 times that of Vermont, 1600 vs 500, respectively. The difference clearly supports the benefit of vaccination.
- World Health Organization Bar chart measuring Adverse Drug Reactions for vaccines updated last on Nov 20, 2021 showing from 2020-2021, there were 2,528,564 ADRs which is noted as raw data. These are situations where people reported any symptom they experienced after getting vaccinated including a headache. There could have been some time between the vaccination date and when they reported the symptoms which may have been unrelated to the vaccine. The important thing to note is that the 2021 data are raw, i.e, not yet investigated for probable association with vaccination, as have been the ADRs for previous years.

Dr. Rhoads asked for any questions and merged into Public Comment. – see below Public Comment: Comments on Covid-19 response

Dr. Rhoads shared signage wording in regards to supporting indoor masking for our local businesses. What needs to be approved is the text for this, not necessarily the graphic. Atty. St. John asked if the approval of this signage was on the agenda? Dr. Rhoads said it was discussed in the last meeting that he would be providing wording for approval and is part of “consideration of an indoor mask mandate” portion of the agenda. Dr. Rhoads requested a motion to approve wording of signage. Ms. Brewer motioned, Dr. Hoyt seconded. Dr. Hoyt said that this language does not change anything that we have already been discussing and it summarizes what we have been saying in the meetings and posting on the websites. He asked where they would be posted. Dr. Rhoads said they will be distributed when Mr. Blaisdell makes his rounds to local businesses, on the Town website and Town buildings. Ms. Brewer shared that she likes the graphic. It’s a nice change from all the negativity out there and these difficult times. And this is not to make light of the situation but having a graphic that may catch someone’s eye may help. All approved unanimously.

Dr. Rhoads asked when we may start relaxing the advisory. Dr. Hoyt said the pandemic is still going and we can discuss each meeting to determine when these signs can come down. Mr. Blaisdell suggested that perhaps when the cases get down to the single digits per week, whatever the Board decides, then the Public Health order and the advisories can be revisited.

Public Comment: Comments on Covid-19 responses:

Howard Rosenberg commented that there has been a lot of energy spent on the “urgent” issue of getting vaccinated and masking up. He said that roughly 90% of the people hospitalized or had serious complications with Covid are those that have underlying conditions where their immune systems are already compromised. Some of these conditions are reversible such as diabetes, heart disease, hypertension and obesity. He thinks that there should be focus on the increased rates of obesity and unhealthy nature of the American public. This virus may not have been as deadly if Americans were healthier. Currently, the message is, “if I get vaccinated, get boosted and wear a mask, then I’m fine.” Before you know it, there may be another pandemic and take out another half million people. He would like further discussion on the overall health and habits of those individuals who have underlying ailments and are responsible for their own health. His thought is that a strong immune system will help prevent severe illness of any future endemic. Mr. Rosenberg shared that he had Covid twice, once before vaccination and once after. He also previously had heart disease and because of health behaviors he changed, he had no complications with the virus. He understands that there are outliers. He still firmly believes that this virus would not have been as deadly a pandemic to the scale that it was if people were more focused on the care of their health.

Dr. Rhoads added to this that we will be discussing our recommendations for improving public health in Adams.

Public Comment: Comments on other issues:

None

Public Hearing:

None

Approval of Minutes:

- **December 15, 2021:** The board provided edits. Dr. Hoyt motioned to approve minutes as amended. Ms. Brewer seconded. All voted yes unanimously.
- **January 12, 2022:** Edits were provided. Dr. Hoyt motioned to approve minutes as amended. Ms. Brewer seconded. All voted yes unanimously.

Code Enforcement Officer:

None

Old Business:

- **Discover Books – Donation Bin Update:** Dr. Rhoads does not have an update at this time and will plan to report by the next meeting.
- **2023 Budget considerations:** Dr. Rhoads said that with Crystal Wojcik’s (Finance Director) help, they put together a budget that makes sense and will share at the next meeting. Public nursing services cost will be \$5000 and the rest will be distributed amongst other Board of Health requirements.
- **Annual Report:** Dr. Rhoads had shared a draft of the Annual Report. Dr. Hoyt felt that the draft encapsulated the year pretty well. Dr. Rhoads said he could have written more on the Athletic Field Dog ban. Moving on to recommendations, Dr. Hoyt said that he is in agreement with what Mr. Rosenberg said earlier. He recommends people being more physically active in town and we can work with Mr. Rosenberg and come up with ideas. He would like to see more businesses promote health such as gyms and less that sell cigarettes. Dr. Rhoads will add Mr. Rosenberg to the Annual report and welcome him as the Board of Selectman liaison. Mr. Blaisdell offered adding an honorable mention to the Council on Aging partnership for wellness programs for a specific population. Dr. Hoyt agrees as they did a great job especially when the pandemic hit. They helped with transporting people to clinics and not just people from Adams. Ms. Brewer had no additions at this time. Dr. Rhoads thought it would be nice to have more town wide togetherness events. Mr. Blaisdell said that due to the Covid-19 pandemic, events did not happen like they did previously. We do expect some previous events coming back and will give us the opportunity to put up a tent. Dr. Rhoads mentioned photos

for the Annual Report. We do have the photo of the Mobile Health Unit and Dr. Hoyt suggested that there may be photos of the Adams staff at the vaccine clinic. Mr. Blaisdell said that CHP and Berkshire Health Systems are out in the community doing more than just this as well. Ms. Brewer added to look at the Board of Health website and confirm all our links are up to date.

- **Update on Opioid Harm Reduction Services / Syringe Services Program (BOAPC); next step:** Dr. Rhoads said that this is a pilot grant program to BOAPC. Most county municipalities have signed on (similarly signed the Host Control letter). When enough contiguous municipalities have joined the program, the mobile unit will be able to offer services (needle exchange, Narcan) in that area. Dr. Hoyt clarified with Dr. Rhoads the language was already approved. Dr. Rhoads will email a copy of the letter to the parties involved and will include Atty. St. John as well.

New Business:

None

Local & County Updates:

None

Upcoming Events:

In his communication with David Bassaillon regarding masking protocols, Dr. Rhoads was informed that the Thunderfest was postponed until March from its usual time in February.

Review Mail:

None

For the Good of the Order

Dr. Rhoads noted that some concerns had been raised about how the Board operates and suggested that we adopt some formal training options. His most informative was the state program on how to hold a public hearing. He would like to put together a set of training that we could buy into. The board members took Board of Health orientation and they cover open meeting law and who we serve. The boards carries out the mandates of public health and environmental protection. Just to get an understanding of what the Board of Health's scope is and will look into it. Fundamentals is the big one which is quite extensive in public health and public health administration policy. It is costly and was shut down due to Covid, but should be coming back soon. Dr. Rhoads will investigate and report at the next meeting.

Schedule Next Meetings: March 2, 2022

Adjournment:

Dr. Rhoads asked for a motion to adjourn. Ms. Brewer so moved, Dr. Hoyt seconded. Voted Yes unanimously. Adjourned at 4:55pm

Respectfully Submitted,



Michelle DeRose
Administrative Assistant

3/10/2022

Date