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COHASSET BOARD OF HEALTH MINUTES

DATE: Tuesday August 17, 2021

TIME: 6:30 P.M.

PLACE: ONLINE VIA ZOOM

Board Members Present:

Michael Pollastri, PhD, Chair

Lynn Doxey, MPH, Vice Chair

Robin Lawrence, DDS, MPH, Clark, Absent

Recording Secretary:

Amy Davis

Public Health Director:

Pam Fahey, MPH, SE

Field Engineer

Jason Federico

Public Health Nurse:

Mary Goodwin, RN

6:30 P.M. Online Zoom Meeting called to order

6:32 P.M. Covid-19 Masking Mandate

- **Public Presentation and Public Comment**
- **Adoption of formal Resolution**

In attendance for this agenda item: Robert Silvia, Cohasset Fire Chief.

Dr. Pollastri reviewed slides regarding the Cohasset Board of Public Health's current viewpoint on a COVID-19 masking mandate with the following presentation:

The take-home message, up front

PROPOSED TOWN-WIDE PLANS FOR MASKING LEADING INTO FALL

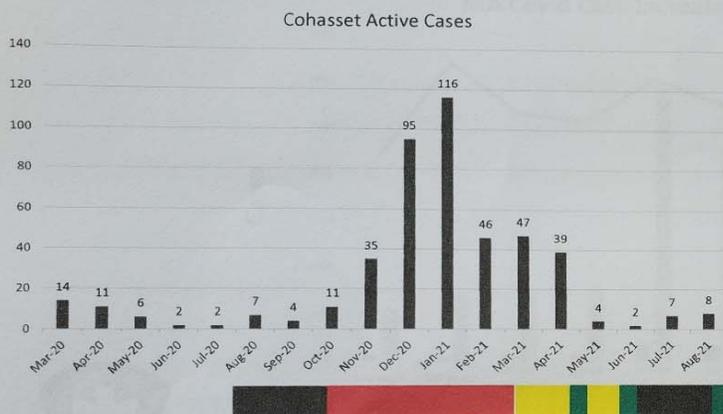
- **Board of Public Health voted 8/10/2021 to develop:**
 - A mandate for mask wearing for all unvaccinated individuals in indoor Town buildings, except for children under 2 years old, and for those with medical conditions.
 - A strong recommendation for mask wearing for vaccinated individuals in indoor public buildings (including private businesses), except for children under 2 years old, and for those with medical conditions.
- **This is in line with the CDC Recommendations:**
 - Vaccinated individuals in areas with "high" or "substantial" Covid-19 transmission should resume wearing masks indoors.
 - Unvaccinated individuals should continue masking until they are fully vaccinated
- **We are hoping to balance risk to unvaccinated with the desire to afford some level of freedom to those who are vaccinated**
- **The language of the mandate is the topic of today's meeting.**
- **Remember: The Board of Public Health's mandate is the protection of the public health of all.**

Why a town mask mandate now?

This is intended to get ahead of a potentially serious outbreak in the coming months

- We look to reduce likelihood of outbreaks which could lead to more extreme public health measures
- Lower the risk for individuals in town who are at high risk for serious morbidity or mortality.
- The Delta strain is changing the game: we don't know enough about the emergent strains to be able to predict how things unfold
- We are heading into dense indoor activities in the Fall when respiratory infections often re-emerge.
- All Mass Counties are now considered to have "substantial" or "high" transmission Rates

Infections in Cohasset over time



We are still in good shape, but there are emerging concerns

- About to enter more intensive indoor period
- Delta strain infectivity/transmission not well understood

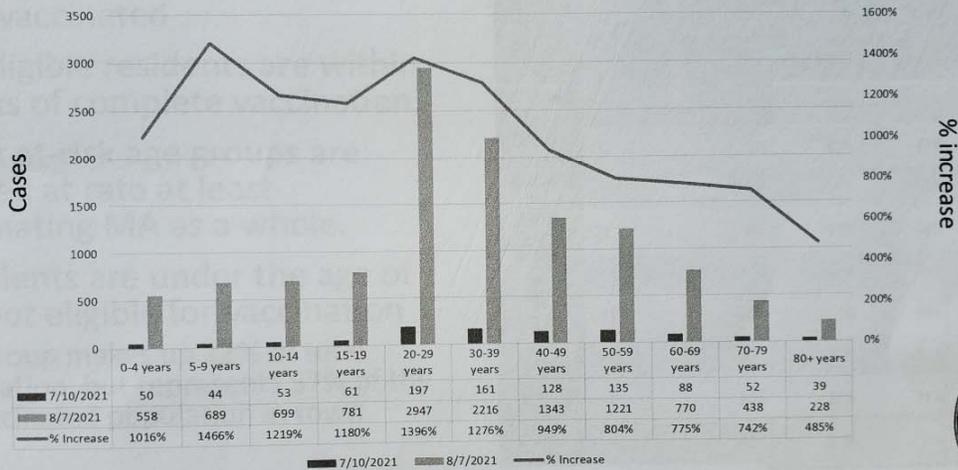
State DPH Color coding. For towns under 10,000:

- Grey: ≤ 10 positive cases over the last 14 days
- Green: ≤ 15 positive cases over the last 14 days
- Yellow: ≤ 25 positive cases over the last 14 days
- Red: >25 positive cases over the last 14 days.

Statewide Covid-19 cases are accelerating

STATE DPH DATA SHOWS SERIOUS UPWARD TREND

MA Covid Case Increases - July-Aug 2021



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.



Town & state vaccination rates of eligible individuals

COHASSET HAS HIGHER VACCINATION RATE THAN THE STATE OVERALL

- 79% of eligible Cohasset residents are fully vaccinated
- 88% of eligible residents are within 2-3 weeks of complete vaccination.
- Cohasset at-risk age groups are vaccinated at rate at least approximating MA as a whole.
- 860 residents are under the age of 12 and *not* eligible for vaccination
 - Age group makes up 12% of total population, but represents 57% of the unvaccinated population in town

Age Group	Population	Proportion of town population	Cohasset eligible individuals with at least one dose	State of MA eligible individuals with at least one dose	Cohasset Fully vaccinated eligible individuals	State of MA Fully Vaccinated individuals
< 12 Years	860	12%	0%	0%	0%	0%
12-15 Years	537	8%	87%	61%	77%	49%
16-19 Years	496	7%	>95%	66%	93%	57%
20-29 Years	536	8%	>95%	68%	>95%	60%
30-49 Years	1,446	20%	>95%	79%	>95%	72%
50-64 Years	1,817	26%	>95%	86%	89%	79%
65-74 Years	730	10%	>95%	93%	>95%	87%
75+ Years	696	10%	89%	91%	79%	83%
Total	7,118	100%	88%	70%	79%	63%

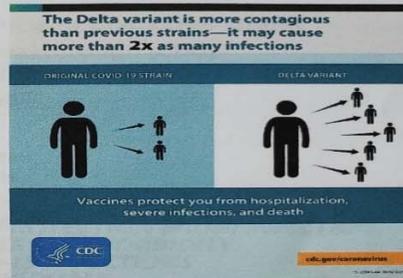
Data Source: MA DPH, Week of 8/9/2021

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The situation has changed over time

DELTA STRAIN NOW MAKES UP THE VAST MAJORITY OF NEW INFECTIONS

- Delta is more infective than previous strains
 - tends to cause higher viral load
 - more severe effects, higher infectivity
- Breakthrough symptomatic infections observed in vaccinated individuals
- *Some* infected vaccinated people can transmit the virus, but this is not well understood
 - Potentially even if asymptomatic?
 - Do they have a shorter infective period?



<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/variants/delta-variant.html>

Delta strain versus vaccinated individuals

BREAKTHROUGH INFECTIONS ARE RARE AND VACCINES IMPROVE OUTCOMES

- 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 (high risk population)
- The vaccines work! Fully vaccinated individuals
 - Much lower risk of infection
 - Lower risk of death (1 in 500) if infected.
 - Lower risk of serious illness (1 in 100) if infected
 - 99.5% of deaths are in unvaccinated individuals

BESIDES AFFORDING EXCELLENT OVERALL PROTECTION FROM INFECTION, VACCINATION CLEARLY REDUCES THE MORBIDITY AND MORTALITY OF COVID-19 INFECTIONS IN VACCINATED INDIVIDUALS

Summary

WE ARE DOING GREAT, BUT NOW IS NOT THE TIME TO LET DOWN

The Board of Public Health believes that requiring masks for unvaccinated individuals is key to carefully managing the transition into Fall, given the unknowns around the delta variant, the size of the unvaccinated portion of our community, and the opportunity for breakthrough delta infections into at-risk individuals community wide.

The Order under development:

- A mandate for mask wearing for all unvaccinated individuals in indoor Town buildings, except for children under 2 years old, and for those with medical conditions.
- A strong recommendation for mask wearing for vaccinated individuals in indoor public buildings (including private businesses), except for children

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under 2 years old, and for those with medical Conditions.

- Regular review of the epidemiological data efficacy and ongoing necessity of the order.

Remember: The Board of Public Health's mandate is the protection of the public health of all.

School committee masking policy* **RESULTS FROM SPECIAL MEETING 18 AUG 2021**

- All students in pre-kindergarten through grade 6 are required to wear masks when indoors, except students who cannot do so due to medical conditions, behavioral needs, or other educational factors as determined by a school-based team
- Unvaccinated staff in all grades, unvaccinated students in grade 7 and above, and all unvaccinated visitors are required to wear masks indoors
- Masks are not necessary outdoors and may be removed while eating indoors
- Schools will allow vaccinated staff and students (with the exception of vaccinated sixth graders) to remain unmasked; however, masks are strongly recommended.

***Pending bargaining obligations with the unions**

6:50 P.M. Public comment session (1 HOUR)

Dr. Pollastri reviewed the following guidelines for all public comments:

Please...

- Identify yourself and your home address, for the record.
- Limit your comment or question to two minutes
- Try to keep the comments or questions to new topics or seeking clarification of topics discussed.

Remember that we are all doing our best to make good decisions to accomplish the same thing, which is to find the safest way to enter into the next phase of the Covid pandemic for our town.

Public Comment:

Jenna Cunningham, 15 Hill Street, commented: Tonight, it is being mentioned that the Town wants to get ahead of the surge so the Town doesn't experience what happened last winter, and speculating that we may see the same surge again. Ms. Cunningham stated the Town was under a mask mandate during that surge last winter. How impactful does the Town think that masks will be on a potential surge based on that data for this winter considering the vaccination rate currently in the Town of Cohasset?

Dr. Pollastri replied: The Town doesn't know what that surge would have looked like without masking, its data we don't have. It's a combination of measures that were in place at the time of the mask mandate during the Pandemic surge that kept it where it was. There are several peer-reviewed studies that can be accessed through the Centers of Disease Control website that shows the effectiveness of masking.

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Dr. Pollastri referred to one of the reviews that stated even a 10% increase in the rate of masking leads to a three-fold decrease in transmission. It's easy to see if you have a much higher masking rate then you would expect to have a much lower transmission rate.

Ms. Cunningham explained: I had asked during last night's School Committee meeting if the Town had the number of pediatric cases since the town is focusing on requiring masking of 12 and under at this point. This is the population that is ineligible for vaccination, correct?

Dr Pollastri responded: They are not eligible; this age group makes up 57% of the unvaccinated population in Town.

Ms. Cunningham added: I think after the meeting last night there is really no way of controlling masking for the population above that. Anything on record when it comes to visitors in the school no one is willing to control that in terms of masking people. It focuses on 12 and under.

Dr. Pollastri apologizes but does not understand the rationale.

Ms. Cunningham questioned: what are the actual numbers right now of pediatric cases in Cohasset past and current? No one was accurately able to answer this question and it is concerning to me. I am trying to decide on masking or not masking my kids. For a Board who is about to vote on something that is very impactful, but no one had an accurate answer, and I don't find this to be ok.

Dr. Pollastri reported: I do have the data over the course the Pandemic there were 102 cases under the age of 18 which is 22 % of the case load and if those numbers are filtered such as less than age 12 instead of 18 there were 54 cases out of 453 in Town.

Dr. Pollastri thanked Ms. Cunningham for her question.

Ms. Stefan, 260 Jerusalem Road, wanted to comment to the last caller. Ms. Stefan remarked:

I know you don't necessarily have data regarding masking effectiveness regarding Covid, but I think there is corollary data that might be relevant which is in terms of flu levels that went down, and other air borne illnesses. So, I think you can extrapolate a bit about the effectiveness of masks from that preexisting data. I think there was a high correlation between wearing masks and decreased levels of airborne illness. Ms. Stefan stated masking is effective in terms of transmission and based on the Board's data. That is a high number of pediatric cases in my opinion, and I consider it concerning.

Ms. Stefan wanted to again reiterate 50% of students approximately, in the 6 to 8 building, are not vaccinated or eligible to be vaccinated. This is a high number. There are also students going into common spaces, again this is an airborne illness, and this is also concerning to me.

Ms. Stefan explained: There is no accountability on who is wearing a mask and who is not if relying on vaccination status. This will add to the teacher administrator responsibility to track everyone down which I don't see as realistic. I would like to point out that BU has required vaccinations for all students, staff, and indoor masking. This is for students over the age of 18 required masking indoors. Also, Thayer Academy requires vaccination for their students that are eligible and require wearing masks for

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the first two weeks of school and then reevaluate. Thayer Academy website says it is expecting a surge based on scientific information and therefore all students will be starting with masks. It's a private school and can require this Cohasset is not in that position.

Ms. Stefan stated: If the data suggests loosening mask wearing fine but right now who is sticking up for the 11-year-olds? It is not safe to send those 100 plus kids to school. Someone needs to speak up for these kids who don't even have a chance to get vaccinated and then to put them in a space where there is 50% vaccination rate in a building where 9-12 grades have 20% of the students not vaccinated it seems a high risk to me.

Ms. Stefan concluded: A lot of parents are concerned, especially the six grade parents, and a lot of people can't conceive why we are here. Maybe some people don't understand science and I am sorry about that maybe they can learn. There should be a mask mandate if later it becomes safer, and the data goes in a different direction fine. But we need to protect the young members of this community which is a substantial number as well as Town's people that are going to deal with the negative effects of this. There should be a mask mandate indoors for all citizens in Ms. Stefan's opinion. Keep the six graders safe. This is insane to send these poor kids who don't have the opportunity to get vaccinated.

Dr. Pollastri thanked Ms. Stefan for her comment and explained: The school committee was very constructive last night, where they heard the voices of the community, teachers, and parents. The Board is trying to balance this with the DESE guidance the desire for vaccination for staff, faculty, and students to be able to essentially live the best they can and give them some amount of choice. There is also a strong recommendation for masking indoors irrespective of vaccination status.

Ms. Fahey responded: The DESE guidance that was just put out this week does say that vaccinated students should not be required to wear masks. The Board is doing what it can, which is requiring masks on unvaccinated students. Milton Academy is a private school and can do what they want. At Public Schools vaccinated kids are not required to wear masks, per DESE guidance.

Ms. Doxey asked: Ms. Fahey DESE highly recommends vaccinated students to mask indoors, correct?

Ms. Fahey replied: Yes

Declan Lee, 67 Ripley Road, commented: I appreciate some of the comments from the last speaker. I have kids in 8th grade and high school, and they don't want to wear masks if they are vaccinated. I would like them to have the choice. I do support the statement that came out from the School Committee, and I am okay with the statement you are proposing particularly for those that are unvaccinated. I do think it is easier when you go into a business, you're only there for a short period of time but for kids, they are in school all day. It did not work great this past year with kids being remote and having to wear mask. I would like them to have the choice. Hopefully with more vaccinations and other people wanting to wear masks it will reduce it, but I don't think we are there at this point. This may get a lot worse going forward and we would have to reevaluate. It is also likely this sort of status quo will be with us indefinitely. To suggest we start wearing masks given that people are getting vaccinated I don't think it's the right way to go. I am supportive how it is structured right now, and I

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am against the kids in 7th grade and above mandating masks, the recommendation is fine. Mr. Lee asked the Board what input did they get from businesses in Town in Terms of requiring mandates?

Dr. Pollastri thanked Mr. Lee for his statements and stated: To be clear we are not mandating masks in private businesses opened to the public. The Board's mandate would be for indoor spaces in Town Buildings and a strong recommendation for private businesses. The Board has not gone out and consulted with businesses which we would have done if we were talking a mandate, in which case there would be a lot more conversation.

Ms. Fahey responded: I have not had any feedback from businesses. If it had been a mandate for everyone to wear masks indoors Ms. Fahey would surely have heard from businesses.

Dr. Pollastri read the following comment from Kimberly: Since all Massachusetts counties are in high or substantial transmission rates why not require all people wear masks in public building regardless of their vaccination status to protect unvaccinated people who are not eligible for vaccination? My 6th grader will be exposed to vaccinated staff and students in the middle school who will be unmasked under the School Committees proposed mask mandate finalized last night. They would be at risk because vaccinated individuals can transmit the virus.

Dr. Pollastri thanked Kimberly for her comment and explained: The risk of a vaccinated person being infected with Covid is low. We are hearing about breakthrough cases but .01% of vaccinated people are being infected. Dr. Pollastri said yes there is a risk though I think that when you consider the relatively low risk plus the other mitigating factors of distancing and other measures the school department is putting in place, we feel that risk is manageable.

Ms. Doxey agrees I think it is a tough decision. With Massachusetts being so highly vaccinated that right now we are at a stage we can make it vaccinated vs unvaccinated. This is the recommendation from DESE.

Ms. Fahey read the following comment from Jenna Cunningham, 15 Hill Street, there is no current State requirement for masking in schools for unvaccinated. The Cohasset Board of Health mandates mask for under 12 what would be the metrics used for unmasked?

Dr. Pollastri communicated: The metrics for masking the Board has been developing would base the mask mandate on the number of new cases. The weekly numbers the Board gets from the State and for the county. Because we are in part of Norfolk County located in the middle of Plymouth County, we would probably want to use Plymouth and Norfolk as the guide. As long we are in the high to significant categories, we would keep these mandates in place.

Ms. Cunningham voiced: I have a really hard time understanding. There seems to be a lot of contradictions. We are talking about the at-risk population under 12 age group because they are unvaccinated. Ten out of the eleven new positive cases that are detected in Cohasset were from breakthrough cases and you said that was rare. So, the ten out of eleven cases over the last two weeks

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that we have used to come up with this new Board of Health measure to put my four children in masks for 1600 hours this year for unvaccinated individuals. I am asking the Board why? They are not vaccinated what will get them out of masks? Do they need to be vaccinated?

Ms. Cunningham stated I am an educated adult in this Town and have lived in the Town for many years. I just don't understand any of this at this point. I am enraged that my four children must pay this verdict when ten out of the eleven cases came from breakthrough cases. They did not come from unvaccinated cases. Who's at risk? Not my children. I am willing to put my kids in school without a mask let me do that.

Dr. Pollastri explained: The school mandate has been decided by the School Committee that's not what we are talking about here.

Ms. Cunningham said: Yes, because of your advisement. It did not come from the State it came from the Board of Health.

Dr. Pollastri declared: We can agree to disagree on that. The School Committee is also considering this with the guidance of DESE as well as their experience of the last year of the pandemic.

Ms. Cunningham added: None of the numbers add up to under 12 being in mask for 1600 hours this year.

Dr. Pollastri explained: From the BOPH perspective we don't think of it as "under 12" but rather the "unvaccinated population". The mandate is for unvaccinated individuals when the Town gets to a point where two things must happen. The vaccination rate would have to be high, and the infection rate is below high or substantial.

Ms. Cunningham asked: In the under 12 population or the general population?

Dr. Pollastri responded: In the general population. That is the County data I am referring to.

Ms. Cunningham expressed: That is all so contradictory though I am trying to understand it. The Board is trying to protect the general population that's what you said at the beginning of the conversation but you're not requiring masks for the vaccinated and they are the ones who are the cases right now. If your goal is to protect general population which you stated already tonight. Then everyone should be masked I could understand that a lot more than putting the burden on my 6- and 4-year-old.

Dr. Pollastri declared: The Board has heard your position and we thank you for your comments.

Ms. Cunningham thanked the Board and appreciated everyone's time and stated: I just want the Board to hear our voices and I really respect that our voices are being heard.

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Dr. Pollastri mentioned: We are all trying to do the best we can, and the Board is balancing a lot of things. Thank you for your patience with us.

Ms. Cunningham stated: I understand, but there must be better than my 10, 8, 6, and 4-year-old to live in mask for the rest of their lives. There must be better than that and you must hear from us, and you will.

Ms. Doxey responded: Simply, I understand it stinks but at the same time the data shows that the breakthrough infection rates are very small. In my mind I wonder why we don't mandate masks indoors for everyone. I do understand there is a burden of that, and the risk of infection is low. It happens, 10 out of 11 breakthrough cases in one Town is not good. The Town could have probability of one in a hundred and those ten in a thousand are all in the same Town. You just don't know but you know the bigger picture the bigger data shows the infection rates or breakthrough rates are much lower. Vaccinated individuals overall have less severe reaction generally. Protecting the unvaccinated and those that cannot be vaccinated because they are too young or have a health issue. This is what the Town is trying to do and that is why they are the ones that need to be masked.

Ms. Goodwin agreed and confirmed putting unvaccinated people indoors 3 feet apart without a mask is very risky.

The concern is not with just the school children it's their families and extended families. The Town needs to protect everyone. We need to look at this and do what we can to protect those unvaccinated kids. We have a responsibility to do that. I think people indoors less than 6 feet that's high risk and we need to protect them.

Ms. Fahey read another comment: Why not just make everyone wear a mask even the vaccinated?

Ms. Fahey explained: One of the reasons given to not make vaccinated people wear a mask inside is that you want to give people an incentive to get vaccinated. That is really the gold standard for Public Health for ultimately ending all of this and all restrictions: to get everybody vaccinated. So, if you say to people "even if you get vaccinated you still must wear a mask" there is a certain percentage of people that will say why bother? This is the argument Ms. Fahey has heard.

Silvia Family, 40 Fair Oaks Lane, commented: I think all of you know where I stand except Chief Silvia. I am really concerned when my two 5-year-olds and 9-year-old will get out of these masks. If I had a penny for every time, I hear the word vaccinated on these calls. Has the Board ever thought parents don't want to get their small children vaccinated when the vaccine comes out? Parents want to wait to see if it's not safe. We don't know the long term affects. I just keep hearing vaccinated, vaccinated for small children. There is not even a vaccine out for small children. The minute it comes out to be honest I am not giving that to my children. So, here we are again, and I know a ton of other parents that are not comfortable with that. So, the minute the vaccine comes out for my 5-year-olds and they're not going to get it are we in mask forever in school? My kids aren't in mask all summer at Recreation Camp or the theater where we are sitting two inches from each other. Everything was fine. We've seen these kids are not affected that is my thought. I have feelings about putting mask over my children's faces in school for 6 plus hours a day. I think we need to look at the other side of the negative effects of mask on children for 6 plus hours a day. Your average child who must go to school and sit there for 6 plus

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hours a day. The Town really need to look at studies and science on that. Then I would be happy if the Town looked on that side of it and we saw and told the parents yes there are harmful effects, that's all I ask. Thank you for listening.

Dr. Pollastri thanked Ms. Silvia.

Ms. Doxey responded: My son is immunocompromised. He is doing awesome, and he is thriving. He is 9 years old and can't wait for the vaccine to come out. He had a conversation with his infectious disease doctor that says anecdotally were not going to worry about it now do you mind wearing a mask. He wore a mask he did not go to Recreation Camp, but he went to a Deer Hill program. He wore a mask and happily so did most of the other kids.

Ms. Doxey continued: We had our follow-up with the infectious disease doctor, and he said I know your excited you're going to be ten and we have been talking about a vaccine. I work for Mass General for children, so I have heard the vaccine is coming out and told my son about it he is super excited. My daughter got vaccinated. The infectious disease doctor told my son not to get his hopes up. Because anecdotally we have seen bad things happen with the condition he has. Kids who have gotten vaccinated with this rare condition have had bad things happen to them.

Ms. Doxey stated: There is no good answer for my son except not to get COVID. Do you know what will make it better for him to not wear a mask is when those who can get vaccinated are vaccinated.

So, I am looking forward to the day everyone can get vaccinated and those who can get vaccinated do so. Then those who can't get vaccinated can safely unmask and reduce their risk. It is always a risk and as a parent I would totally advocate for what I want as a parent. I have no problem with what parents are saying tonight and last night at the School Committee meeting it is totally valid.

Ms. Doxey explained: As the BOPH, we must look what is best for the population and we can't look at an individual for the overall mandate or policy. This is what the BOPH is doing right now. As to when we can unmask, we can unmask when the risk of infection is much lower. We might have been there if people got vaccinated right away when it came out. I get the vaccine hesitation. Talk to your pediatrician they will help you work through what's right for you. Maybe getting vaccinated is not right for you, but it should be right for most of the people, this would allow to bring the infection rates down. So, as a parent I am on the opposite end because of my individual situation. As a BOPH member I am looking at science-based evidence and recommendations from the CDC and the NIH that says this is the way to get out of this pandemic. Because our vaccination rates weren't quick enough now we have the variant. Let's work hard to be proactive and get through this so none of our kids must be masked.

Kimberly Macadam, 41 Pleasant Street, expressed: This is an emotional situation for everybody who is on this call. I have been listening and I can hear lots of valid feelings. I think the only way some of these decisions can be made as Ms. Doxey just pointed out and Chairman Pollastri said. We must look at what objective data we have, trends, and what we know from last year. I was just wondering what evidence do we have from DESE recommendations? They're not scientists per se. They have knowledge about school, how to teach, and the curriculum. I get all that, but I am not sure they are the guiding light for the BOPH. What is your guidance when you think of your authority? What do you look to for not just recommendation but for what is your duty? What evidence should you be looking

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at and can you go beyond DESE if you wanted to. I am thinking of my 6 grader. I would like to see vaccinated, unvaccinated, staff, and students for safety and equity all masked. I think they are old enough to handle it at that age. I sympathize with Ms. Silvia talking about her 5-year-olds. I have younger twin sisters I can't imagine them having to go through this. It's hard for everybody.

Ms. Macadam's explained: I think at the Middle School or anywhere else like the Public Library all kinds of unvaccinated and vaccinated people. Will the Town have a different rule for them? My daughter will be exposed everywhere she goes to people who may say they are vaccinated and don't wear a mask but how do we enforce it? How will we know at the Middle School that 30% of the adolescence are choosing not to get vaccinated maybe they have a good reason for it that is their choice. This leaves my daughter and all the other 6 graders at risk. Ms. Macadam's would like the Board to talk about objective standards not what DESE recommends from a teaching standpoint.

Dr. Pollastri thanked Ms. Macadam's and responded: The DESE guidelines were developed in collaboration the State Department of Health. There was Public Health input into this it was not just made up by educators, it was informed by the DPH. Yes, the Board can be more restrictive but what struck Dr. Pollastri last night at the School Committee meeting was how thoughtful the committee members were thinking about the risk vs benefit analysis of masking vs unmasking in terms of the educational mission and the quality of the education and experience for the kids. We are all trying to thread a needle, so the School Committee, the teachers, and staff that were at the meeting last night had good insight on how to mitigate risk beyond just masking. How to best balance the educational needs of those students in the school community and how to best do that. They ended up adopting essentially a policy that is slightly more restrictive than ours. We don't know the perfect answer here. We don't want everyone masked irrespective of vaccination status. We don't want to have to mandate that, and

we just don't have enough data about the Delta variant on how this is going to play out. The Board can commit to monitoring this as it continues to evolve over the next weeks and months.

Courtney Ness, 210 Lamberts Lane, I agree with the comment that this has been a very emotional. Our kids have endured so much over the last 18 months. We are trying to not unprotect those around us who are at risk. We are trying to provide a learning environment for our kids that they absolutely flourish. Kids can't read lips, they can't see emotion, they can't talk to friends, they are reserved to raise their hands in class right now. I don't care if there is a piece of literature on this or not. My children are affected by this, and they are completely healthy.

Ms. Ness expressed: The kids in this town have shown that they can go to school or go to Rec. Camp unmasked. They go through the buildings that they are being asked to go in the next 2 weeks. They have been shoulder to shoulder, they have been 1 foot apart, they go to sports. My kids are around 200 contacts on a weekly basis with cheer, hockey, and other sports. The Town is asking these kids to put on another mask this year when they are not the population in this Town who are infected.

Ms. Ness continued: The population in this Town who are infected are vaccinated individuals. If that is the trend masks need to go on vaccinated individuals because that is what's happening. I have a major problem with the fact that this is the first line of defense to fight infection in our Town when we allow five thousand patrons at the South Shore Music Circus. I went to a cover band show a few weekends

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ago and I had to leave. The lead singer was basically sweating on ten people in the front row asking everyone to sing. There might have been 5 masks in the entire place, and it was a 90-degree evening. That is not infection control and if you are looking to stop spread, stop transmission, and get a handle on this then as the BOPH then you need to look beyond our children.

Ms. Ness stated: I am infuriated with the fact that the State has given you full reign to make a local decision and you are grasping at neighboring counties to say oh my gosh what if this is a trend here. This is not about mask, no mask, infection, or kids. This is about parental choice. Many Towns have made the difficult decision to make it parent choice. Our kids deserve this, they deserve to prove you wrong. They haven't even been given the opportunity to prove you wrong. Send them into the building if they have an infection put a mask on but you haven't even given it a chance.

Ms. Ness continued: Its highly disturbing and I agree with April I am not rushing out to get the vaccine. So, if you want to unmask my kid that is not the threshold. I am extremely upset; I am extremely disappointed you have been given the autonomy to make the decision on your own. You are more restrictive for in a small Town, and we have less than 10 cases and they are all from vaccinated individuals. So, I urge you to think about our kids to think about your childhood growing up because we have lost 2 years, our kids have lost 2 years. We are paying for extra tutoring. We must except the fact that our children are not hospitalized, they are not dying from Covid, and we must take the leap. The Board is the partner to do this with us. We can't look to Plymouth or bigger Towns. We are 7,500 people and we can do this but don't keep the Music Circus open and unmasked. Then slap masks on my kids in 2 weeks because that's not going to work for me.

Dr. Pollastri thanked Ms. Ness for her comment.

Chief Silvia commented: I wanted to remind people of where we have come from. I am hearing comments about the mask and everything else. At the very opening of this evening's meeting

Dr. Pollastri was trying to explain to the simple fact that there is a surge coming. The surge started in the beginning of July. If you look at the numbers of the Covid Delta variant and how it has surged coming into the beginning of August. I have grave concerns for the Town moving into September. This morning the first thing I read was here we go we all need to get a booster shot at 8 months because the Delta variant is going to cause us issues. The CDC, I am going to go right past DPH, DESE, and everybody else. The CDC very simply says as far as K-12, and I quote "students benefit from in person learning and safely returning to in person instruction in the fall 2021 is a priority" second bullet point "vaccination is the leading public health prevention strategy to end Covid-19 pandemic. Promoting vaccinations can help schools safely return to in person learning as well as extracurricular activities and sports." Bullet point three "due to the highly circulating highly contagious Delta variant CDC recommends universal indoor masking by all students aged 2 and older, staff, teachers, and visitors to K-12 schools regardless of vaccination status".

The fact that the Commonwealth chose to dumb down what the CDC has recommended is disconcerting to the guy that is the Incident Commander and is trying to keep a lid on this thing.

I certainly don't want to go back to where we were in 2020. I thought the vaccine was going to get me off the hot seat and I am back on it again. I think everyone needs to take a deep breath here. We are looking at something that is coming like a freight train whether you want to admit it or not. I believe

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what Dr. Pollastri said is true and the data is starting to show in the last month that it is coming. So, that's my take on this and that's all I am going to say for tonight. Chief Silvia thanked the Board for giving him a minute to let him vent a little bit.

Dr. Pollastri thanked Chief Silvia.

Barbara Stefan, 260 Jerusalem Road, I wanted to support what the Chief said. The Commonwealth and DESE have not exactly been leaders on this. When this whole pandemic first hit DESE left it to the superintendents to figure this out. I agree they are not necessarily the gold standard here they seem to be punting in my opinion. The previous caller said that kids are not getting sick. I think you did cite data that they are getting Covid and there are kids who have been sick. From the data I have seen at Children's Hospital beds are filling up faster rate than they ever have. Kids can get quite sick from this. The argument with the Music Circus, it should have a mask mandate, but that doesn't mean the schools shouldn't because the Music Circus isn't. It should be addressed separately.

Also, what are the teacher's perspective? I don't know how many of them have talked about what it's like in their classrooms. I think taking their perspective is valuable there is still joy in the classrooms. It doesn't seem the kids are bothered by this. I was a teacher I have a lot of friends who teach but they said kids just rolled with it. For kids who can't, exceptions can be made for them. There are classes outside, there are tents, and those can be addressed individually as well.

Ms. Stefan noted: My son is in a special education school he goes to school 10 months out of the year they have been masked for over 2 years. There has been pretty good compliance and it hasn't been an issue for these several hundred kids in this school K-12. I have also talked to friends with children with profound disabilities where masking and shielding has worked to help mitigate the causes. This does effect kids this is a different ball of wax and just because the numbers aren't high right now in the summer it doesn't mean it's coming the numbers were high last year. I would anticipate the data showing its coming back again. Cohasset was in a little bubble. The argument that we are a small Town

of 7,500 people might carry some weight but we're not isolated. People come and people go from all over the place. As you said last night you are looking at data from Norfolk County and Plymouth so, I think the data is not isolated to Norfolk therefore not totally irrelevant.

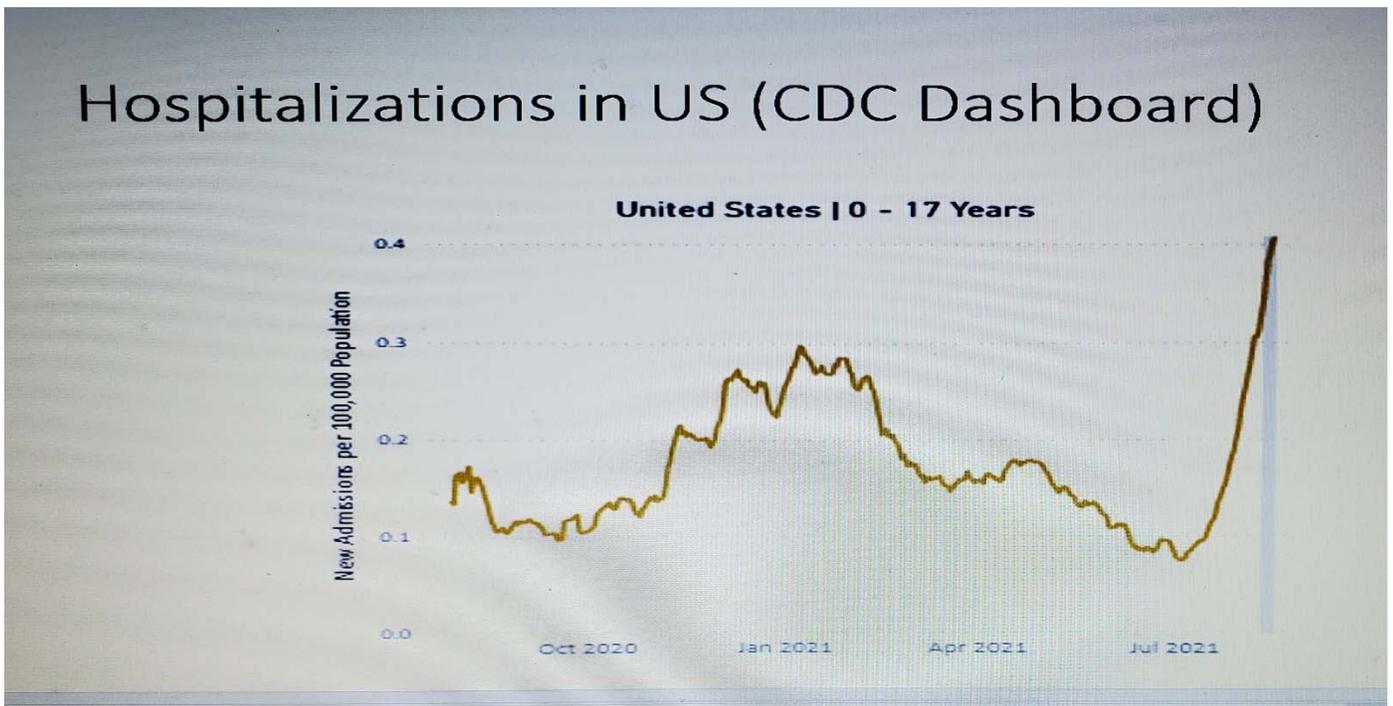
Finally, the vaccine is something that could have gotten us out of this. No vaccine means we are stuck in this for quite some time. Hopefully they can figure out more vaccine coming that can address it may be better but also until people have the chance to get the vaccine which does result in less severe cases I think we need to look at masks. I feel better just knowing that my child was less likely to die because they had an opportunity to get vaccinated. I would probably feel a little better about not having mask in school but unfortunately that's not the case.

Dr. Pollastri thanked Ms. Stefan for her comments.

Dr. Pollastri shared the following slide and stated: This data is hospitalizations in the US for people 17 and under. What you can see is the surge in January. You can see the new admissions per one hundred

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thousand is on its way up. This data is highlighting serious infection are occurring in young people. This is not a harmless disease for young people. Dr. Pollastri thought this would be important data to show.



Ms. Doxey mentioned: This is a small Town, and our numbers are low, but we are not isolated. Just as one mom said her kids are all over the place and luckily, they have not contracted Covid. As numbers increase it can be like a runaway train; this happens fast. In my opinion and I think the CDC opinion to keep it under control until we know we have mitigation factors that work. The one thing we know that works is vaccines and masks. The Board is putting those two things on the table. One or the other. Ms. Doxey prefers to do both when you are indoors especially since winter is coming. The idea that the Town would do nothing and hope we stay this way seems to be irresponsible with our kids. Honestly if we have one death in this Town due to Covid in a child that to me is a tragedy.

Kristin Quinn, 219 Sohier Street, wanted to respond to Ms. Doxey: If the Town had one death of a child who had the flu, we have never in the history of the United States put masks on our kids for the flu. With the numbers I think it's easy to show a chart that says the numbers are going up. I don't know what other diseases these children had, do they have leukemia, we don't know. It just looks like numbers are rising it's hard to show a chart that says there's been a surge. When do we get to talk about these positive cases vs severe hospitalization and death? Because kids get sick from the flu. Kids die from the flu. A lot more kids have died from the flu than Covid. Trying to stop all children deaths I would love to do that but to what end? Why aren't we masking for the flu?

Ms. Fahey stated: The chart is Covid not for the flu or anything else.

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Ms. Quinn understands it for Covid but what else did they have? Did they have leukemia? Did they have underlying conditions? It doesn't show that.

Dr. Pollastri responded: The important part of the chart is that we know that comorbidities you have mentioned those existed during the surge. In January just like they do now unfortunately. The way to interpret a chart like this is to say okay the baseline disease state of that age group should stay the same over time, and then you take that the hospitalization number in the number of cases that are happening. That's how you map those things together.

Ms. Quinn questioned: When can we move on from the number of cases? For example, I believe I could be wrong, but the cases here in Cohasset were not even symptomatic I don't know if there is data on that it's just what I have heard. Where are the metrics on that? It just seems all these numbers are fear mongering. I am not saying it's not real but in terms of our children where a lot of people in this town are thinking about. I am looking at pure numbers I am trying not to look at the emotion of it. I struggle with more kids dying from the flu and we have never done this to our youth.

Ms. Goodwin commented: Ms. Quinn mentioned if people were symptomatic or not. That is my job when the Town gets a case, I investigate the case and identify the contacts. More people are symptomatic than not, I can tell you that.

Dr. Pollastri mentioned: The conversation yesterday talked about illnesses in children, but we are also looking at the wider Town population. Kids may get the infection and it may be fine for them. We must think of the impact on the older population and people who can't get vaccinated. Is it more significant than the flu? I am not sure. My point is that this is real, and all indications show we will have a surge for the Delta variant.

Ms. Doxey remarked: Maybe not in this Town but kids nationally get very sick from Covid. Some don't some do. Again, we look at the data and the numbers from organizations that are factual. CDC and DPH they are very evidence-based and scientific. Ms. Doxey feels comfortable looking at that data and going off those recommendations.

Dr. Pollastri wanted to mention the CDC guidance is an acknowledgement that vaccination rates are extremely high relative to the rest of the Country. We think of our vaccination rate as our driver; I personally don't think universal masking is the way to go. I think mandating masking for unvaccinated people makes a lot of sense. I think strong recommendations for people vaccinated also makes a lot of sense. We are in a different situation in Massachusetts and in Cohasset we have a much higher

vaccination rate. I think we are trying to walk the fine line here. We are monitoring this from week to week to week. It's not a "set it and forget it" situation. We are trying to thread the needle here.

Lisa Malone, 10 Orchard Drive, you were sort of speaking to my point a little bit ago. I was curious of why we are deviating from CDC and the American Academy of Pediatrics recommendation for universal masking in general. It just seems to me that is a more manageable system since the school administration can't check vaccination cards for visitors and are allowing teachers who are vaccinated to unmask, seems a bit risky to me. Especially while we are shoving a large portion of the Towns unvaccinated indoors. I know people are talking about Rec. Camp and other outdoor activities they

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have been enjoying this summer and those have always been less risky. I just wanted to make the point we are now entering a more dangerous time of the year and we are dealing with a data lag.

The Delta variant we are still trying to grasp it, understand it, and we don't know how it will affect our children. In my mind if it is that contagious than a simple public health measure like masking our children seems attainable and a reasonable measure to take. I don't think we should put our children out there and see what happens even one death or severe illness I would feel horrible. That is where I stand, and I am for masking in schools.

Dr Pollastri thanked Ms. Malone for her comment.

Doug Lankow, 17 Doane Street, questioned: Why are we ignoring national immunity, that's not following science. I think what it boils down to, and I will encapsulate it. Dr. Pollastri just stated you're in favor of masking unvaccinated students. My question is why? You know what this is attempting to do is put people into categories. Essentially what you are going to have is a group of kids with mask on between 12-17 and a group of kids without masks. I don't think this is the direction we should be going. We should make mask mandatory for everybody. What the prior speaker mentioned was 10 out of the 11 cases currently in Town are vaccinated people. This is not a pandemic of the unvaccinated. This is what we are hearing on the news from Dr. Fauci, the president, everybody, and it's not true. If anybody with a brain knows that to be the case. Those are my comments either have everybody wear a mask or make it a parent choice. Thank you for letting me make a comment.

Dr. Pollastri thanked Mr. Lankow for his comment.

Ms. Doxey believes we answered the question before. I see a very good case to mask everyone. I also see the public health case in terms of encouraging people to get vaccinated. Having to wear a mask regardless of vaccination status that deters people from getting vaccinated. I should say it gives an incentive to not wear a mask. I do think it is a tough choice.

Dr. Pollastri stated one of the drivers from the School Committee meeting last night was also an overarching desire to meet the requirement for in-person learning for the year. The School Department when we look at what they accomplished last year was not one transmitted case in the school system. The careful deliberation and consideration of the fact in balance with what Lynn was getting at. The quality of education and the quality of the experience. I think there was a strong balance of being over cautious vs being a free for all. In my view that was in the spirit of what we were trying to accomplish with this mandate for unvaccinated individuals in Town. This was a great conversation.

8:30 P.M. The Board went into deliberation to discuss the verbiage of the mandate

The following is language the Board recommended for the mandate. Ms. Fahey will have an attorney that represents Massachusetts Association of Health Boards (MAHB) review the proposed mandate tomorrow. The attorney will make necessary modifications.

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MOTIONED BY: **Ms. Doxey made a motion to accept the Board of Public Health order that states:**

DRAFT

All persons over the age of two (2) who are not vaccinated, including visitors and employees must wear a facial mask covering his or her nose and mouth inside all municipal buildings in the Town of Cohasset, except those who cannot do so due to medical conditions.

The Cohasset School Department Mask/Face Coverings Policy, as adopted by the School Committee on 16 August 2021, is endorsed by the Cohasset Board of Public Health as compliant with this Order. Other Town Departments may, for the purposes of supporting their specific operational needs, develop modified implementation plans for this Order, in consultation with the Town Health Director.

- 1. Enforcement:** The Board of Public Health or its designated agent pursuant to G. L. c. 111, § 30, are authorized to enforce this Order.
- 2. In Effect:** This order will remain in effect until (a) both Plymouth and Norfolk Counties are no longer classified as “high” or “substantial” Covid-19 transmission by the State Department of Health, and (2) the Town of Cohasset is classified in the “Green” category, with fewer than or equal to 15 positive cases over the previous 14-day period. The status of this order will be reviewed at least monthly at a Board of Public Health meeting.

MOTIONED BY: **Ms. Doxey moved to accept this order with the understanding there may be word smithing by the Department of Public Health**

SECONDED BY: **Dr. Pollastri**

VOTE: **2-0 MOTION CARRIED (Dr. Lawrence was absent)**

MOTIONED BY: **Dr. Pollastri moved that the following recommendation be distributed to businesses and posted around the Town of Cohasset to the following:**

The Cohasset Board of Public Health strongly recommends all individuals irrespective of vaccination status wear a mask covering nose and mouth in all indoor public buildings including private businesses except for children under 2 years old and for those with medical conditions

SECONDED BY: **Ms. Doxey**

VOTE: **2-0 MOTION CARRIED (Dr. Lawrence was absent)**

Dr. Pollastri stated for the folks who have participated in this meeting. The Board is grateful for your active participation in this process. I recognized a lot of names from last night’s call. This has been a very charged and challenging conversation for all of us in Town. I believe I can speak for my colleagues who are on the panel. We are all grateful for your forbearance and pleased with the level of engagement we have had in this particular important time in our Town. We like to say we are all in this together and it does seem like 2/3 of the Town’s population participated in these meeting over the last 2 days. I am grateful for that.

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

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Reports:

Public Health Director Weekly Report Week Ending August 12, 2021

COVID-19:

- DPH call – At this point in the pandemic Dr. Katie Brown recommends that anyone that has any symptoms should get tested even if it seems like a typical cold. Attorney Cheryl Sbarra announced that she has prepared templates for mask order for any community that needs one.
- Answered questions from manager of South Shore Pool Supply, sorting through testing, quarantine and isolation rules regarding an employee that tested positive for Covid and implications for other employees.
- Prepared for School Committee meeting on Monday night where a mask order will be discussed for unvaccinated individuals.
- Attended a “Post Pandemic” meeting with Cohasset management representatives. Discussed lessons learned as well as things that went well during the state of emergency.
- Worked on Color (new software to be used for future vaccination clinics) onboarding.
- Board of Public Health meeting to discuss possible face covering mandate.

NON-COVID-19:

- We received word that we have been awarded a Public Health Excellence Grant from DPH! We received the full amount of \$300,000 that will provide shared services between Cohasset, Hingham, Hull, and Weymouth. Details will be released next week.
- Beach results were for Sandy and Black Rock were lower than the maximum limit, however, the geometric mean for Black Rock was slightly higher than the limit. Re-sampled and dropped a sample off at G&L. Black Rock is closed to swimming pending the re-sample. Bassings was elevated again and remains closed to swimming.
- Fielded several calls from residents regarding beach results this season.
- DPH finally responded about the buried seaweed on Sandy. Michael Beatty said that I could close a portion of the beach if I felt a portion was being impacted by the leaching bacteria from the seaweed. In terms of excavation and removal he gave me a MassDEP contact. In reference to Bassings, he mentioned that with all the rain received in July, beaches in general are doing poorly this season. There are beaches with much higher bacterial counts than Bassings.
- 390 CJC (Stop & Shop Plaza) update: the lawyer for the developer issued a letter indicating the final provisions required for the developer to sign a contract with Cohasset Sewer Commission. An additional hearing was requested where the final contract can be hammered out.
- Finally received a report from Green Environmental that was prepared for the Cooke Estate failed septic system. Two of the findings will be addressed while we (the Town and Weston & Sampson) review the report: (1) Rosano Davis will inspect the tanks to see if they are cracked or leaking and (2) Shawn Hardy will inspect the force mains. After we review the report, we will meet with Cooke Estate representatives and their consultants to plan future steps to either repair the system and determine if a sewer connection is necessary.

7:15 P.M.

MOTION BY:

Ms. Doxey to adjourn meeting at 9:50 PM

SECONDED BY:

Dr. Pollastri

VOTE:

2-0 MOTION CARRIED (Dr. Lawrence was absent)