

**BOARD OF HEALTH  
MINUTES  
June 14, 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 7:03 PM by Board of Health President, Adam Matysiak.

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

**PRESENT:** Ms. Patricia Esty  
Mr. Sydney Harris (7:05 pm)  
Mr. Adam Matysiak  
Mrs. Christy Varatto

**ABSENT:** Dr. DeMaria  
Mrs. DeSilva

**PROFESSIONALS:** Mrs. Donna Ruccione, Principal REHS  
Mr. Daniel Maas, REHS  
Mr. Jeffrey Mason, Board of Health Attorney  
Mrs. Kathryn Hagan, Recording Secretary

**PRESENTATION BY ALEXANDRA FOX**

*(Heard out of order after Report of Public Health Nurse.)*

Mrs. Behre introduced Alexandra Fox, Local Public Health Outreach Coordinator (formerly Vulnerable Population Outreach Coordinator aka VPOC.) Ms. Fox is employed with NWRHC through the Strengthening Public Health Capacity Grant. She has been assisting with communicable disease reporting, social media content and community support.

Ms. Fox stated that originally her role as the VPOC was to increase local public health capacity to investigate and trace communicable diseases among vulnerable populations. With the passage of time, the grant has evolved which rendered the title change as previously noted. Ms. Fox began her presentation noting that the State of New Jersey currently has 103 Local Health Departments (LDH's). Northwest Bergen Regional Health Commission provides services to over 106,000 residents across its eleven municipalities. Mahwah is their largest municipality with 25,487 residents; more than double

their next largest municipality. LDH's are responsible for a variety of functions such as communicable disease investigations and reporting, and for environmental matters. Most LHD's are solely funded through local tax dollars which often results in a reduced workforce and a reduction in the provision of necessary services. The need for public health services has increased and will continue to do so, in step with the increased demand for affordable housing. Hopefully, the recent pandemic has brought light to this need moving forward.

Public Health activities yield a good return on investment as prevention is more affordable than medical care. While the upfront cost may be higher, savings will be realized long-term. It is a well-established fact that public health has been under-funded for decades, but the changing world and environmental factors warrant more attention should be given to this field. The American Journal of Public Health states that by the year 2030, a national target for per capita public health spending should be set to ensure sufficient investment.

The social determinants of health include where individuals are born, work, play, etc. Circumstances that determine the outcome of public health issues and risks include both the built environment and the natural environment. It is important to study the demographics because it provides a snapshot of the community at a given point in time, and data indicates that socio-demographic factors do have an effect on health outcomes.

Socio-economic data provided was based on the 2020 Census. Due to the pandemic, there may be under reporting of some groups and over reporting of others which will need to be addressed at the next Census. The percentage of individuals under the age of 18 and over the age of 65 is very similar in Mahwah.

Ms. Fox reviewed information from the America Community Survey which is recorded through the Census. This survey provides local officials, community leaders and local business the ability to understand the changes taking place within their municipalities.

In Mahwah, 25% percent of residents speak a language other than English within the home and 95% of Mahwah households have a least one computer in the home. Unfortunately, there is a gap in internet access. Federal Programs exist that provide low-cost internet services to low-income households. Ms. Fox will share this information with the Township if requested.

The high school graduation rate of Mahwah students is high; however, 1,147 residents under the age of 65 do not have health insurance.

While Mahwah is not considered a low-income community, a total of 1,249 residents registered an income below the national poverty level. These are individuals that are falling through the gaps that we could potentially assist.

In regard to COVID vaccination, 75% of individuals over the age of 5 have completed the initial vaccine series. Approximately 61% of individuals have received a booster dose of vaccine which is comparable to our neighboring municipalities.

The Strengthening Public Health Capacity Grant has been extremely beneficial in allowing increased communication between NWBRHC and key community stakeholders. It has also provided for an increase in work hours for the public health nurse, hiring of an additional part-time nurse and part-time health inspector, coverage for a part-time Health Officer and an individual dedicated to researching and applying for Federal and State grants. The current Grant has been renewed through June 2023, but the future of the Grant remains undetermined.

In the year 2022, the focus of the Grant will become more general so as to include additional communicable diseases such as Hepatitis A, Lyme Disease and Rabies. Social media strategies will be increased as a means of communication with the public, and vaccination clinics will continue to be offered.

Mrs. Hagan suggested that this presentation be emailed to Mrs. Campbell for distribution to the Board Members.

Mrs. Behre stated that NWBRHC is funded solely by municipal contracts and does not receive any Federal funding. This Grant has allowed NWBRHC to continue to function effectively during the recent pandemic. She suggested that any Board Members who utilize Facebook should consider following NWBRHC.

#### **REPORT OF PUBLIC HEALTH NURSE**

Mrs. Wendolowski reported that health and blood pressure screenings are continuing monthly at both the Mahwah Senior Center and Norfolk Village. Approximately twenty-five individuals attend the sessions at Norfolk Village regularly and have requested further educational programs. A presentation entitled "Nutrition on a Budget" was offered in June, and in July the "DASH Diet" (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) will be offered.

Unfortunately, participation at the senior center is not as robust with the nurse only seeing approximately six people for regular screenings. She will work with Mrs. Campbell to distribute flyers regarding the blood pressure screening and upcoming programs.

Reporting of Hepatitis B and C as well as Lyme Disease has increased statewide. Elimination of the strict COVID quarantine standards has allowed individuals to return to regular doctor visits which could be a factor in the uptick in the reporting of these illnesses.

COVID cases have dropped significantly in June. Brandywine Assisted Living is currently on a 28-day monitoring status due to a positive case among a visitor being reported. Fox Trail Memory Care is currently in outbreak status with four active cases being reported and will also be monitored for 28 days. When an outbreak is reported, the State is notified, and an infection control interview is conducted to be certain proper sanitation methods are being utilized.

Fox Trail has received K-94 masks for the staff, but fit testing has not yet been conducted. HARP is working with Fox Trail to have fit testing done at all of their Bergen County facilities.

A staff member from HARP will be present at Mahwah's upcoming program entitled "Safety Town" for incoming kindergartners. She will also offer a presentation entitled "Community Helpers" as an introduction to the first responders such as EMTs, firefighters and police. They will have an opportunity to go inside an ambulance, speak with a paramedic and learn about utilizing 911 in an emergency.

HARP will be providing CPR Recertification to the Mahwah School Nurses at an upcoming education day.

Mrs. Behre requested names of any local companies that offer fit testing for the K-95 masks to which Mrs. Wendolowski stated that most referrals are to Bergen County Health Department and Mahwah Medical. She also asked if the 28-day monitoring status is likely to change in the near future. Mrs. Wendolowski does not expect this to change as it has been the standard public health procedure for many communicable diseases. She called the State Health Department and was informed that recommendations by the State are not law but are typically followed as they are regarded as best practice.

Communicable Disease outbreaks are required to be reported; however, COVID reporting is not required. Mrs. Wendolowski finds this concerning since SARS is reportable, and COVID is a strain of SARS.

Mr. Matysiak wished to know the recommendations for quarantine in unvaccinated children. Mrs. Wendolowski stated that a 5-day quarantine is warranted with testing between Days 5 to 7. If symptom free with a negative test, they may return to the school on Day 8. If no test is conducted, quarantine for 5 days is necessary, and a mask must be worn for an additional 5 days.

**APPROVAL OF MAY 2022 REGULAR MEETING MINUTES**

Moved by Mr. Harris and, seconded by Ms. Esty, and unanimously agreed by all present to approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting of May 2022.

**APPROVAL OF HEALTH ACTIVITIES REPORT**

Moved by Mr. Harris and, seconded by Ms. Esty to approve the Health Activities Report for May 2022.

Mr. Matysiak queried whether the high bacteria levels in the water reports on Page 2 were strictly related to public recreational bathing. Mrs. Ruccione replied affirmatively. Mr. Matysiak was pleased to note that reports of animal bites were low in June. Mrs. Ruccione stated all bites were animal to animal, with no human bites reported.

Mr. Matysiak queried the communicable disease reported on Page.7. Mrs. Ruccione believes this refers to a complaint at the Sheraton by a guest who was concerned that only one elevator was in service, and the elevator was filled to capacity. The complainant was concerned about a possible COVID exposure. Mrs. Ruccione attempted to follow up with hotel management for clarification on whether the elevator has since been repaired and their sanitation procedures during the time period in question.

There being no further questions or comment, the Health Activities Report for May 2022 was unanimously approved.

**APPROVAL OF HEALTH OFFICER'S REPORT MAY 2022**

Moved by Mr. Harris and, seconded by Mrs. Varatto to accept the Health Officer's Report for May 2022.

Mr. Matysiak queried the nature of the Tick and Lyme Disease Program offered by Dr. Toledo of Rutgers Vector Biology Center. Mrs. Behre stated that a Westwood official connected with Dr. Toledo, and NWBRHC took advantage of this opportunity to request he give a similar presentation in Midland Park. If the Board is interested, she will ask that he make a presentation to Mahwah Residents as well. Mrs. Hagan requested that any flyer be forwarded to Mrs. Campbell for distribution to interested Mahwah residents.

Mrs. Behre stated that NWBRHC received a supply of over-the-counter COVID test kits, and a supply was provided to the Township for testing of any vulnerable individuals or exposed employees.

The Health Educator from NWBRHC will also be present at Safety Town and will give a presentation regarding the importance of handwashing to the participants.

There being no further questions or comment, the Health Officer's Report for May 2022 was unanimously approved.

#### PAYMENT OF BILLS

Moved by Mr. Harris and, seconded by Ms. Esty and, unanimously agreed by all present to approve the bills for May 2022.

#### REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES

No Reports to Present.

#### REPORT OF ATTORNEY

Mr. Mason researched the Board's recent request to enact an ordinance regarding the ability to euthanize potentially dangerous animals. While he believes this idea has merit, the statutes in place by the State permitting such are already in place, and any ordinance created by Mahwah would be a duplication. Currently, the Animal Control Officer (TYCO) has authority to euthanize any animal in their care that is not recovered by its owner after 7 days. It was determined by the Board that it was not necessary to move forward on this at the current time.

**CORRESPONDENCE**

No correspondence to present.

**OTHER BUSINESS**

a) Board Position Vacancy

Mrs. Hagan suggested that the Board Members submit suggestions on possible candidates to Mrs. Campbell, and she will reach out to those individuals.

b) Discussion: Medical Director MOA

Mrs. Behre will direct Mrs. Campbell to draft a Memorandum of Agreement for the purpose of appointing a Medical Director to the Mahwah Board of Health. This will allow for the purchasing of restricted medical supplies. She is hopeful that a draft of the MOA will be available for review at the next scheduled meeting.

**GENERAL COMMENTS BY PUBLIC**

No public present.

There being no further discussion, a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:04 pm was made by Mr. Harris and, seconded by Ms. Esty and, unanimously agreed to by all present.

The next meeting is scheduled for July 12, 2022, at the Mahwah Municipal Building or via Zoom, beginning at 7:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathryn Hagan  
Recording Secretary