

East Longmeadow Board of Health Agenda

Tuesday, November 2nd, 2021; 6:30p.m. at East Longmeadow - Zoom

Board of Health Members Present: Christine Johnston, MPH, Dr. Kathryn Jobbins, DO, MS, FACP, and Rebecca Torcia, RN,BSN

Health Department Staff Present: Alix Roncarati, MPH

Visitor: Mary E. McNally, Justin McCarthy, Alex Kogan, Dr. William Bazin, Lynn Vanderleeden, and Rebecca Cobos

Topic	Discussion/Action Taken/Decision Made
Call to order and Chair Announcements	Meeting called to order by Chair, Christine Johnston at 6:30 p.m.
Approve minutes of previous meetings: August 26, 2021	Motion to approve minutes as written from the August 26 th meeting was made by Christine Johnston out of necessity. Motion passed 1-0. Dr. Kathryn Jobbins and Rebecca Torcia abstained.
Public Comment	<p>Attorney Justin McCarthy spoke in favor of ending the mask mandate and filed a petition (received 222 signatures) with town council to force a vote to end the mandate stating is a burden on businesses and community in favor of ending the mandate. The petition was forwarded to Christine.</p> <p>Alex Kogan spoke in favor of ending the mask mandate.</p> <p>Dr. William Bazin, local chiropractor, spoke in favor of ending mask mandate.</p> <p>Lynn Vanderleeden spoke in agreement with Attorney Justin McCarthy, Alex Kogan, and Dr. William Bazin.</p> <p>Rebecca Cobos spoke in support of Attorney Justin McCarthy.</p>
New Business	
Board Reorganization	<p>Motion to appoint Christine Johnston as the chair made by Dr. Kathryn Jobbins and seconded by Rebecca Torcia. Motion passed 3-0.</p> <p>Motion to appoint Dr. Kathryn Jobbins to be the vice-chair made by Christine Johnston and seconded by Rebecca Torcia. Motion passed 3-0.</p> <p>Motion to appoint Rebecca Torcia to be the secretary made by Christine Johnston and seconded by Dr. Kathryn Jobbins. Motion passed 3-0.</p>
Old Business	

Covid-19 Update: Including by not limited to:

- a. Cases
- b. Vaccination Rates
- c. Mask Mandate - **Vote**

Alix discussed the more extensive spreadsheet of case numbers and percentage of positivity numbers as well as DESE (Department of Elementary and Secondary Education) extending the mask mandate until January 15, 2021. She stated the CDC met today to recommend Pfizer to approve the vaccine for 5–11-year-olds and the CDC voted to approve this and awaiting a sign off. The FDA had met 2 days prior to approve. A review of the cases by Alix showed that in August cases were at 113, Sept. 116 and October 83 with a further breakdown showing 31% of cases ages 0-11, 17% ages 26-37, 18.5% ages 38-41, 5% ages 12-25, 8.6% ages 50-61, 13.5% ages 62-73 and 6% ages 74 and older. The bulk of cases being among the 0-11 age group, which are all unvaccinated. The transmission is not really seen in schools however, children are coming home positive, and all members of household are testing positive and we're seeing family clusters of infections.

Alix continued to state that the percentage of positivity among neighboring towns/cities as of October 28, 2021 for Springfield was 2.7%, West Springfield was 2.93%, and Longmeadow was 1.78%. EL percentage of positivity as of October 28th slighter higher at 3.16% and was also higher than previous week of October 21st when it was reported to be 2.86%. Christine clarified that percentage of positivity is percentage of all tests reported positive of all people getting tested regardless of the reason. Dr. Jobbins added that this is over a 14-day period and doesn't represent home tests. Christine added that she saw an uptick with numbers for the age group 12-19 at her place of work. Dr. Jobbins noted that she has a concern that it is positive however, from last month to this month didn't significantly increase in vaccine status as need to encourage people to get both doses of vaccine to be fully vaccinated and only showing received first dose.

Christine asked Alix if seeing mostly household clusters, which she stated that with the Delta variant, this is the pattern we are seeing. Dr. Jobbins relayed Baystate numbers stating over last few weeks have flattened at currently 6 people in ICU and 35 hospitalized. The down trending has been slower since last wave due to increase rate of transmission among family members. Last week there were 3192 breakthrough cases of vaccinated individuals however many mild symptoms and very few hospitalized in the state of Massachusetts. Alix stated from August through the end of October that in EL 37% breakthrough cases from fully vaccinated, however, the booster is now approved for ages 18 and older with specific conditions (immunocompromised and those living in assisted living) and work in high risk occupations such as teachers. Booster shots for Moderna are offered at CVS and Walgreens offers Moderna and Pfizer.

Christine added that at the college level, they are seeing almost no transmission as they have very high vaccine rate among students and typically students become infected when go home and then return to campus. Dr. Jobbins asked if there was current data available showing an increase in vaccination rates over last few months and Alix stated are up a bit but did plateau in June. Dr. Jobbins asked if a vaccination clinic was done for kids 12 and older and Alix stated was done by school nurse at end of school year in June. Christine stated that DESE does have the authority over schools with mask mandate and is extended through January 15, 2022. Individual schools and district can petition the mandate if 80% of the students and staff are fully vaccinated. Alix stated Gordon Smith the superintendent has asked staff to voluntarily show proof of their vaccination status but it has not been required. Dr. Jobbins asked if another clinic would be scheduled due to the vaccine being approved for 5-11 age group and pediatrician won't have access and minimal access by pharmacies. By having a clinic, there would be a central access within the. Also, people tend to trust

someone they know such as a provider, school nurse and more likely to receive vaccine from a trusted health professional.

Alix said other towns are rescinding their mask mandates, such as Springfield effective November 1st, W. Springfield a few weeks ago at request of the mayor and Longmeadow rescinded theirs on October 26th. Christine stated if East Longmeadow lifted the mandate that schools are still under DESE and it will not affect them. Residents would continue to wear masks as do in health care setting, buses and local businesses have the right to ask individuals to wear a mask if mandate is lifted. Dr. Jobbins made a point to state that the other towns and city lifting the mandate is an advisory and if not vaccinated to continue to wear a mask. She continued that masking does protect against Covid and helps protect against getting the flu. She states per recent research last month that surgical mask does protect against Covid and individuals should wear a mask if they don't feel well. Dr. Jobbins continued to state that with winter coming and more people in doors as well, if Covid rates increase, re instituting a mask mandate can be an option. Christine states that businesses may want to consider an advisory as well. Dr, Jobbins states people may want to consider wearing a mask when around large groups such as restaurant, grocery store or children unvaccinated as well as people compromised to protect them. Alix stated she can write up language similar to Longmeadow advisory. Alix states will write up the advisory and send for approval by board.

Christine Johnston made a motion to rescind the mask mandate in East Longmeadow for indoor public places. Dr, Kathryn Jobbins second the motion. **Motion passed 3-0.**

Christine Johnston made a motion to implement a mask advisory recommendation for all unvaccinated individuals to continue to wear a mask indoors and individuals at high risk for Covid to wear a mask in doors. Dr. Kathryn Jobbins second the motion. **Motion passed 3-0.**

Christine expressed her gratitude to the community for their participation in the health of the community as well as everyone input on both sides of issue of masking. She also noted that if people want to continue to wear a mask in public places, they are welcome and will be supported. Next meeting scheduled for Thursday November 18th at 6pm. This will be an executive session.

Motion to adjourn made by Christine Johnston and seconded by Dr. Kathryn Jobbins at 7:30 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.

Rebecca Torcia 11/18/2021
Rebecca Torcia, Secretary