

Ashland Board of Health
Meeting Minutes
February 1, 2022
ZOOM Meeting

Ronald Etskovitz, Chair
Diane Mortensen, Vice Chair
Rajit Gupta, Health Agent/Director

Barbra Sekesogundu Simon, Clerk
John Byrnes, Member
Bernadette Lunkuse, Member

Members Present Via Zoom Meeting:

Ron Etskovitz, Barbra Sekesogundu Simon, Jay Byrnes and Bernadette Lunkuse

Members Not Present

Diane Mortensen

Others Present:

Rajit Gupta, Health Agent/Director
Laura Clifford, BOH Admin. Assistant
Sergeant Ed Burman, Ashland P.D.
Mark Dassoni, Resident

Call Meeting to Order, 6:00 P.M.

Mr. Etskovitz called the meeting to order at 6:02 P.M.

Citizens' Participation

None.

COVID-19 Update

Sergeant Burman noted that as of this afternoon, we have 70 open confirmed cases, and 11 probable cases of COVID. Sgt. Burman noted these are the cases that we have been notified of, this does not include the number of positive cases tested with home testing kits. Sgt. Burman stated that he is seeing a number of cases as parents call in to the school to notify the school when their child has tested positive with a home test; Sgt. Burman estimated the total number of COVID cases to be approximately 30% above what is reported through MAVEN.

Sgt. Burman noted that tomorrow the FDA is expected to come out with an Emergency Use Authorization for Pfizer for 1-5-year-old children; Sgt. Burman spoke to Northborough Health Agent, Kristin Black, regarding holding large vaccine clinics for this age group which will include all the towns in the collaboration.

Sergeant Burman noted that there will be a small vaccine clinic at Town Hall from 10:00 AM – 1:00 PM; two weeks ago there was a vaccine clinic at the Community Center which two of the staff members from the Hudson collaboration attended.

Sgt. Burman explained that over the last week they have been using text and voice calling to inform people who have tested positive of the isolation and quarantine protocols, mailings were previously

used. This method has been helpful in informing people of their COVID diagnosis sometimes before they receive notification from the testing site.

Consent Agenda:

- **Review and Approve Meeting Minutes: December 14, 2021, January 4, 2022, January 5, 2022**
- **Review Year-to-Date Budget Report, FY2022**

Motion: Mr. Byrnes made a motion to approve the consent agenda. Ms. Lunkuse seconded the motion.

Vote: 4-0. The motion was approved.

Member, John Byrnes' agenda:

- **Discuss: Remote Area Medical (RAM) Clinic**

Mr. Byrnes updated the Board on the recent activity pertaining to the Remote Area Medical (RAM) Clinic discussions. Mr. Byrnes noted that he recently met with the Town Manager, Michael Herbert, as well as Mr. Gupta, who both thought this was a good idea. A subsequent meeting was held with the Town Manager, Assistant Town Manager, Jenn Ball, Sergeant Burman, and the Director of Human Services, Jennifer Wuelfing, who all agreed it is a good idea as well. It was suggested that they speak with Keefe Tech regarding potential use of their school building as the venue. Sgt. Burman, who is on the Keefe Tech School Committee, said that he spoke with the Superintendent of Keefe Tech who expressed that they would be very interested in hosting this, with August being the most optimal month.

Mr. Byrnes noted that he has completed RAM's online form in which he included Ashland data and statistics; he was then contacted by RAM who inquired if there was a dedicated venue and date. Mr. Byrnes noted that August may be tough to pull off; Mr. Byrnes discussed the preparation time in setting up a clinic can take up to a year. Sgt. Burman suggested inviting John Evans, Keefe Tech Superintendent, to the next meeting to discuss dates. Mr. Byrnes noted the short-term goal is to let RAM know that we have a venue, some estimated dates, and a team of volunteers. They will come in and look at the feasibility and predict the number of patients; from there, they would determine the number of volunteers needed, and other needs. Mr. Gupta noted that the Health Department will be here to help, during off hours as well.

Sgt. Burman inquired as to whether childhood vaccines would be part of the Clinic, as this will be a great need in August as children prepare to go back to school. Mr. Byrnes noted that they could be, vision and dental are also a big part of the Clinic, it all depends on what is available. Sgt. Burman noted this would be great for the students of Keefe Tech to gain hands-on experience. Mr. Etskovitz offered his services as well, and noted that we will keep this item on our future agendas.

Health Director's Agenda:

- **Board of Health Grants, Update**

Mr. Gupta discussed the Public Health Emergency Grant and the Contact Tracing Grant. Mr. Gupta noted that we are already receiving help from the collaboration staff at the COVID vaccine clinics, a Director and a Nurse attended the last clinic. They have also offered to help at Thursday's COVID vaccine clinic. Another grant we received was from the Metrowest Health Foundation which includes five communities, and is for \$250,000. These funds can be used for clinics and to purchase PPE, and is for COVID

use only. The NEARS grant is for \$2,500 for food safety and foodborne illness trainings and investigations. We are waiting for responses on two other grants.

- **Academic Public Health Corps, APHC, Contact Tracing, Update**

Mr. Gupta discussed Academic Public Health Corps which works under the State along with MHOA, they have given us a contact tracer for eight weeks, for 10 hours per week.

- **Restaurant Updates**

Mr. Gupta noted that Honey Dew and Kidde Fenwal are both squared away and have both been given their permits.

- **Virtual Tobacco Retailer Training, February 4, 2022**

Mr. Gupta explained that our Regional Tobacco Coordinator, Olivia Dufour, will be conducting a tobacco retailer training on Friday at 12:00 – 12:30 PM.

Mr. Etskovitz inquired as to how the grant funding is dispersed; Mr. Gupta explained that the State is now giving money to regions, rather than to individual communities. They have a part-time septic inspector and food inspector through the Hudson collaboration, and we can ask for help if needed. The Metrowest Health Foundation grant will be used for COVID-related expenses, such as masks, clinics and testing.

Discuss Agenda Topics for Future Meetings

Remote Area Medical (RAM)

Mr. Etskovitz suggested getting an update from Decisions at Every Turn, and Green-Up Ashland in the Spring.

Citizens' Participation

Mr. Etskovitz opened Citizens' Participation back up to give Mark Dassoni an opportunity to speak. Mark Dassoni noted that he and his father are both double vaccinated and boosted. Mr. Dassoni thanked the Town and the Board and was glad there were no issues during the snowstorm.

Adjournment

Motion: Ms. Lunkuse made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Sekesogundu Simon seconded the motion.

Vote: 4-0. Motion approved.

The meeting adjourned at 6:34 PM.

ASHLAND BOARD OF HEALTH
DOCUMENTS REVIEWED AT THE 2/1/2022 MEETING
(All items stored in the Board of Health files unless otherwise noted)

1. COVID-19 Confirmed and Probable Cases – Charts
2. December 14, 2021, January 4, 2022, January 5, 2022, Draft Meeting Minutes
3. YTD Budget Report, YTD Revolving Budget Report
4. A recording of the meeting is available at WACATV.com