



Town of Agawam

Board of Health

36 Main Street Agawam, Massachusetts 01001-1837

Tel. 413-786-0400 x 8207 Fax 413 726-9723

Gladys Fernandez-Largay, MD	- Chairman
Mary Jo Safford, NP	- Vice Chair
Mary Lee Bertrand, BSN	- Member
Michael Theroux	- Health Agent
Sherry Petrucci, RN	- Public Health Nurse
Lauren Kennedy	- Sanitarian
Beth Ceccarini	- Secretary

Meeting Minutes - February 9, 2022

Meeting held via ZOOM due to Novel Coronavirus

Attendance : All members present, Sanitarian Lauren Kennedy present

Documents distributed at meeting :

-Board of Health Agenda

Meeting Called to Order : 5:04 pm. Chairman Fernandez noted that based on COVID 19 active measures where meetings are concerned, meetings would continue to be virtual until April 1, 2022 by the Governor's Executive Order extending these measures.

Approval of minutes : A motion to approve the January 2022 BOH minutes was made by Vice Chair Safford and seconded by Member Bertrand. Motion to approve minutes: 3-0.

Citizen Speak Time : None called to get a BOH meeting invitation.

Old Business :

School Nurse Position : Health Agent Theroux told the members there is still no candidate for the School Nurse position. This position has been open since school started in September. Members again asked about upgrading the pay scale for these positions. They will feel it will continue to be a struggle to get qualified candidates with the expanding rolls they play in our schools. Nurse Sherry told the Board that the nursing contract is up in June so that could be one of the negotiation points. The position still needs to be classified as an RN or higher. The Board members stated again that with the DPH guidelines they still feel the positions would be better served in the School Department and not in the Health Department. They also noted the astronomical cost to the town for substitute nurses to fill in for nurse call outs could be financially problematic for Health Department.

Sanitarian Position : Agent Theroux introduced the Health Department's new Sanitarian, Lauren Kennedy. Member's welcomed her aboard. Lauren told the Board she is happy to be part of our team. She gave background information she attained a B. A. degree in Environmental Sciences in 2017 from Connecticut College. She also received an R.E.H.S. (registered environmental health specialist) accreditation as well. Her last employment was with the West Springfield Health Department. Since she has been here, she told them she has been doing food inspections and a couple housing inspections. Each board member introduced themselves to her and gave some background into their medical education. Agent Theroux stated that he was VERY PLEASED that after 13 months, our office is fully staffed again. He said it was great to have her in the Health Department and she already seems to be a productive asset helping with the work load.

New Business :

Testing for COVID 19:

Agent Theroux told the members the Governor plans on lifting the mask mandate on February 28 for the schools. He stated what he had heard so far is that the School Committee and the School Superintendent, all are ready for this to happen. He asked the members what they thought about the mask mandate lifting being medical professionals. They did question the timing of this specific mandate lifting. They do fear that after school vacation, the nurses will still be busy testing students who don't feel well. They wonder about the studies that show over the course of the 2 years that masks didn't seem to protect students in schools as well as they had hoped. They noted that sometime down the road, the number of cases just may warrant the use of masks again in the future. They also had concerns about how much testing will get done in those first two weeks after February vacation with the transmissions. All still worry about the immune compromised population as well as the older adult population. It was noted how nice it is to see the local level of government having some control with the mandates. Agent Theroux stated that the pharmacies have been able to restock their shelves with at home test kits so hopefully the public will have more access to local places to buy them. The State testing sites have also slowed with quicker wait times, ease in making daily appointments or same day appointments becoming available again.

State Guidelines / Contact Tracing: There will now be symptomatic testing in the schools. There is no longer the "test & stay" program at Robinson Park for the school district. Agent Theroux told the Board he would be able to keep all the tests from the program and disperse them to the nurses for their testing when needed. Our Health Department will still have tests for employees also so we should be good for the next few months. The State is giving us 4 testers to utilize in different schools to help with the symptomatic testing. Members asked Agent Theroux about the tri-city grant nurse working on contact tracing for our city. Agent Theroux told the members that the State has recently relaxed their contact tracing measures for cases. They have found the program is not going quite as far as it did in the beginning of the pandemic and people now are much less inclined to give out their information. Also there has been an uptick in the purchase of home testing kits and there is no way to get the contact tracing nurse that information. Almost all of the people who have tested positive using those kits have NOT called our office to report. Our overall COVID numbers are not going to be exact again, nor will we ever have an accurate count of cases in our town.

There was a meeting among the 3 towns in the grant program and it was decided to only contact trace for the age group of 65 and older who are at the greatest risk. Our school nurses are going to continue tracing for their school aged population. That will help with which students are supposed to be in school, quarantined, or isolated. The Bboard was happy to hear that at least some of the contact tracing will still be a viable tool to use for our nurses and the grant nurse. The towns all feel that people are much more aware of what they need to do should they contract COVID than they did at the beginning of the pandemic.

44 Ley Street: Agent Theroux told the Board he has gotten several calls on this property. He thinks it has been abandoned for about 8 or 9 years. There are probate issues for the surviving inheritors. He had gone over to the property to condemn it as the water and utilities to that property have been shut off. He notes that there is water in the house possibly from a pipe bursting. At this point, he saw the house walls were covered with mold as well as the ceilings crumbling on the inside. He noted it would be a while before all the proper owners can get together and decide what to do with the declining property. He has been in touch with our Law Department to see if the process can be moved along with the probate court judge. The house does have a condemnation order on it.

School Cafeteria Inspections : For the last few years, Health Agent Auer and now current Agent Theroux have had issues getting the school kitchens update with the basics needs that the law requires. Some of the kitchens have not been renovated or upgraded in the past 30 plus years. He has taken up the mantle again and approached the Building Maintenance Director and the School Superintendent to see if they can move this progress along. The noted there was a new Food Service Director whom he has been in touch with. She told H A that she's not sure who is responsible for actually doing the work for kitchen upgrades as well as whose budget the money will come from. Michael told her there are some recurring violations that need to be taken care of that she could work on while they wait for that answer. Board members asked HA if the School Committee gets a copy of his inspection findings. He told them as after his inspections, copies usually go to the Food Service Director. She in turn gives copies to her supervisor who is the Assistant Superintendent and Business Manager, Rob Clickstein. He is not sure where they go from there.

Food Inspections : Sanitarian Lauren Kennedy told the Board that she has done about 35 inspections. Inspections range from gas stations, quick marts to larger restaurants. She is trying to do a few each day as we have been behind due to the pandemic and staffing issues over the last year. She noted that overall the inspection reports have been good and most businesses are in compliance.

School Nurse Activities : Nurse Sherry told the Board there have been lots of staff call outs over the last few months. She also stated the nurses seem to have done all they could in terms of the COVID testing for staff and students. Now that the “Test & Stay” program has been eliminated, there were 4 people sent by the State to do in-house symptomatic testing at the schools. She is hoping those testers will be utilized throughout the entire school district. She noted the number of COVID cases with school aged children has been dropping each week. The nurses are finally able to get a bit of breathing time and get more of their School Nursing work done other than the continual testing that has been done since the Christmas break. Nurse Sherry is working on helping the nurses find times to do their hearing and vision screenings before the school year is over.

Public Health Nurse : Nurse Sherry told the Board she has gotten her standing orders signed off for 2022 by the physician. She is now in the middle of closing all of the COVID cases from the end of November to the beginning of February. She has just returned from medical leave Monday and has been out since before Thanksgiving. She noted there were 3,069 probable cases that had come in on the Maven system over that time period. One of the grant nurses did acknowledge quite a few of the cases, but Nurse Sherry does not know how much of the contact tracing was actually done.

She did relay to the Board that the Superintendent wanted to know the rough number of the student population vaccination rates. Each School Nurse would have to utilize the ‘SNAP’ program to see their school’s breakdown of the vaccination numbers. Nurse Sherry said initially there were about 800 students but it’s possible that up to 900 students could be vaccinated. The Nurses did find that in that particular program there were several places within the program that specific information could be placed. The program could also break down the different brands of vaccines such as Moderna, Pfizer or Johnson & Johnson, which would take longer to track individually. She noted that when she looked for cases today, there was only 1 case for a child under two years old and 6 adults. She noted the numbers are much lower than they were weeks ago. She noted they numbers are steadily dropping in Agawam. The Board members were pleased to hear that information. They also welcomed Sherry back from her medical leave, noting she was missed.

Nurse Sherry has ordered her flu vaccines for the fall of 2022.

Adjourned: Motion to adjourn was made by Vice Chairman Safford seconded by Member Bertrand. With a vote of 3-0, the meeting adjourned at 5:52 p.m.

BOH/bc