



CITY OF GARDNER
OFFICE OF THE
BOARD OF HEALTH
95 PLEASANT ST, ROOM 29
GARDNER, MASSACHUSETTS 01440



Members Present: Lauren Saunders – Health Director
Susan Avallone, RN – Chairperson
Michele Parker, MD – Member
Geoff Tobia, Esq. - Member

Minutes for Board of Health meeting held Monday December 13, 2021

4:36 Meeting called to order.

4:38 Minutes from the November 22, 2021 Board of Health meeting were reviewed, discussed and approved.

4:40 Covid Discussion:

The state contact tracing program ended on 11/30/21. Sue and Sandy Knipe are the only two nurses who have been trying to cover contact tracing for this area since December 1st. There were over 750 active cases in the past week in the 8 communities in the Gardner area that they are attempting to cover. They are mainly focusing on complicated cases and high-risk groups.

A Code Red call went out to the public just before Thanksgiving to remind the public of mitigation measures to help reduce the spread of the virus over the holidays. Lauren also submitted a letter with guidance for residents to the Gardner News with steps to take if you have symptoms, have a positive teste, when to quarantine or self-isolate. Residents should also be directed to call their PCP for medical advice when they test positive.

Many municipalities have been issuing mask mandates as the state does not currently have one in place. The main concern is that people are going to gather for the upcoming holidays and spread the virus.

In an announcement today, Govender Baker identified 102 municipalities in the Commonwealth with the highest proportion of families at or below the poverty level to distribute 2.1 million home-test kits statewide, Gardner is one of the communities that will get test kits. Athol, Winchendon, Fitchburg and Leominster are the other towns in the MPH N that will receive kits. A plan is in the process of being developed to distribute these tests.

23:16

Covid dashboard has Massachusetts at 2.26% positivity rate and Gardner is 8.36%. The incidence rate in Gardner is 68.6 per 1,000 residents, which is the highest in the area, Winchendon, 67, Fitchburg and Leominster are both 29.2 and Athol is 54.3. The positivity rate for the previous week Gardner was 5.8% so the rate is rising again.

The Health Department has increased their posting about Covid on social media, the mailer that was previewed at the last meeting was sent out encouraging vaccination, booster shots and handwashing. There was a mobile Covid booster clinic on 11/16/21 at City Hall with 84 booster shots given. Gardner Public Schools will be doing a clinic with Community Health Connections next month which will include children ages 5-11 years old. Fitchburg and Leominster have done clinics with children 5–11-years old already.

The state Contract Tracing Team will be ending on 11/30/21 and then it will be up to the local Boards of Health to complete contact tracing. Most of the area Boards of Health do not have a
5:10 Old Business:

Prevention Coordinator's Update – She is currently doing the ‘Game Changers’ program at the High School and at the MWCC. In the Middle School, the Prevention Coordinator is doing an ‘Escape the Vape’ program about the hazards of vaping. She is also doing a Training Active Bystanders (TAB) program at the Middle School, High School and the college.

Health Department Permitting & Alcohol Commission Licensing – renewal deadline for Alcohol Licenses was 11/19/21. The renewal deadline for all other health Department Annual permits is 11/30/21. The office is still short-staffed 1 Administrative Coordinator.

Transfer Station – The full-time Transfer Station Operator position was posted; Lauren is reviewing resumes and will be scheduling interviews soon.

Narcan: Lauren has discovered that there is already a standing Narcan agreement for the city in place coordinated with the Police Department and the state.

Curbside Municipal Trash/Recycling: EL Harvey computer systems were hacked, they were without computers for about 1 week causing some challenges with recovery of missed yard waste, trash and recycling. There has been an increase in calls to the Health Department office.

5:15 New Business:

Recycling Grant – Gardner received their award letter from state recycling dividends program, we will receive an \$15,400 award for 2022 which goes towards purchasing recycling totes, rain barrels and education materials.

The Board Members and the Health Director collaborate on the Code Red message content.

5:25 Next meeting set Monday January 24, 2022 at 4:30 pm, Adjourn.

Susan Avallone RN, Chair Person

Atty. Geoffrey Tobia, Member

Michele C. Parker MD, Member

All conversations are documented on recordings identified as B.O.H December 13, 2021 Meeting