

WESTON BOARD OF HEALTH
Meeting Minutes for
Wednesday, February 16, 2022
10:08 AM – 11:55 AM
Zoom Meeting

Present: Laura Azzam – Chair
Dr. David Kominz – Member
Dr. Jennifer Kickham - Member
Michele Fronk Schuckel MBA, BSN, RN – COVID-19 Response Manager, BOH Public Health Nurse
Kelly Pawluczzonek, RS, MS - Public Health Director
Beth Ann Boles, RS – Health Agent
Michelle Hubbard – Administrative Assistant, Meeting Minutes

I. Residents’ Concerns

Meeting called to order at 10:08 AM. No resident concerns unrelated to agenda items.

II. COVID-19 Report/Update – Current Positivity Rates, Incidence Rates, Trending Data, and Vaccination Rates – Michele Fronk Schuckel, MBA, BSN, RN

“The Board of Health, assisted by the Health Department, is responsible for the promotion and protection of public health. It is done through education enforcement of environmental, public, medical, and mental health laws and regulations and emergency preparedness planning.” The complexity of the pandemic requires careful thought and analysis regarding risk mitigation and disease prevention and evaluation of local data. The Board is being asked to consider the roles defined, data, and options to proceed with our pandemic response for Weston. Michele gave recommendations to the Board whether they move to modify the existing order or if they move to a masking advisory. She also discussed the steps that a few surrounding towns have taken regarding their mandates/advisories. Vaccination offers the greatest protection against COVID-19 infection and Michele strongly encourages everyone who works, lives, learns, and visits Weston to be up to date on their vaccination against COVID-19. For individuals who are not fully vaccinated, it is important that you continue to wear a face covering or mask to help prevent you from spreading COVID-19 to other people. Individuals who are considered close contacts or who have tested positive must follow the isolation and quarantine guidance which includes wearing a mask in public for 5 more days after they leave isolation or quarantine on day 5, regardless of vaccination status. All people in Massachusetts (regardless of vaccination status) are required to continue wearing face coverings in certain settings, including transportation and health care facilities.

Case rates are on the decline in Massachusetts, with the 7-day average being 3.09% positivity rate. Weston’s positivity peaked at 11.79% at the beginning of the year. There

were 63 confirmed, probable cases in Weston from January 30-February 12. This was down from 116 positive cases the 2 weeks prior. This is the second 2-week period that Weston has been in the yellow. Approximately 50% of the cases in Weston are due to in-home spread. We are not seeing severe illness in children. Their most common symptoms are mild flu-like to mild cold. To our knowledge, there has not been a child in Weston hospitalized due to COVID-19. Michele went on to discuss the vaccination rates in the schools throughout town. We are still offering the vaccination clinics of Moderna Mondays and Pfizer Fridays.

The CDC examined data on 93,000 hospitalizations and 241,000 emergency department and urgent care visits across 10 states during the Delta and Omicron waves. During Omicron, vaccine effectiveness against hospitalization was 91% during the first two months after a third dose and remained high at 78% four or more months after a third dose. During both Omicron and Delta, receipt of a third vaccine dose was highly effective at preventing COVID-19 associated emergency department and urgent care encounters and preventing COVID-19 associated hospitalizations. According to the CDC, adults who are unvaccinated have a 5x higher risk of infection compared with adults who were fully vaccinated with a booster. Also, people who reported always wearing a mask in an indoor public setting were less likely to test positive for COVID-19 than people who didn't. New guidance came out stating that people who are moderately or severely immunocompromised should receive a booster dose at least 3 months after the last (third) dose of an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine.

III. COVID-19 Mitigation Protocol – BOH Discussion and/or Modification of School Mask Order

A discussion was had amongst the Board members about rescinding the mask order and possibly changing it to an advisory. Laura Azzam stated she thinks we are at a great place and would like to discuss rescinding the existing K-12 order. She believes it is important to have the statement "individuals should be up to date with their vaccines." Dr. Jennifer Kickham stated she believes we are in a good place and are lucky that so many people are vaccinated and people are being thoughtful of others. She believes the schools will be thoughtful of people that need to or want to still wear a mask, but her and Laura agree that they would favor rescinding the order for schools in favor of an advisory with the understanding that there are still situations where masks will need to be worn and that there are people who do not want or cannot to take off their masks and we should be accepting of these individuals in our community and schools. This is an important step forward in our recovery, but we need to continue focusing on vaccinations, boosters, testing, monitoring, and keeping our community members safe. Dr. David Kominz also agrees we could eliminate the mandate and create an advisory. The Board members asked Kelly and Michele on how to word the changes and what dates could this possibly start. Public schools still have to follow the DESE guidelines and stay masked until February 28. Michele stated that using the date of February 28 or March 7 would give some time for operational changes within the schools.

A few residents gave some comments on the matter. One resident stated that the elementary schools are not at 80% vaccination rate, and that should be considered. Families who have children that cannot be vaccinated will still have concerns because even though rates are going down, they are not low. On the other side of it, one resident stated that we have done everything we can within reason to follow along, be responsible, and do what's right for the community, but it is time to move on and allow the children to have their lives back and have the option to go maskless, including K-3. Another resident spoke about how he is in favor of removing the mandate due to the negative effects, developmental delays, and speech language issues that are now beginning to emerge in children. A question was raised about whether this advisory was the same as the advisory for municipal buildings. It is not, that advisory was put out by the Town Manager's Office.

Dr. Jennifer Kickham made a motion to rescind the current mask mandate in favor of an advisory starting February 28, 2022. Dr. David Kominz seconds the motion. All in favor, the motion is carried.

Considering that we are now looking at an advisory, there are things that should be considered because we have a broad spectrum of needs and concerns across the community. There are certain situations where masking is going to be required to continue such as school busses, nursing and group homes, and healthcare settings. A discussion was had between the Board members, Michele, and Kelly on what should be put into the advisory.

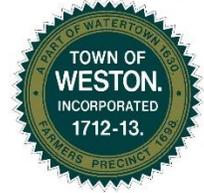
Dr. Jennifer Kickham made a motion to approve the advisory as it is written. Dr. David Kominz seconds the motion. All in favor, the motion is carried. See the advisory below.

IV. Next Meeting Date

March 9, 2022 at 10 AM via Zoom.

V. Adjourn

Dr. Jennifer Kickham motioned to adjourn the meeting. Dr. David Kominz seconds and Laura Azzam adjourned the meeting at 11:55 AM.



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Mask Advisory for the Town of Weston - Effective February 28, 2022

All individuals regardless of vaccination status those who live, work, learn and visit Weston are advised to:

- Stay up to date with vaccines and boosters against COVID-19 and other communicable diseases: Vaccination offers the greatest protection against COVID-19 infection
- Practice good hand hygiene
- Participate in robust COVID-19 testing programs, as made available by your school or employer
- Stay home when sick, call your doctor for next steps
- Promote/participate in good air quality/robust air exchanges per hour in indoor public spaces
- For individuals who are not fully vaccinated, it is important that you continue to wear a face covering or mask to help prevent you from spreading COVID-19 to other people

We support people who may choose to wear a mask. People have many reasons and circumstances for choosing to wear a mask, including vaccination status for themselves or family members, desire to have an extra layer of defense against infection, being in a crowded gathering, visiting vulnerable family or friends, or living with someone who is immunocompromised. In this respect, residents are advised to practice situational awareness around the risk mitigation choices of others.

- Individuals who are considered close contacts or who have tested positive must follow the [isolation and quarantine guidance](#). Individuals are required to wear masks in certain situations. Please reference 2/15/2022 [Massachusetts DPH Advisory on Face Coverings](#) for the most up to date guidance.

When possible, wear more protective masks, which are now readily available for the public:

Most Protective	N95
	FFP2, KN95 & KF94
	Surgical [procedural] mask under cloth cover
	Surgical [procedural] mask
↓	
Less Protective	Cloth face covering

When you wear a mask or face covering, it should:

- Fit snugly but comfortably against the side of the face [covering the nose and mouth];
- Be secured with head straps, ties or ear loops;
- Allow for breathing without restriction

Cloth face coverings should:

- Include multiple layers of fabric;
- Be able to be laundered and machine dried without damage or change to shape

Individual employers and businesses may choose to require masks in their establishments

The Board of Health will continue to use available information to inform our recommendations and response to COVID-19 .