
Pursuant to the Open Meeting Law, M.G.L. Chapter 30 A, § 18-25, written notice posted by the Town Clerk and delivered to all Board members, a meeting of the Wenham Board of Health (BOH) was held Wednesday December 2, 2020 at 5pm. *Due to the COVID19 Virus pandemic, and restrictions concerning in-person gatherings ordered by the Governor, this meeting took place virtually on Zoom. The Chair announced the meeting was being recorded and those BOH members present.*

The Wenham Board of Health (BOH) makes regulations as it deems necessary for the public health and safety of the Town. The BOH is responsible for the enforcement of State Sanitary Codes, State Environmental Codes and BOH Regulations. Areas of responsibility include: septic systems, housing and dwelling units, food service establishments, private wells and recreational camps for children.

Board members are elected for a three-year term: Gerald Donnellan (2021); Dr. Andrew Ting, (2022); Regina Baker (2023)

- Call to order - *With a quorum present, in the absence of the Chair, Ms. Baker called the meeting to order at 5pm.*

Board members present: Dr. Andrew Ting, Chair(A-5:02pm); Regina Baker; Gerald Donnellan

Also present: Jackie Bresnahan, Director of Administrative Services; Maribeth Ting, Public Health Nurse; Greg Bernard, Health Agent; Catherine Tinsley, Recording Secretary

Officials present, not participating; Selectman Cheeseman; Tom Younger, Interim Town Administrator

- Covid-19 Update from Public Health Nurse

Ms. Ting reported that Wenham was a “red community” (high risk, rate of average daily cases is greater than 8 per 100,000) due to the increase in COVID-19 positive cases based on data from November 8 -21.

12/3/2020 Total (accumulative from 1/1/20): Confirmed Cases of COVID-19 is 86 and Probable Cases of COVID-19: 10

11/15-11/28 - 36 new cases: 28 Gordon College and 8 Wenham residents.

Ms. Ting strongly encouraged residents to gather in person only with people from your household, wear a face covering over nose and mouth (Governor’s order). The Hamilton Wenham Regional School District switch to remote learning this week. There is new guidance on the quarantine period for those who have had close contact (with COVID positive person), and do not have symptoms, may have a PCR (polymerase chain reaction) test on day 8 after exposure. If that test is negative and the person remains without symptoms, they may resume normal activity on day 11. Anyone with mild symptoms such as stuffy nose, scratchy throat, headache, etc. should seek testing.

The state was required to submit a vaccine distribution plan to the federal government for when the COVID vaccine becomes available, but local Boards of Health were not asked to give input and have not seen the plan. There are concerns around the cold storage required for the vaccine. There is no guidance on the distribution to date, but first line responders and high-risk people i.e. nursing home patients, are a priority.

Ms. Ting noted she received a form from the state regarding vaccine distribution asking for local contacts.

Dr. Ting questioned the town’s storage capacity and how many vaccines can be distributed in a specific period of time.

Ms. Ting noted that the town does not have a freezer and it was questioned if CARES funds were available to purchase additional storage.

Ms. Bresnahan said information from the recent drive through flu vaccine was available and would be referenced in planning for a local distribution of COVID vaccine i.e. doses, paperwork. This will be available for discussion at the next meeting.

- Discussion on school and public testing capacity

The Department of Public Health (DPH) issued an advisory regarding testing for municipalities/schools. Private groups & companies that provide this all-inclusive service were also provided. Discussion on setting up a testing site in Wenham followed. Ms. Bresnahan noted the cost for a single test kit ranges from \$140 - \$160. Invoices for costs incurred by the town must be submitted for CARES funds by December 31, 2020.

Tentatively, Wenham, the Town of Hamilton, and the school district are discussing the possibility of collaborating to provide testing to the school and essential municipal workers; this would be outsourced to a contracted service. Ms. Bresnahan noted this is in the planning stages but thought information would be available for discussion at the next BOH meeting,

It was noted that testing to the general public is done when the case positive rate. Wenham’s positivity rate has increased the past few weeks.

November 5 /1.03%

November 7 /1.47%

November 12 /1.72%

November 19 / 3.64%

Approved 12.9.2020

This rise in cases is in part due to cases at Gordon college but also in the community. It was noted that Gordon College has gone remote through the end of January and will only be testing staff and the few students that remain on campus. Local free testing sites are listed on [Mass.gov/stopthespread](https://www.mass.gov/stopthespread), as well as NEMA interactive testing sites; Ms. Ting, as the Public Health nurse, may provide a test pass for residents wanting their insurance to cover the test.

- Update to the Board on the current Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) metrics
Dr. Ting reviewed that starting in July 2020 the Wenham and Hamilton Boards of Health created a metrics as a resource for the HWRSD Superintendent when to change learning modes from hybrid, to in person, to remote; these changed over time with input from DESE. The most recent guidance from DESE recommends in person learning as much as possible, regardless of the community's COVID risk color code, unless there are suspected in school transition. School districts were encouraged to consultant with their local BOH.

The BOH will work with School Superintendent and School Committee using local data together with DESE guidance. The Town of Hamilton voted to review any metrics recommended to the HWRSD. It was noted that there is no requirement for the BOH to accept DESE's recommendation. To date, the School Committee has not asked for input from the BOH. The Board was comfortable supporting the hybrid model pending current data.

Ms. Ting noted the school has the ability to request mobile rapid response testing, if transmission appears to be within the school and other requirements are met.

- Updates from staff, as needed
 - Mr. Bernard reported that soil testing is leveling off, but the number of Title 5 inspections is not, due to the increase in the number of home sales. The majority of septic systems are passing.
 - There was no update from the Assistant Health Agent.
 - Ms. Bresnahan mentioned at the next meeting the draft FY22 BOH budget will be ready for the Board's review.
 - Ms. Bresnahan welcomed and introduced the Interim Town Administrator, Tom Younger.

- Ms. Ting referenced that the Town of Hamilton has to use a letter to residents to enforce quarantine and isolation due to COVID exposure and found to be in violation, therefore putting others in risk.

The Town of Hamilton has reduced the hours town hall is to the public due to the number of positive cases in the community. The Board briefly discussed when it would be appropriate to consider closing town hall to the public or changing the hours of operation. This will continue to be monitored.

Ms. Bresnahan noted that Wenham town hall has been fully operational during the pandemic even when closed to the public. Foot traffic in town hall has been steady. Typically, each year the Permitting Department issues 150 -180 construction permits, but this year (2020) permits issued will be near 300 by the end of the year. The Town Clerk and Finance Department is also seeing heavy public foot traffic.

The state is holding "town hall" meetings with a moderator prescreening questions; Wenham & Hamilton held a forum early on in the pandemic through zoom and had about 300 attendees. The Board talked about holding another forum. CARES funds may be used to expand the Zoom attendee capacity.

Because Wenham is a red community, the Board agreed it was important to updated residents, especially during the holidays. Ms. Bresnahan will work with Ms. Ting on a date to schedule a forum.

- Approval of outstanding minutes: October 21, 2020 & November 19, 2020

Vote: The Board voted unanimously by roll call to approve the meeting minutes of October 21, 2020 and November 19, 2020.

- Schedule next meeting: Wednesday December 9 at 8am.
- Adjournment: *The Board voted unanimously by roll call to adjourn at 6:06 pm*

*Respectfully Submitted By
Catherine Tinsley
12.7.2020*