

**CITY OF SALEM  
BOARD OF HEALTH  
MEETING MINUTES**  
Virtual Meeting held via Zoom  
and also  
Recorded by SATV  
**September 8, 2020**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Dr. Jeremy Schiller, Paul Kirby, Geraldine Yuhas, Datanis Elias, Sara Moore

**OTHERS PRESENT:** David Greenbaum, Health Agent, Suzanne Darmody, Public Health Nurse, Maureen Davis, Clerk of the Board, Patti Morsillo, City Council Liaison

**ATTENDEES ADDRESSED:** Alan Hanscom, SATV and resident, Aayesha Siddiqui, resident

**TOPIC**

**DISCUSSION/ACTION**

**J. Schiller read aloud that, pursuant to Governor Baker's orders, there exists COVID-19 Emergency Open Meeting Law Guidance regarding the implementation of virtual public meetings.**

**1. Call to Order**

7:04pm

**2. Approval of Minutes  
(August 4, 2020)**

**S. Moore motioned to approve the minutes. G. Yuhas 2<sup>nd</sup>. All in favor. Motion passed.**

**3. Updates on COVID-19**

D. Greenbaum said cases are up and down lately. There were seven new cases on Saturday, one on Sunday, one on Monday and no new cases today. Testing at Salem High School has been going on since August and will continue through the end of September. It seems to be going pretty well. They are averaging around 230 tests per day.

P. Kirby shared a sheet he prepared showing the percentage of positive test results from 8/17 – 9/3, which was .83%. He also screen-shared a list of moving averages of cases from 3/19 – present, which was 4.46.

D. Greenbaum said that shows we are trending in the right direction. The 14-day average has been good, but he would like to see a 4-week trend because it will be more telling.

J. Schiller commented that we are solidly in the yellow zone.

D. Greenbaum explained that in order to be in the green zone, we must have less than four cases per 100,000 tests in a two-week period. We are currently at 4.9. 4-8 cases are the yellow zone and >8 cases are the red zone.

P. Kirby said the situation is very volatile and it's important for us not to overreact either way and should not immediately celebrate when in green or freak out when in red.

S. Darmody said when households with many members have a positive test result it brings the numbers up quickly, but at least we know where the increase in numbers come from in those cases. The population is not that big, so all it takes is two households infected to put us into the red zone. With the weather changing, people will be inside more, but hopefully there will be less comingling between households.

D. Greenbaum said we are seeing multiple cases in one household. We will have to watch the trend of how many people from one household are

becoming infected.

J. Schiller said that is the worry of the fall that people are going to be inside, and those clusters could be larger.

J. Schiller said there is still a low amount of hospital admissions and that has not risen with the increase in the number of cases.

S. Darmody said most cases are recovering at home.

P. Kirby said he was surprised by the low positivity rate. He calculated the Fallon data and found that 63% of those tested at Salem High School are Salem residents and 37% are non-residents. He said he can make a chart with the frequency of the other towns attending our testing.

J. Schiller said he and D. Greenbaum get a lot of emails about the restrictions in place and requests for exemptions. He said D. Greenbaum is doing an excellent job of keeping a broad policy in place. We naturally want to do more than we can do, but this is a public health issue and a community effort.

D. Greenbaum said if we were to start adding exemptions, it would make enforcement that much more difficult. Enforcement is challenging as it is. He said it's important to emphasize that the idea behind the mask order is not to generate revenue for the City, it is to gain compliance. The science is pretty clear that the two things that help slow the spread of the virus are wearing facial coverings and physical distancing. If we can get people to do those two things, we would be in a much better place both locally and nationally. There is a lot of mixed messaging out there, so it makes it difficult.

P. Kirby asked what kind of exemptions are being requested.

D. Greenbaum said yoga classes in the park, sporting events, etc. are requesting an exemption from wearing facial coverings.

He said we are not advertising any city-run activities in October, but we are expecting people are going to come. It is going to be even more challenging and we need to see how we are going to address all these restrictions and requirements for people coming to visit the City.

He worked with the IT Department and they took the State travel form and modified it into a city travel form for Salem. All the lodging establishments, inns, Air bnbs, etc. will get it in the next week or so. They will have to give it to all their guests. It will have a QR code so they can scan it on their phone. It will automatically send notification to him so we can do contact tracing if we need to. We do get some information from the State's travel form, but it's more information than we need, so the City form will narrow down the data for Salem in particular. When the travel restriction went into place, he sent an email with a copy of the order to almost 90 air bnbs, hotels, etc. to let them know of their responsibilities to inform guests of the requirements for travel to MA. He tries to communicate with the businesses that are affected as much as he can.

J. Schiller said considering how busy the City is, Salem as a community has really done amazing complying with social distancing and mask wearing. He feels very grateful for how much the community has adhered to the science. It has been very positive and community-building that we are showing that kind of unity. It really strengthens the Board of Health's position and our role in the City.

S. Moore said it seems that, with the signs and the communications coming from the City, we have established a culture of mask wearing and thoughtfulness. There is a willingness of community members to look out

for each other.

D. Greenbaum said originally the mask ambassadors reported only 40% compliance and that was very disheartening. Unfortunately, we are going to have those people who are just not going to wear a mask no matter what. Attendee Alan Hanscom of Washington Square asked about Destination Salem advertising for tourists to come and visit Salem. He asked if that was wise and wanted to hear our comments.

D. Greenbaum said he spoke to Kate Fox of Destination Salem and she said they have greatly reduced their marketing and advertising. Their focus in marketing this year is to stay local. They are hoping to cater to Salem residents who may usually stay away from downtown in October. They are hoping to attract people within the Commonwealth, not outside the Commonwealth. All the City-run programming has been cancelled.

S. Moore said there is a fine line between wanting to have enough people to keep Salem businesses alive without making ourselves vulnerable. It's a tough thing to balance.

D. Greenbaum said he agrees it is definitely a fine line. We don't want to draw people in, but they are going to come anyway. People have planned their trips years in advance because of the destination Salem is in October. If anyone called and asked him, he would tell them this is not the year to plan your dream trip to Salem. He would tell them to wait and come in 2021 or 2022 when hopefully this will all be behind us. They will have a much better time and a much better trip.

Attendee Aayesha Siddiqui thanked the Board for all the wonderful work they do. She asked if the mask mandate will be extended to be city-wide as we move into October and flu season.

D. Greenbaum said not at this time.

J. Schiller said that decision would be considered based on data, but our numbers are good now.

S. Moore asked if there have been any conversations about trick-or-treating.

D. Greenbaum said not yet, but the State is looking at it. If the State cancels it, we will certainly get the message out.

#### **4. Discussion on Health Disparities and Race Equity**

J. Schiller asked if there are any updates on the task force.

D. Greenbaum said the large task force has been named and they have been meeting. He believes the Mayor is currently trying to figure out what their charge should be. Once they figure out their focus we may see more about subcommittees, etc.

#### **5. Chairperson Communications**

J. Schiller asked if there has been any discussion of what voter polling places will look like.

D. Greenbaum said for the primary they set up polling locations around the City and they set up early voting at the Annex each day for the week prior. He imagines the polling places will be set up and look the same. A large portion of the population are either voting by mail or voting early. Lots of precautions are being put in place due to COVID.

#### **6. Monthly Reports-Updates**

##### **a. Public Health Nurse's Report**

J. Schiller asked if there are any predictions on flu season.

S. Darmody said she hasn't heard anything yet. She reported that she started giving first responders flu shots today at fire headquarters and will

continue for all shifts for the rest of the week. She will also be going to the Police Department and will be scheduling the employee flu clinic. She is exploring the idea of a possible drive-through flu clinic at the council on aging. She will be helping out in Marblehead with their clinic on 9/30 and will get some ideas from there. She will hopefully have something scheduled for October. We have both high-dose and regular vaccine available.

S. Moore asked if there are any plans to do a flu clinic in conjunction with Salem Public Schools, especially given the requirement that public-school students need to be vaccinated. She feels it could be a good way to catch families who may not normally go to the doctor to get a flu shot.

S. Darmody said after the mandate came out, they met with the school nurses and they did talk about it. She said we don't usually get pediatric vaccine, but if we can get some, we could look into it. Discussions are ongoing.

D. Greenbaum said we don't have a lot of vaccine and don't generally get a lot of pediatric vaccine. Also, getting parents to sign release forms and permission slips to receive the vaccine is challenging. There is benefit to it, but it would have to come with a lot of assistance and support from the School Department. It is a promising program and he would love to get it going, but he feels it will be a heavy lift. It would most likely look more like a mass vaccination site, like at the high school, rather than us going around to each school. Another thing to note is there are lots of other places people can get flu shots now compared to years ago.

Copy available at the BOH office.

**b. Health Agent's Report**

Report not available. He gives the Fire Department a weekly situation report that he can share with the Board going forward.

**c. Administrative Report**

Report not available.

**d. Council Liaison Updates**

P. Morsillo said there is nothing to report. The Council is back in session on Thursday. She reported she is also getting questions about trick-or-treating. People are curious how it is going to happen.

S. Moore said she and P. Morsillo will be writing something on affordable housing.

**G. Yuhás motioned to approve the report. P. Kirby 2<sup>nd</sup>. All in favor. Motion passed.**

**7. New Business/Scheduling of Future Agenda Items**

Attendee Alan Hanscom said he heard COVID statistics will first pass through political channels instead of directly through the CDC. If those numbers are tweaked in a way that's incorrect, how will we know if the numbers in Salem have been affected by that?

P. Kirby said our numbers come from us.

D. Greenbaum said it is not all data that goes to the federal government. It is more like hospitalizations and ICU beds, etc. The data we get on MA specifically comes from MA DPH and they report to the federal government.

P. Kirby said the data we have doesn't come back to us from the feds.

D. Greenbaum feels the Board shouldn't rescind the mask order, in particular after October, just because it's colder out and less people are out

and about. His concern would be what happens in March through June when people start to come back if we are not in a better place COVID-wise. Does the Board want to do it again or just leave it in place through the winter months and see what happens? We can put it on a future agenda for discussion and a vote.

J. Schiller said he applauds the Board and feels we have been very measured instead of reactionary and have been data driven. Our decisions have been based on information and science.

S. Moore worries the more changes we make about masks the more challenging the messaging may be. It may confuse and frustrate people. She feels like we should just leave it the way it is until the emergency order is lifted. In the colder weather we may actually like the masks.

D. Greenbaum feels like if we rescind it in December we are just going to be back at this question in March or April again. If we have a vaccine at the beginning of the new year, we might be in a position where some of these orders can be rescinded completely mid-year next year.

J. Schiller thanked the Board again for meeting in August.

Attendee Aayesha Siddiqui asked if, in addition to epidemiological data and analysis, does the Board also rely on a consultant that specializes in public health communication and social and behavioral change?

D. Greenbaum said we don't have a consultant that deals with those topics, but there is a consultant working with the City as a COVID Coordinator. She has a vast history and experience working in public health and dealing with different pandemics. She has a wide knowledge of HIV and AIDS. The Mayor has brought her on to coordinate what the City does going forward as we look at what could potentially be an increase in cases. Her name is Kim Waller and she is an asset.

## **MEETING ADJOURNED:**

**P. Kirby motioned to adjourn. S. Moore 2<sup>nd</sup>. All in favor. Motion passed.**

7:53pm

Respectfully submitted,

Maureen Davis  
Clerk of the Board

***Next regularly scheduled meeting is  
Tuesday, October 13, 2020 at 7:00pm  
Virtual Meeting Via Zoom***