

Board of Health
Meeting Minutes
April 28, 2020
Ashland Town Hall
101 Main Street, Ashland, MA

Diane Mortensen, Chair
Judi Teller, Clerk
Mark Oram, Agent/Director

Chris Daniele, Vice Chair
Ronald Etskovitz, Member
Koduvayur Narayana, Member

Members Present Via Zoom Meeting:

Diane Mortensen, Chris Daniele, Judi Teller, Ron Etskovitz and Koduvayur Narayana

Others Present:

Mark Oram, Health Agent/Director
Laura Clifford, Administrative Secretary
Sergeant Ed Burman, Ashland Police Department
Michael Herbert, Town Manager
Jennifer Ball, Assistant Town Manager
Tom Curran, Food Inspector
Mark Dassoni, Resident
Preston Crow, Resident

Call Meeting to Order - 6:00 PM

Mr. Daniele noted that the Chair will be arriving shortly. Mr. Daniele called the online meeting to order at 6:03 PM and noted the meeting was being recorded by WACA-TV.

Citizens Participation

Mark Dassoni, resident, noted that he has been having trouble with getting bags from DPW, but everything else is going well.

Covid-19, Updates

Sergeant Burman reviewed the documents which were distributed to the Board Members. Sgt. Burman noted there was a spike in the number of cases due to the testing that occurred at Waterview Lodge; tomorrow the National Guard will be testing at Residence at Valley Farms, both residents and staff. There have been four positive cases at Residence at Valley Farms, he assigned Amy Childs to be the nurse and point of contact to this facility. Sgt. Burman noted that the State has updated the MAVEN system this week, they are now given a script to be used when reaching out to the contacts. Sgt. Burman explained that he has been able to clear out many cases. Sgt. Burman noted that Mr. Oram has gone out to the restaurants and supermarkets, and will report on that. Sgt. Burman noted that as of yet, there has been no testing at Mill Pond Rest Home, they have not had any residents with Covid-19 symptoms. Sgt. Burman thanked the schools for making the face shields with the 3-D printers, which were given out to all three facilities.

Michael Herbert explained that he was part of a conference call with the State and the Waterview Lodge management team due to concerns he and others had, as well as concerns of family members. Mr. Herbert would like the Board of Health to consider that all nursing homes, assisted living homes and long term care facilities, mandate their employees to be tested for Covid-19. Mr. Herbert explained that he has asked Town Counsel to weigh in; he noted this could be done under the Board's authority under Chapter 111. Mr. Narayana suggested the Board could vote to mandate testing of staff subject to Attorney Mead's review.

Mr. Etskovitz noted he is in agreement but the rules are unclear as to who can be tested, that you must be showing certain symptoms to be tested. Mr. Herbert noted that when the National Guard comes in to test the residents, staff members are able to be tested if they and the owner of the facility agree to the testing. The owner has agreed to this but some staff members have not, possibly due to employment concerns. Mr. Herbert explained that a mandate would require this, and that the public health factor should outweigh the private issue. Board Members agreed. Ms. Teller noted that we need to protect the vulnerable population in any way we are legally allowed to.

(Ms. Mortensen joined the meeting at 6:15 PM and was updated on the discussion.)

Board Members discussed Covid-19 testing of the Town's First Responders. Sgt. Burman noted that they are always wearing proper PPE (Personal Protection Equipment) when entering a facility. Ms. Teller reported that after a discussion with Chief Alfano, she was glad to learn that First Responders were fully supplied with more than adequate equipment.

Mr. Herbert suggested the Board could vote to implement this tonight, and then we could come up with Regulations and Policies for this that could go back before the Board for review.

Motion: Ms. Teller made a motion that the Board move forward. Mr. Narayana seconded the motion.

Vote: 5-0. Motion approved.

The Board continued the Covid-19 discussion regarding the mandating of wearing a mask or facial covering. Ms. Ball noted that the guidance continues to evolve, many cities and towns have issued advisories and achieved compliance but the Board can also choose to create a violation; Ms. Ball is in discussion with Town Counsel regarding fines. Board Members discussed the age requirement for children to wear a face covering, some cities are requiring children over the age of two, and some over the age of five. Mr. Daniele asked for any citizen feedback regarding this issue; Mr. Dassoni suggested a issuing a warning for the first violation. Mr. Crow agrees with a mask requirement in public buildings, but requiring masks in State parks and outside is a big step further. Mr. Etskovitz noted the police officers in Town are busy enough without having to enforce this, but believes it is important to send a strong message. Mr. Narayana asked about the availability of masks; Ms. Ball noted they have received many donations through the Food Pantry, we could continue to encourage these donations. Mr. Crow suggested any mandate should specify that masks are to cover nose and mouth. Ms. Mortensen noted we should work with the Declaration provided by Town Counsel, Board Members reviewed the Declaration. Ms. Ball suggested the Board could advise essential businesses to post the advisory at their door to require masks or facial coverings, Board Members discussed whether this applies to employees. Board Members agreed they would prefer a mandate. The Board agreed to approve Town Counsel's Declaration, Ms. Ball noted they may want to discuss any fines and an exemption for anyone whose health would be in jeopardy to wear a mask, or children under the age of two or five. (Tom Curran joined the meeting at this time, 6:48 PM) Ms. Mortensen suggested the Board accept Town Counsel's Declaration, with the exemption stated by Jenn Ball, and would include children over the age of five.

Motion: Mr. Daniele suggested a motion to implement the Emergency Declaration Order related to face coverings, that it be implemented and distributed to the public pending approval of Town Counsel, effective no later than 48 hours after public release, with the exemption (for anyone whose health would be in jeopardy), and children over the age of five. Mr. Narayana so moved the motion. Ms. Teller seconded the motion.

Vote: 5-0. Motion approved.

The Board continued the Covid-19 updates regarding the inspections of food and retail food establishments. Mr. Oram explained that inspections have occurred at both grocery stores on multiple occasions this week, he has also had communications with store managers regarding any complaints we have received. Mr. Oram noted he reviewed proper cleaning of carts, store traffic, cleaning of registers and barriers, and management of employees. They are aware that they will be seeing a mask requirement. Mr. Oram visited other restaurants in Town where he discussed handwashing, social distancing and marking the floors. Mr. Curran

noted he has been checking on the Certified Food Managers, this is part of the routine checklist each time an inspection is conducted.

Discussion on fee for food retail permit for existing food service establishments

Mr. Oram noted that we have been approached with the idea of food service establishments selling groceries during the Covid-19 emergency, and said it's a great idea. He would recommend that during this period, we would waive any additional permit fees, due to the difficulty for some to buy groceries.

Motion: Mr. Narayana made a motion to waive the fee for these Retail Food Permits for existing food establishments. Mr. Etskovitz seconded the motion.

Vote: 5-0. Motion carries.

Mr. Oram noted he has spoken to Joanne Duffy regarding the Food Pantry. Mr. Curran reviewed some relief guidance from the State that he will forward to the Board. Mr. Oram noted he and Mr. Curran are working on a Zoom Meeting/Presentation for the food establishments, which will include information regarding CFM's and updates/guidelines to Covid-19, and will include mask use. This presentation will be ready in a week and will be mandatory. Board Members agreed this should be recorded. Ms. Mortensen suggested there also be a Zoom meeting for the Members to be given guidance by Mr. Curran or Mr. Oram, for Members to be educated on visiting establishments. Mr. Oram noted that he and Sgt. Burman discussed the Board Members having identification when they visit establishments. Mr. Etskovitz offered to make a donation to the Ashland Food Pantry, Board Members thanked Mr. Etskovitz and noted PO Box 112, Ashland, is the address to send donations to the Emergency Fund.

Discuss Future Agenda Topics for Future Meeting Dates

The Board agreed to meet next week, Tuesday, May 6, 2020.

Adjournment

Motion: Mr. Narayana made a motion to adjourn. Ms. Teller seconded the motion.

Vote: 5-0. Motion approved.

The meeting adjourned at 7:10 PM.

ASHLAND BOARD OF HEALTH
DOCUMENTS REVIEWED AT THE 4/28/2020 MEETING
(All items stored in the Board of Health files unless otherwise noted)

1. Graphs of Total Cases, Total Cleared, Combined Total Cases and Cleared
2. Draft Mask and Social Distancing Order, from Town Counsel
3. Face Cover Orders, Milford and Framingham