

East Longmeadow Board of Health Agenda

Thursday, August 26, 2021; 6:30p.m. at East Longmeadow - Zoom

Board of Health Members Present: Karen Robitaille, R.N. Dr. Sarah Perez McAdoo and Christine Johnston, MPH

Health Department Staff Present: Aimee Petrosky and Alix Shipman

Visitor: Kathryn Dugan

Topic	Discussion/Action Taken/Decision Made
Call to order and Chair Announcements	Meeting called to order by Chair, Sarah Perez McAdoo at 6:30 p.m.
Approve minutes of previous meetings: July 14, 2021	Motion to approve minutes was made by Karen Robitaille and seconded by Christine Johnston. Motion passed 3-0.
Public Comment	Kathryn Dugan tells the board she had emailed many of them before the department of secondary education had changed their decision on masking. She requests the board mandate indoor masking in town. It feels like the right thing to do in the community and our neighbors in Longmeadow implemented a mask mandate on the 17th.
New Business	
Old Business	
Covid-19 Update	Aimee shares with the board that the Covid-19 numbers across the state have been climbing due to the Delta variant and East Longmeadow is not immune to that climb. For the month of August, we are just under 100 cases alone. In the last 14 days, East Longmeadow reported 68 positive cases. The last time we were reporting around 65 cases was back in April. We are currently at 4.85% for our percent positivity reported by today by DPH and the last time we anywhere close to that was also around April. The percent positivity is completely dependent on the amount of tests given that week. They take the amount of positives and divide it by the total number of tests given and that's how you get your percent positivity. This week we had about 1,400 tests done. Aimee says she thinks that is something that is going really well in East Longmeadow. The residents are getting tested and by doing that, they can do what they can to protect those around them. The entire month of July we had just about 15 cases and this month we're at just about 100, 98 cases. We're seeing exponential increases, which we can pretty accurately say is due to the new Delta variant. As of today, the CDC says 98% of all cases in the country are the Delta variant, which is up from event two weeks ago when it was at 85%. There is not any age demographic that stands out and is pretty even across all demographics. We have two or three family clusters, but there is nothing Aimee can find to account for the large number of cases other than the new variant. Our vaccination rates have also really plateaued. As of today, 59% of our eligible population is fully vaccinated and we've been in that range since June. We do know the Delta variant is breaking through the vaccine, but we also know that less than 1% of cases in those

vaccinated end up hospitalized. Therefore, we know the vaccine is keeping people out of the hospital and from dying.

One of the pieces provided in the packet for tonight's meeting is a draft mask mandate for the board to discuss. Karen asks Aimee if she could discuss the breakdown of vaccination rates among age groups. Aimee says a lot of the schools focus was on the pediatric vaccination rates, but we all live in a community together and cross borders frequently, so it's not just about one age demographic. Fully vaccinated 12 to 15 years old is 52%, 16 to 19 years old is 69%, 20 to 29 years old is 67%, 30 to 49 years old is 61%, 50 to 64 years old is 71%, 65 to 74 years old is 84% and 75+ years old is 67% for a total of 59% on average. Sarah asks what the current mitigation strategies now are. Aimee says beyond vaccinations, at least in the municipal buildings, we are having unvaccinated people who are coming in are required to wear masks. We're doing a lot of education and community outreach through Facebook and our website. We have a lot of questions coming in from businesses about what next steps are when they have positive cases to help keep their staff safe. There is no obligation for them to share that information, but if they would like our help and support, we are more than happy to do that. Daycares, camps and restaurants have called us and it's great to see they are asking for our support. Karen says as of yesterday, all our K-12 schools and indoor sports will be masked according to DESE's order at least until October 1, 2021.

Sarah asks if there is an opportunity in our town to support additional vaccination efforts, such as the previous vaccination clinics we held. We do not want to be in a position where we have to continuously wear a mask, but we cannot achieve that until our vaccination rates increase. Back in February of 2020, you have masks being required for the entire school year when the positivity rate was around 4/4.5%. Then you have mask mandates being lifted back in May when the percent positivity was around less than 1 percent. Aimee says the mask ordinance was lifted on May 29, 2021 and our percent positivity was at 0.87% at that time. Sarah says she's struggling with the direction we're going in now with the data that's been presented, is supporting multiple mitigation strategies to the highest level to support our community to continue to function. In addition to the mandate, what else can we do and make it easy to protect our community and support those doing the right thing. Karen says vaccines are readily available and are readily available at our two pharmacies in town. You don't even need an appointment and both CVS and Walgreens have extended ours. Sarah asks if we could share the one pager from DPH on all the different ways you can get vaccinated. Aimee says there's no longer any restrictions for the at home vaccination program and is open to any Massachusetts residents. The same program will come with a bus to any business and offers all the different vaccines available.

Sarah asks if there are ways to modify the mask mandates to make it easy for everyone and not so challenging. Karen says there are mask breaks embedded in DESE's mask mandate for the schools and there's also a lot of great graphics coming out of DPH on how to adapt masks for children and what makes a good fitting mask. She says providing masks at certain points can be very effective, especially if someone comes in without a mask. She's not sure what type of funding we have to go to some of our businesses to provide masks at the door. Aimee says that's one of the things we do at the Town Hall, Library and Council on Aging. We have free masks available at each department for people who want to take one. We still have masks at the Health Department available and will look at what left over Covid funds the department has to maybe help support some of our area businesses who need help with providing masks.

Sarah says one of things she's taking into consideration for the mask mandate is since we're in a different stage of Covid, in order for something to be successful, we need leadership support. She doesn't know if it's possible to meet with our leadership after school, with our Town Council or Town manager to discuss this topic. Karen seconds what Sarah is saying. Health care professionals are burnt out and leaving their profession at historic rates. The same goes with Public Health professionals who want this to end as much as the rest of everyone else. She feels very strongly this is the direction we need to go in and believes this is what is necessary to protect her community. Karen says we need the leadership in our town to step up and support us. Christine says both Sarah and Karen said it wonderfully. We're all tired and parents are tired and don't want to see their kids go back to remote learning. Having community leadership behind us is extremely important.

Karen requests that in the part of the mandate that lists indoor places such as restaurants, that it also includes schools in section 2 under definition of public space. Sarah asks if Aimee could go over the enforcement aspect of the mandate. Aimee says our department has always moved towards education and warnings before we move anywhere near fines. For the legality of such an order, there does need to be a section on enforcement. The way it's written says the indoor space has the obligation to enforce this requirement, so it's really up to each individual business. There are communities who have done this weeks or months ahead of us and Aimee reached out to a larger community to know what type of feedback they were receiving from their businesses after implementing a mask mandate so we could be prepared based on the lessons learned from another community. The Health Director from the community said overwhelmingly, the calls they were receiving were of gratitude. These businesses want to protect their employees and feel like if they do it on their own, they will lose customers. It does state that if there's no penalty for what they are doing under Mass General Law, they will be punished of up to a fine of no more than \$1,000.00. That's kind of typical code language and that's what most public health code says. Clearly, we would never start with a \$1,000 fine and we typically start in the \$25 range, but we would need to do a lot of education before moving to a fine. We don't want to fine and at the end of the day, we really want to encourage mask usage. Sarah says that is what she wanted to hear regarding the process behind enforcing the mandate.

Christine says we had a lot of guidance from the State before the previous mask mandate was removed about restaurants and bars about removing a mask to eat or drink and we should think about some actual guidance for those establishments. What does that mean and when are people allowed to remove their mask in a bar or restaurant. Aimee says she thought we should follow the most recent guidance from the state, which was unless you were at your seat; your mask should be on. Employees should wear masks at all times. Aimee says she can amend it to include those specifics. Karen asks Christine if she wanted the clarification in the order or in a separate guidance. Christine says she's fine with either. She would just hate to turn this order over and have local establishments calling the Health Department for clarification. Aimee says we can do one of two things. We have a letter drafted to our food service establishments that includes a letter on if this passes and signage they can use at their establishment and send to everyone if it's passed tomorrow. We can add that delineation to the email or we can clarify it in this document. Sarah says adding an asterisk that there is additional information on this guidance will be sufficient. Karen asks if there are any other spaces that need additional guidance. Aimee says, this is a document we can amend. As people call and question

	<p>what certain aspects of it mean, we can revise it to suit the needs of businesses. At the next meeting, we can discuss the exit ramp and look at what metrics we want to meet for the mask mandate to end. Sarah says we can monitor and then asses lifting the mandate.</p> <p>Motion to approve this order Covid-19 mandatory policies and procedures for wearing of masks or other face coverings in public indoor spaces in the Town of East Longmeadow with the amendments that we talked about just now was made by Karen Robitaille and seconded by Christine Johnston. Motion passed 3-0.</p>
Annual Bike Rodeo	<p>Aimee says this event was started because of a resident, Christina Uss, coming to us and requesting we do something to provide information on bike safety, especially the youth. Last year we had 150 participants attend. This year, Mary McNally approved us to use some of our community funds we get from Republic to purchase bike helmets again for anyone participating. This year we are buying the helmets from Family Bike who supported this event each year at a significant event. They are really nice, high tech helmets that adjust from the back that will fit kids of all ages. In addition to bike safety, we will have some cool arts and crafts, we'll be raffling off a book and the Police Department will be there teaching the kids the rules of the roads and doing some off-roading. We're really excited for this event. It will be held on September 25th at the High School from 9am-12pm.</p>
Public Health Nurse	<p>We hired a nurse for 3-5 hours a week. She just started a few weeks ago and right now is getting trained in Maven. She is sending the cases to the CTC and starting next week, she will take one case a week and follow it from start to finish. She has agreed to do community program with us with her skill set including; diabetes, tobacco cessation, blood pressure checks, and blood sugar checks. The Council on Aging used to have a full time nurse to offer services to our seniors, but two years ago they removed that position. Our hope is that we can collaborate with the Council on Aging and provide some of these services and figure out what other services we need. The health needs assessment resumes in September and will help us get some of that data.</p>

Motion to adjourn made by Karen Robitaille and seconded by Christine Johnston at 7:41 p.m. **Motion passed 3-0.**

This listing is reasonably anticipated by the Chair to be discussed at the meeting. Not all items listed may in fact be discussed and other items not listed may also be brought up for discussion to the extent permitted by law.

Christine Johnston 11/2/2021
Christine Johnston, Secretary