

**BOARD OF HEALTH
MINUTES
January 11, 2022**

The regular monthly meeting of the Board of Health of the Township of Mahwah was held via Zoom video conference. The meeting was called to order at 7:20 PM by Board of Health President, George Cimis.

The Opening Statement was read according to the Sunshine Law and was followed by Roll Call:

PRESENT: Mr. George Cimis
Dr. Edie DeMaria
Mrs. Wendy DeSilva
Ms. Patricia Esty
Mr. Sydney Harris
Mr. Adam Matysiak (7:30 pm)
Mrs. Christy Varrato

PROFESSIONALS: Mrs. Gina Behre, Health Officer
Mrs. Donna Ruccione, Principle REHS
Mr. Daniel Maas, REHS
Mr. Jeffrey Mason, Attorney
Mrs. Kathryn Hagan, Recording Secretary
Mrs. Marianne Campbell, Administrative Secretary
Mrs. Joanne Wendolowski, RN

REPORT OF PUBLIC HEALTH NURSE

Mrs. Wendolowski stated that Mahwah had a total of 2,330 positive COVID cases during the year 2021. A surge in December resulted in a total of 787 cases reported. The majority of positive cases are now being reported in a younger demographic.

The surge is continuing into 2022 with preliminary January data indicating 467 cases reported in Mahwah as of 5:00 pm this day. As with December, the majority of cases are in the younger population.

Two large outbreaks were reported at Ramapo College during the month of December 2021 among students residing on campus. These outbreaks are not yet resolved.

Young World Day School, Ramapo Ridge Middle School and Mahwah High School all reported outbreaks on or about December 21st. Shortly

thereafter, outbreaks were reported in both the Brandywine Senior Living and Fox Trail Memory Care facilities

On December 19th the NJDOH recognized the challenge of reporting positive cases within a 24-hour timeframe; and therefore, changed the priority groups to children ages 0-18 and individuals over the age of 65.

Mrs. Wendolowski stated that there were 4 hospitalizations of older adults reported; however, it is unknown whether these patients were admitted due to the COVID virus or another health concern. Positive cases have also been reported in newborns, and again it is unclear as to what precipitated the hospitalization.

Mrs. Behre commented that the NJDOH has acknowledged the challenge of keeping up with the increasing surge and stated that having additional Contact Tracers will significantly improve the timely reporting of cases. Mrs. Behre emailed the NJDOH requesting that Public Service Announcements be issued from that office in an effort to streamline information to the public regarding positive tests, exposures and quarantine periods.

Regarding the ever-changing quarantine protocols, Mrs. Wendolowski stated that HARP's Health Educator has agreed to hold a meeting with the school nurses to delineate the ambiguous guidance being presented.

Mrs. Wendolowski stated that the monoclonal antibody therapy is not proving effective against the Omicron variant, and some hospitals are no longer offering this treatment option.

Mr. Cimis queried whether it is expected if this virus will be downgraded in the near future as hospitalizations and deaths continue to decrease. Mrs. Wendolowski replied that because repeated outbreaks of COVID that cause waves of severe outcomes such as hospitalization and death are still occurring worldwide, the virus is not yet considered endemic. Hospitalizations among the pediatric population have increased dramatically, and two pediatric deaths have been reported in New Jersey alone.

Beyond COVID, Mrs. Wendolowski was happy to report that HARP will be introducing some new programs to the senior citizen population to include a 4-part Memory Improvement Program and additional fitness programs.

APPROVAL OF DECEMBER 2021 MEETING MINUTES

Moved by Mrs. DeSilva and, seconded by Dr. DeMaria to approve the December 2021 meeting Minutes.

Mr. Mason wished to clarify the Board's ability to revoke or not renew an establishment's food license. He stated that due process would need to be followed with a notice issued to the establishment owner and an opportunity for the licensee to request a hearing with the Board of Health.

There being no further questions or comments, it was unanimously agreed to accept the January 2022 meeting minutes.

APPROVAL OF HEALTH ACTIVITIES REPORT FOR DECEMBER 2021

Moved by Mrs. DeSilva and, seconded by Mrs. Varrato to approve the Health Activities Report for December 2021.

Mrs. DeSilva queried the nature of the two Conditional ratings issued to Imperial Dynasty and Tavern 17. Mrs. Ruccione stated that the owner of Imperial Dynasty has been experiencing staff shortages as well as some personal issues. The serious violations were related to sanitation of the kitchen equipment. Both refrigeration and holding temperatures of prepared foods was acceptable. The establishment has paid the re-inspection fee and will be visited again shortly.

Tavern 17 has been experiencing a staff shortage as well, and sanitation issues were also noted at this establishment. The most critical violation was the lack of a Certified Food Manager on staff. Mrs. Ruccione has been contacted by the General Manager who has received a ServSafe Manager certification, and Mrs. Ruccione will be conducting a re-inspection of the kitchen in the near future.

After an Administrative Hearing was conducted with the establishment owner, Sushigo was re-inspected in December. Mrs. Ruccione was pleased to report that the kitchen was professionally cleaned and looks outstanding. She has asked our part-time inspector to make regular visits to ensure that the kitchen is being maintained.

Mrs. DeSilva queried the status of the court case against Eleventh Hour Rescue. Per Mrs. Behre, there are no updates to report at this

time. The next court date is scheduled for January 13th at 9:00 am.

Mrs. DeSilva queried why Carlin, LLC has not yet hooked up to the sanitary sewer. Mrs. Ruccione has heard from the engineer for Bolla Market who leases the property, and Bolla has agreed to take responsibility. Test holes will be conducted to confirm the ability to establish a hook up. Mrs. Ruccione has consulted with both Mahwah's Plumbing Inspector and Construction Code Official, and neither believes there will be any impediment to hooking up. Mrs. Ruccione concurred since part of the building has already been hooked up for many years, and she sees no reason why this portion of the property cannot conform. Mrs. Ruccione has allowed an additional 30 days for the data to be gathered.

Mrs. Varrato requested information on the hoarding issue noted on Page 11. Mrs. Ruccione stated this is an issue of the resident storing exorbitant amounts of open and outdated food in the house and the garage. Upon inspection, she did not see any rodent activity; however, there is potential for such, and an abatement notice was issued. To date, she has not received any reply from the homeowner and will follow up.

There being no further questions or comment, the Health Activities Report for December 2021 was unanimously approved.

APPROVAL OF HEALTH OFFICER'S REPORT FOR DECEMBER 2021

Moved by Mrs. DeSilva and, seconded by Ms. Esty to accept the Health Officer's Report for December 2021.

Mrs. Behre stated that due to the surge in COVID cases across the State, a decision was made to postpone the annual Rabies Clinic to March 26th in the hopes that this can be a completely outdoor event. The health and safety of the veterinarian, the animal handlers, and the registration volunteers was paramount in making this decision. A request was made to the Mayor and Council to waive the late fee for animal licensing to May 1, 2022.

Mrs. Behre informed the Board that NWBRHC will begin hosting vaccine clinics in February for individuals who wish to receive the third dose or booster of the Moderna vaccine. Individuals who want to receive the initial series of shots are instructed to contact New Bridge Medical Center.

There being no further questions or comment, the Health Officer's Report for December 2021 was unanimously approved.

PAYMENT OF BILLS

Moved by Mrs. DeSilva and, seconded by Ms. Esty and, unanimously agreed by all present to approve the bills for December 2021.

REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES

No Reports to present.

REPORT OF ATTORNEY

Mr. Mason has reviewed the Contract with NWRHC for Health Officer Services. A slight increase in the total amount of the annual contract was noted as expected; however, there was no significant change in services to be provided.

Mr. Mason will forward the Oath of Allegiance to Mr. Harris for signature and execution as a renewed member of the Board of Health.

Mr. Mason is continuing to follow up with the State regarding the need for a Medical Director for ordering medical supplies. Mrs. Behre has contacted the State as well with no response. In the interim, NWRHC will be ordering supplies until further clarification from the State is received.

Mr. Mason has had numerous requests from individuals on where and how to receive antibody treatments for COVID. Mrs. Behre has offered to forward guidance on this issue.

Mr. Matysiak stated that prior to the emergence of the Omicron variant, it was fairly easy to receive monoclonal antibody treatment. Since the surge of Omicron, Emergency Departments are being more selective on who receives this treatment. Mrs. Varrato stated that many hospitals have now put the monoclonal antibody treatment option on hold.

Mr. Matysiak stated that most of the COVID patients he has seen that have been triple vaccinated are faring very well. Their illness is of a shorter duration, not as severe, and fewer of them are requiring hospitalization. PCR test results have taken up to two weeks to receive, therefore, many doctors are no longer offering this testing option.

Mr. Matysiak also stated that individuals who have received all doses of the vaccine may still be asymptomatic carriers of the virus. They will continue to test positive for up to three months on a PCR test after having contracted the illness. The optimal time to have a rapid test performed is between Days 5-7 after the onset of symptoms. Patients are being instructed to take Vitamin C, Vitamin D, Zinc and get plenty of rest to support the immune system.

Mrs. Varrato stated that Hackensack Medical Center is no longer offering PCR testing to the community, and they will only conduct a PCR test on employees who exhibit symptoms. If an employee tests positive but has no symptoms, they are instructed to return to work. If they exhibit symptoms, they are permitted 5 sick days. Rapid testing has resulted in too many false negative results, and Hackensack Hospital is no longer offering this testing option.

CORRESPONDENCE

No correspondence to present.

OTHER BUSINESS

No further business.

GENERAL COMMENTS BY PUBLIC

No public present.

There being no further discussion, a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:35 pm was made by Mr. Harris and, seconded by Ms. Esty and, unanimously agreed to by all present.

The next meeting is scheduled for March 8, 2022, and will be conducted via Zoom videoconference at 7:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathryn Hagan
Recording Secretary