

APPROVED

COHASSET BOARD OF PUBLIC HEALTH MINUTES

DATE: TUESDAY AUGUST 10, 2021
TIME: 6:30 P.M.
PLACE: VIA ONLINE ZOOM

Board Members Present:

Michael Pollastri, PhD, Chair
Lynn Doxey, MPH, Vice Chair
Robin Lawrence, DDS, MPH, Clerk, Absent

Recording Secretary:

Amy Davis

Public Health Director:

Pam Fahey, MPH, SE

Field Engineer

Jason Federico

Public Health Nurse:

Mary Goodwin, RN

6:33 P.M. Meeting called to order.

6:35 P.M. Discussion of Current COVID Situation

In attendance for this agenda item: Dr. Schubert, Resident, Chief Silvia

Dr. Pollastri reviewed the following documents showing a summary of where the Town is regarding COVID-19, data that Dr. Pollastri collected from the CDC website, and the State Department of Health.

Town and State Vaccination Rates

COHASSET HAS HIGHER VACCINATION RATE THAN THE STATE OVERALL

- 88% of eligible residents are within 2-3 weeks of complete vaccination.
- 79% of eligible Cohasset residents are fully vaccinated
- 88% of eligible Cohasset residents are partially vaccinated
- Cohasset at-risk age groups are vaccinated at rate at least approximating MA as a whole.

Age Group	Population	Proportion of town population	Cohasset Individuals with at least one dose	State of MA individuals with at least one dose	Cohasset Fully vaccinated individuals	State of MA Fully Vaccinated individuals
12-15 Years	537	7%	87%	61%	77%	49%
16-19 Years	496	7%	>95%	66%	93%	57%
20-29 Years	536	7%	>95%	68%	>95%	60%
30-49 Years	1,446	20%	>95%	79%	>95%	72%
50-64 Years	1,817	25%	>95%	86%	89%	79%
65-74 Years	730	10%	>95%	93%	>95%	87%
75+ Years	696	9%	89%	91%	79%	83%
Total	7,355	100%	88%	70%	79%	63%

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Where we are

DELTA STRAIN MAKES UP THE VAST MAJORITY OF NEW INFECTIONS

The Delta Strain

- is >2x more infective than previous strains
- May cause more severe illness due to higher viral loads
- Breakthrough infections more common
- Infected vaccinated people can transmit the virus even if asymptomatic

Where we are

BREAKTHROUGH INFECTIONS ARE RARE, BUT IMPORTANT TO CONSIDER

- Breakthrough infections more common with Delta than other strains
- 0.01% of vaccinated individuals have had breakthrough (CDC)
 - 74% of breakthrough cases in age 65 or older
 - 0.002% of fully vaccinated people who are infected have died. (MA data)
 - 0.009% of fully vaccinated people who are infected are hospitalized (MA data)
- Vaccinated individuals can be infectious, even asymptomatic, but perhaps for a shorter period than unvaccinated.

VACCINATION CLEARLY REDUCES THE MORBIDITY AND MORTALITY OF COVID19 INFECTIONS

Infection rates

MASSACHUSETTS DATA, 7/18-7/31

- Younger people are getting infected more frequently in MA, but no deaths reported in this age group
 - (2300 (20-29) and 2,000 (<=19)
- Mortality is high in older population (more than half of deaths in same date range is 70+)

THUS, AS BEFORE, WE NEED TO WORK TOWARDS LOWER OVERALL INFECTION RATES IN SOCIETY IN ORDER TO REDUCE THE RISKS CREATED FOR THE OLDER POPULATION.

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For Cohasset Board of Public Health Discussion

- In the absence of a state of emergency, state guidelines, and state mandates, what is the role of the BOPH at this time?
- In terms of a risk/benefit analysis, do we need to discuss a mask *mandate*...?
 - In schools?
 - In businesses?
 - In Town facilities?
- If not a mandate, what can we do to *encourage* masking in indoor situations?
- Do we have a position on asking people to show *proof of vaccination* for use of Town facilities?
- What other topics should we discuss as we head into this next phase of the pandemic?

Ms. Doxey's biggest concern is the unvaccinated population and those that can't get vaccinated. In terms of mandates, it is clear cut to talk about vaccinated vs unvaccinated especially when you have asymptomatic carriers. Ms. Doxey feels from a Public Health standpoint the Board would be doing a disservice too not encourage if not mandate the requirement of masks in school for kids who are not vaccinated. Dr. Pollastri personally thinks if the Board is going to mandate mask in school that it should be for everybody. There is a low number of breakthrough cases the fact that this strain can still be transmitted makes Dr. Pollastri think the Board should encourage schools to go back to what worked, wearing masks. The Board understands some residents have strong feelings about masking.

Dr. Pollastri, Ms. Fahey, and Ms. Goodwin were asked to attend a special School Committee meeting next Monday July 16th to represent the Board of Public Health (BOPH). The School Committee may decide to mandate wearing mask without the BOPH weighing in. Ms. Doxey asked Ms. Goodwin if there has been any transmission reported during the Recreation Camp this summer? Ms. Goodwin confirmed there has been one case from the Recreation Camp with thirteen close contacts that are in quarantine. An email was sent by the Recreation Department to parents that inadvertently said that face masks were *required* and immediately some parents sent emails threatening to hire a lawyer to sue the Town. An updated email was issued by the Recreation Department clarifying *recommending* masks be worn.

Dr. Schubert, Cohasset resident, stated there was a case law at the U.S Supreme Court level Jacobson vs. Massachusetts 1904. A Public Health directive is legal on legal grounds at the Supreme Court level and as a result many of the requirements, recommendations, or even mandates from BOPH are supported by that ruling. A person can sue but they would sue City Hall rather than individuals. The Town is on very good legal ground if the BOPH, Select Board, or Town Manager makes an authorization for masking.

Ms. Doxey noted from a Public Health standpoint if you take the schools, they are separated into three buildings. The elementary kids cannot get vaccinated, and it seems a clear-cut Public Health issue where the Board will want to protect them if the numbers keep going up. Dr. Pollastri

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agreed, that perhaps the Board does not have to mandate wearing a mask at the high school level since they have been vaccinated. Ms. Doxey concluded for the protection of all if a person is not vaccinated then they must wear a mask in school and have proof of vaccination. The State does not require teachers to be vaccinated. The School Committee can require students to wear a mask.

Dr. Schubert explained another factor to take into consideration is the unvaccinated population under the age of 12, which would potentially be in the schools. If they were to bring it home and give it to any unvaccinated person as a vector this would be another potential means for increasing infection rates in the Town. Example: people over the age of 75 is where you see the breakthrough. Grandparents watching the kids because the parents are back at work now. You're not going to just see outbreaks in schools. The Town will probably see outbreaks at home with parents or grandparents who are not vaccinated or there will be breakthroughs. There have not been any breakthrough deaths in two months on the South Shore.

Ms. Fahey informed the Board they can make a recommendation to the School Committee based on science that you believe all unvaccinated children should wear masks or the Board can make a mandate. Ms. Doxey would like to recommend that all unvaccinated staff and students wear masks at school. Dr. Pollastri would like to make a mandate. Ms. Doxey would like the School Committee to weigh in with their opinion before the BOPH creates a mandate, just to hear all sides. Dr. Pollastri suggested the Board make a recommendation tonight and then the recommendation could be a point of discussion for the special School Committee meeting on Monday.

Chief Silvia mentioned the Board might want to give some consideration to treating all Town buildings the same way including the schools. The recommendation or requirement would be to wear a mask inside Town-owned buildings. Chief Silvia put out a directive a few weeks ago and made it mandatory to wear a mask in the Fire Department. Ms. Fahey let the Board know the Massachusetts Public Health Board has drafted some mandates that the Board can get a template from and work on the wording.

MOTION BY: Dr. Pollastri moved to develop a version of the Provincetown mask mandate adapted for Cohasset: In all public spaces unvaccinated individuals are required to wear a mask. All others, even if vaccinated, are strongly recommended to wear a mask in public indoor spaces. Once an Order is finalized and adopted, the Board will add a periodic period of review to determine how long to leave this order in place.

SECONDED BY: Ms. Doxey

VOTE: 2-0 Motion Carries (Dr. Lawrence was absent)

Dr. Schubert wanted to inform the Board of what the CDC recommendations will be in the next two weeks. Pfizer is approaching the CDC for full authorization and will likely be voted on before Labor Day. There will probably be full authorization for off label use for anyone 12 years old and up. Pfizer is also meeting with the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) on Thursday about booster vaccines for high-risk individuals and individuals who are immunocompromised. There is no vote right now on the agenda but Thursday they will discuss booster as a third dose for probably all the vaccines that are out there. For kids ages less than 12 years to 5 years old, Pfizer is submitting vaccine trial data to the CDC and the FDA probably in the next two weeks. Moderna will likely follow two weeks after that.. That data should be

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available and reviewed quickly. Probably by December 1st or January 1st there maybe recommendations for vaccines for the age of 12 to age 5 with Pfizer and for Moderna ages 17 to 12 and from 11 to 5 years old.

Pamela Fahey, Board of Health Director, has been sending the Board the following weekly Reports:

Public Health Director Weekly Report Week Ending July 30, 202

COVID-19:

- DPH call – Dr. Katie Brown on Delta variant and Provincetown cases: Delta variant breakthrough cases are getting sick (although not severe or death). Vaccines are 90% effective against severe disease. Continue with standard public health measures: stay home if sick, unvaccinated mask indoors and above all else get vaccinated. EEE- there was a fear that this would be the 3rd year of a 3-year cycle of EEE, but fortunately no cases have been detected in the state so far this summer.
- Cohasset Emergency Management call – discussed Delta variant. Posted latest information from state DPH on town website.
- DPH issued new DESE guidance today for the fall. DESE strongly recommends unvaccinated children and teachers wear masks. They will allow older vaccinated students to forgo mask wearing. Guidance is attached.

NON-COVID-19:

- Beach results for Bassings and Black Rock were elevated, and both were posted as closed to swimming. Since Bassings individual results consistently exceed the geomean limit of 35 MPN/100 ml there was no sense in taking additional re-test samples. The geomean will exceed for the rest of the beach season. I took an additional sample from Black Rock to G&L and am awaiting the result on Friday afternoon. Sandy Beach was fully re-opened to swimming today. The strong odor and discolored sand were found to be decaying seaweed that had been buried in years past. It was confirmed that it was not buried this year. An excavator was used on the beach to uncover the foul-smelling subsurface seaweed and an upgradient trench was excavated between the source area and the street to verify that there were no leaking sewer pipes contributing to contamination to the source area.
- 390 CJC (Stop & Shop Plaza) update: The developer is appealing for water service at the new building that still does not have sewer in place. According to DPW director Brian Joyce, the decision is to activate only the fire service line for fire protection and that is being done this morning.
The domestic service will not be activated until 1) all water metering is in place, and 2) the permitted, fully constructed, and approved sewer discharge system is in place on the discharge side of the facility.
- Otherwise, the Town could be contributing to the pollution of its own water supply by feeding them a source of water to discharge in an untreated or unapproved manner. Reviewed septic plans prior to the July 27, 2021 Board of Public Health meeting.
- Meeting with Elder Affairs, Police, Fire, and Public Health to discuss homeless situation. Police will be checking on the group on a regular basis that have made an encampment off of 3A in Whitney Woods. The long term goal will be to find them shelter in some type of public housing before winter, but due to their individual histories with prior offences it will be challenging.

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COVID-19:

- DPH call – The contract tracing collaborative (CTC) that was supposed to end their services in mid-September has now been extended to at least the end of 2021. They are trying to rehire people that were phased out in July. It is hoped that some of these epidemiologists will be hired by local health when the CTC program ends. Indoor masking – DPH issued mask recommendations based on Massachusetts data. Over 64% of Mass residents are fully vaccinated. Breakthrough cases still relatively low in proportion to the numbers of who have been vaccinated. Less than 1% of breakthroughs have been hospitalized. Three vaccines continue to be effective.
- Answered questions from Gary Baldino, Cohasset Golf Club manager, regarding steps to take if an employee tests positive for COVID.

NON-COVID-19:

- Beach results were low this week for all three beaches, however, Bassings remains closed due to an elevated geomean. Information has been updated on the town website. I reached out to DPH regarding Sandy. Even though the bacteria associated with the black sand area is present due to the natural decomposition of seaweed, is the bacteria a source of potential harm to public health? DPH did not respond. I found a comprehensive report from Great Britain that compiled studies from around the world and unfortunately the answer is “it’s not clear”. I will reach out to Sandy Beach Association next week and see if they can excavate and remove the buried pile out of an abundance of caution.
- Received a call from a resident requesting an inspection for chickens that they keep at their residence. I let them know that the new Animal Control Officer begins August 16th and they will receive an inspection that week.
- 390 CJC (Stop & Shop Plaza) update: Again, the lawyers for the developer are being pushy. The developer purchased a 10,000 gallon tank to be used as a tight tank. We reached out to MassDEP and they confirmed that they have *not* approved a tight tank for the project. Next week John Hallin will prepare a timeline that lists the permitting process steps that will need to be followed to complete this job. This will be shared among town hall employees as well as the developer and his lawyers.
- Had a meeting with Full Circle, our permitting software company. We are trying to resolve issues so that we can use Permit Eyes for all of our Health permits. We have been primarily using it for food permits due to small issues with applications and permits for other sectors.
- 12 Lamberts Lane – received neighbor complaint about pests on site. Took pictures and wrote a letter indicating the site constitutes a public health nuisance. I submitted it to the court-appointed lawyer. He will use it to try to push the land court judge to act more quickly. They have received two offers, one above asking price, and the judge has put off accepting the offer much to the frustration of the lawyer that hopes to end this after 3+ years of litigation.
- Meeting with a team that wants to create an Oyster Bar at 12 Parking Way. This is the same outdoor site that others have requested some type of outdoor eating establishment. Building and Zoning also weighed in to let them know the approval steps that will need to follow to obtain permitting/licensing.

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Public Health Director Weekly Report Week Ending August 6, 2021

COVID-19:

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Mary Goodwin, Public Health Nurse, has been sending the Board the following weekly reports:

PUBLIC HEALTH NURSE REPORT WEEK ENDING 7/30/21

Total Number of confirmed COVID 19 cases: 443

Total number of Probable cases: 87

Deaths: 4

Contacts traced: 391.

The Town's total two-week caseload is: <5.

The Town's two-week positive test rate is: 0.34% (298 total tests)

The Town's current infection rate: Higher

Investigation and Surveillance:

Ongoing case investigations are initiated within 24 hours of notification of a confirmed case. Contact is made with all probable cases within 24 hours if possible. At this point Mary Whitley is assisting with case investigation and contact tracing.

Calls/Meetings:

Emergency Management Team meetings will not be held for the summer unless a situation arises. The plan is to meet again in September.

DPH call weekly on Tuesday.

Mass DPH Maven call – Maven call will resume on Tuesday 8/3 and weekly thereafter.

Community Tracing Collaborative (CTC) Still accepting confirmed and probable cases for investigation. Contract expires the end of September.

7/26/21

Went to the Cohasset Sports Complex to deliver their camp permit. Answered questions pertaining to Covid.

Spoke with Jess Bradshaw, Director at Brown Bear Daycare. They currently have 5 children in the toddler room and 1 child in the infant room with RSV. 7 other children being tested. Contacted Mas DPH – spoke with an Epi. This is not a reportable disease and does not have to be filed with the State. Reviewed infection control protocols, hand washing and sanitizing with Jess.

7/27/21

Attended a meeting at Willcutt Commons with Police, Fire, Elder Affairs and Health to discuss homelessness in the Community. There is an encampment involving approximately 6 people on 3A. Police are concerned about the health/welfare of a couple of people. Planned to make a visit with the Social Worker and myself with Police on 7/29.

7/28/21

Attended the MHOA quarterly meeting via Zoom.

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7/29/21

Made a site visit to homeless encampment on 3A with the Cohasset Police Dept, the Environmental Police Dept, DCR and Stephanie Saunders, Social worker. Observed 3 separate camp sites, tarps, bikes, tools, tables, chairs, propane tanks and other assorted debris. 3 people were there. The female that the police were concerned about has not been there for 2 days. Stephanie met with 1 person to assist with housing application. All denied needing any further services or assistance at this time. Plan to revisit as needed. Police will continue to monitor the situation.

7/30/21

Attended a Zoom meeting with the Emergency Management Team – discussed mask wearing in the workplace, unvaccinated staff, initial plans for flu this fall. Will meet as needed.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Goodwin

MOTION BY:

Ms. Doxey moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:25 P.M.

SECONDED BY:

Dr. Pollastri

VOTE:

2-0 MOTION CARRIED