

## BOARD OF HEALTH MEETING

Tuesday January 4, 2022 – 6:00 PM

Richmond Town Hall – 1259 State Road, Richmond, MA 01254

**PRESENT:** Peter Cohen, Chair; Anthony Fisher; Fred Schubert; Louise Maron; Tony Segal (via cell phone); Valerie Bird, Berkshire Alliance; Phyllis LeBeau, Recording Secretary; Claudia Ryan, Admin. Assist.; Emilie Jarrett, R.N.

Peter called the meeting to order at 5:00 and placed a call to Tony so that he could attend the meeting via cell phone.

**Review and Approve the Minutes of the December 7, 2021 meeting:** A motion to approve the minutes was made by Andy and seconded by Tony. The motion was adopted by unanimous vote with one abstention (Fred was not present at that meeting).

**Mass Notify Program:** (See attached) The QR Code provided can be scanned into an I-Phone to provide a link to information about possible exposure to COVID. Val noted that smart phones probably already have that app, but it did not seem possible to scan it to an Android phone.

Go to “Settings” scroll down to “Emergency SOS.” Exposure notification should appear under that heading.

Peter was more concerned with letting the general public know about this app. It was suggested that a notice be placed in the town e-newsletter. Phyllis will seek approval to do that from Danielle Fillio, Town Administrator.

**Hilltop Orchards Fire:** A fire at Hilltop Orchards at Christmas resulted in extensive damage to the roof and the building. Val will return on Friday to inspect the food preparation and retail areas, which have been professionally cleaned. She will determine whether they can open those two areas and resume business.

**Drug-User Health Services Program Letter:** Peter inquired about the letter that the Service requested be signed by the Board of Health Chair. Phyllis noted that she had prepared the letter on Board of Health stationery and sent it to Peter for signature. As he had apparently not received it, she will send it again.

**EPA Private Well Testing Program Update:** It has been determined that the Cone Hill Road dump site has been leaking “forever chemicals” into surrounding wells on Cone Hill and Furnace Roads. Mr. Paul Mason approached the Town some time ago, requesting that his well be tested as it had been neglected in the first round of testing at the time the dump was capped. The testing has been done and Mr. Mason has been presented with a lengthy report of the results. This BOH is unaware of the meaning of that report and is assuming that Mr. Mason will have

discussed it with the EPA and that any serious negative findings would prompt him to come back to the Board of Health. Peter will try to contact Mr. Mason and determine what the report said.

Post cards have now been sent to all homeowners whose wells may be involved, offering to provide a test kit for samples to be tested for the presence of PFAC in the water. If any well tests with over 10 parts, the State will get involved, but mitigation of that contamination is up to the property owner. Homeowners must sign up for the program in order to participate.

Peter reported that he plans to speak with Steve Traver, Fire Chief, to determine if the Fire Department had conducted any practices with foam.

**Vaccination Policy for Richmond Employees:** Peter asked if anything ever came out of the Vaccination Policy that the Board of Selectmen adopted with a 2-1 vote. Andy said he has not heard anything further about it or if any way has been established to enforce the policy. Andy asked whether any information about the policy has been sent to the residents of the Town or whether any announcement had been made in the newsletter.

Claudia noted that the minutes of the meeting in which the policy was adopted have been posted on the website and available to the public. Andy thought the Selectmen should be more pro-active in disseminating the information about the policy. He suggested printing the entire policy in the newsletter so that all Richmond Boards and Committees will see that it has been determined in that policy that it is up to the Chair of each Board or Committee to assess their members to determine that all are vaccinated. Andy will send the text of the policy to Phyllis who will ask Danielle if it can be printed in the next Newsletter.

#### **Massachusetts Department of Public Health:**

**Rules regarding Masking:** (See attached)

**Discussion – Whether to meet in Person or via Zoom:** Peter asked for a consensus of the members of the Committee whether to meet in person next month. A discussion ensued that included a reminder from Emilie that a lot of the new cases are in people who were fully vaccinated. It's the new Omicron variant that's being seen. Dr. Fauci said the DPH wants to prevent severe illnesses and hospitalizations, more urgently than preventing infection. She suggested that it would be safe to meet in person so long as all attendees are not sick and have not been exposed to the virus. The Omnicron variant is moving very quickly – people are getting sick within 24-48 hours after exposure, which is why the numbers are exploding. The issues are that the virus is widespread, and people often have no idea where they got infected. That would be a reason to consider meeting via Zoom.

On the DPH call today they indicated that people who had been infected with the Delta variant are getting sick with the Omnicron variant within 90 days. In the past, there was a 90-day period after being sick when you had antibodies to fight a second infection. Dr. Katie Brown has seen reinfections happening quickly with people who have recovered from the Delta and are

getting sick with the Omicron, which might change things. Peter said it was his understanding that the difference between the Delta and Omicron variants is that Omicron does not affect the lungs, which is what puts people in the hospital and on ventilators. For those who are vaccinated and boosted, symptoms will be very mild.

**MPHA Webinar-January 12<sup>th</sup>:** Peter asked if anyone had attended the webinar. A discussion elicited the fact that the MPHA holds numerous webinars on various issues. It was advised that Peter determine if the topic of any upcoming webinar was of value or interest. If so, it would be worthwhile to sign in. Otherwise, it can be ignored.

### **Unanticipated Topics:**

**Alliance Report:** Val submitted her report, which is attached here. Fred noted that the entry for 462 East Rd. concerns his property. Plans are in the hands of Foresight to replace the septic tank as the house is on the market and the existing septic system is 40 years old and parts have eroded over time and need to be replaced. Fred will be moving in the near future and will, therefore, have to resign his seat on the Board.

Val noted that she needs to reinspect 60 Patten Road which has had two 1,500-gallon tanks installed instead of one 2,500-gallon. One tank is a single compartment, the second is a double compartment for a property identified as a seven-bedroom home now being sold as a second home. A drainage problem is being corrected and Val will reinspect.

**Report from Emilie Jarrett, R.N.** (See attached July-December 2021 Report) Emilie has not seen any influenza cases so far and has administered 394 flu shots in Richmond. She did big clinics in the school for students, families and staff.

COVID vaccination for ages 5-11 years were approved in November. She took part in that process through the Berkshire Vaccination Collaborative and participated in a lot of the Elementary School clinics. She held two clinics in Richmond, which were very successful, vaccinating 112 children in the first and 107 in the second clinic. By the end of December, Emilie has a 53% vaccination rate for that population.

As the Omicron variant hit and the demand for booster shots rapidly escalated, she participated in the Berkshire Community College Booster Clinic on December 18<sup>th</sup> at which over one-thousand people were treated either with boosters or children newly eligible for the vaccine. Another clinic will be open on January 8<sup>th</sup> for vaccinations and booster shots.

A discussion of the possibility of a fourth vaccine dose, which has not been approved in this country.

COVID-19 report for Richmond: October – 5 cases, November – 4 cases, December – 20 cases, out of which 16 hit on December 19<sup>th</sup> through today. Omicron is here and spreading rapidly though most people are experiencing very mild symptoms.

New Isolation and Quarantine Guidelines (see attached) Isolation for five days from first symptoms. Symptoms could include body aches, runny nose, sore throat, fatigue, abdominal pain, diarrhea, loss of smell and taste, etc. Anyone experiencing any of those symptoms or other indications of feeling ill should get tested. If a positive test is found on someone with no symptoms, the date of the test will be Day 0.

If a person has had both doses and a booster or a second dose within the past six months, they do not need to quarantine. If the vaccine was administered outside of that timeline, you need to quarantine for five days and then test on day five.

For 2021 – a total of 59 COVID cases in Richmond. Including cases from the beginning of the Pandemic, brings the total to 81. There were 22 cases in 2020, which does not include all the positive home tests that people are taking that are not reported. Deaths are reported for Berkshire County on Mass.gov and are not broken down by town.

There is an opportunity for towns to purchase quality, low-cost home-test kits for distribution to residents. Emilie emailed that information to Danielle to advise her of the program. Peter said that he has heard that the Berkshire Alliance had a plan to purchase test kits and wanted each town to let them know what their needs would be. But Laura Kittross, Public Health Program Manager at the Alliance, emailed today with concerns about the availability. Danielle has been contacting suppliers to negotiate a purchase.

The school has enough masks for the faculty for one-time usage for two months but are down to five or six test kits for the faculty and would like to get more. A discussion ensued of the difficulty of obtaining masks or test kits from any source and whether the Board of Health would be able to purchase these items out of their budget. Emilie pointed out that emergency money would be available for that, which is what Danielle is pursuing. Claudia will call Great Barrington to see if they have masks that they could let us have.

Emilie announced that she will be retiring in June of 2022 and asked whether the Public Health Nursing Role would go to the Alliance. It will. She suggested, then, that the Board meet with the Alliance and find out what the cost will be when they take over Emilie's role in the next fiscal year so that Danielle can create a line item in the budget.

Fred will craft a draft budget in Excel and send it to Peter for submission to Danielle. Peter will let Fred know what the cost will be.

There was a discussion of some of the less recognizable illnesses included in Emilie's report – mostly food-borne illnesses which she sees especially from summer picnics, etc. It is particularly important to monitor its occurrence among food-handlers to keep them from spreading.

There being no further business before the Board, Andy moved that the meeting be adjourned. The motion was seconded by Fred and carried by unanimous vote.

The next meeting of the Board will be on Tuesday February 1, 2022.