



## TOWN OF SHREWSBURY

Richard D. Carney Municipal Office Building  
100 Maple Avenue, Shrewsbury, Massachusetts 05145

Date: February 15, 2022  
To: Board of Health  
From: Kerry Stockwell, Principal Department Assistant  
Re: Board of Health Meeting Minutes – VIA REMOTE PARTICIPATION

ATTENDANCE: Stephen Vigeant, Dr. George Abraham, and Jennie Fishman

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Central MA Regional Public Health Alliance (CMRPHA):  
Karyn Clark, Director  
Dr. Michael Hirsh, Medical Director  
Micah Blondeau, Regional Environmental Health Specialist  
Julie VanArsdalen, Regional Environmental Health Coordinator

Shrewsbury Public Schools:  
Dr. Joseph Sawyer, Superintendent  
Jon Wensky, School Committee Chairman  
Dr. Dale Magee, School Committee Member

Town Manager's Office:  
Kristen Las, Assistant Town Manager

And others

Confirming Member Access: Each vote taken in this meeting will be conducted by a roll call vote.

Anticipated Speakers on the Agenda: Karyn Clark and Dr. Michael Hirsh – were present and could hear.

- 1. Call to order.** The meeting was called to order at 4:33 p.m. by Stephen Vigeant.
- 2. Review and approval of Minutes from the January 14, 2022 Board of Health meeting.**  
On a motion made by Dr. Abraham and seconded by Jennie Fishman and on a roll call vote; Jennie Fishman, aye; Dr. George Abraham, aye; and Stephen Vigeant, aye, the Board of Health voted to approve the Minutes from the January 14, 2022 Board of Health meeting. Unanimously approved 3 – 0.
- 3. Review and Act on rescinding and making an effective date for the Executive Order to require face coverings in all indoor private common spaces in the workplace and indoor private spaces open to the public.**

Dr. Michael Hirsh, Medical Director for the City of Worcester walked the Board through a COVID-19 Mitigation Change Proposal PowerPoint presentation. A similar proposal was submitted to the City of Worcester. In October of 2021, the City of Worcester passed an Executive Order to require face coverings in all indoor private common and private spaces open to the public. Soon after, the Town of Shrewsbury followed suit.

The MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) will not renew the state mask requirement after February 28, 2022. The mask requirement will be lifted statewide. The Diocesan and Charter Schools will abide by the DESE guidelines. As of today, the MA Department of Public Health (MDPH) came out with updated mask guidelines.

The reasons for making the recommendation to lift the indoor mask mandate in the City of Worcester

effective February 18, 2022 for all citizens include the following considerations: COVID-19 case numbers have dropped in both Europe and in South Africa which had experienced the Omicron variant before the United States. Another metric taken into consideration are the Blackstone Area Wastewater studies that confirmed the trend is real and not as a result of home testing diminishing the positivity rate. Concerns of mental health amongst the residents has been felt by the mask mandate.

Specific case numbers in Shrewsbury were discussed. The seven (7) day average continues to fall and is less than half of what it was last week. Both St. Vincent's Hospital (down by sixty seven 67%) and UMass Memorial (down by fifty 50%) have reported that their cases numbers dropped the week of February 4, 2022. Shrewsbury's vaccination rate is very good. The booster shot rate is high but not as high as what we would like it to be.

Many business owners have pointed out that patrons are seeking out entertainment, dining and retail shopping in neighboring communities because there isn't a mask mandate. As such, it has hurt an already hurting business community.

School vacation week is approaching and this will be a good amount of time to see if there is a change in our outlook.

New variants will continue to emerge. Even if the Board chooses to rescind the Order, mask-wearing will still be encouraged. As a society, we should allow for easy mask-wearing without the feeling of being an outcast. We will all be very vigilant moving forward. One key factor is to get more needles in arms. Would like to see physicians administer vaccinations and booster shots in their offices.

Dr. Hirsh thanked everyone for the opportunity to present and Kerry Stockwell will make his presentation available to the public.

Steve Vigeant asked the Board if they had any questions.

Question: Will there be any tracking and data around COVID-19 long-haulers?

Answer: Dr. Hirsh and Karyn Clark have been discussing options that they might have. The State will be creating a database. There is a new long-hauler clinic located at Brigham and Women's; however, there is a five (5) month wait list. This is something that will need to be tracked. Most likely can work with the Prevention Research Center at UMass Memorial Hospital. Thank you for bringing up this topic. It's a great point and it will be tracked in some fashion.

At this time, Dr. Abraham acknowledged all of Dr. Hirsh and Karyn Clark's work and is extremely grateful. He was comfortable with rescinding the indoor mask mandate to be effective February 18, 2022. He has concerns around the mask mandate in the schools as there are trends around school vacation weeks.

On a motion made by Dr. Abraham and seconded by Jennie Fishman and on a roll call vote; Jennie Fishman, aye; Dr. George Abraham, aye; and Stephen Vigeant, aye, the Board of Health voted to rescind the Executive Order to require face coverings in all indoor private common spaces in the workplace and indoor private spaces open to the public with effective date of February 18, 2022. Unanimously approved 3 – 0.

**4. Review and Act on rescinding and making an effective date for the Executive Order to require face coverings in all schools (public, private, parochial and charter) K-12.**

Dr. Abraham indicated that he would like to see the COVID-19 metrics following the February school vacation on March 4, 2022 before deciding on lifting the school mask mandate. On a motion made by Dr. Abraham and seconded by Jennie Fishman, the Board voted to revisit this Order after the February school vacation and on a roll call vote, Jennie Fishman, aye; Dr. Abraham, aye; and Steve Vigeant, aye. Unanimously approved 3-0.

**5. Review and Discuss the Executive Order to require employers to report COVID-19 cases in the workplace.**

It was Karyn Clark's recommendation that this Order remain in place for the time being.

Steve Vigeant asked the Board if there were any questions.

Question: Is there a timeframe?

Answer: Dr. Hirsh felt that the Order should remain in place for at least another month. The Face Covering Order for Indoor Public Spaces will be rescinded effective February 18, 2022. Somewhere around the middle of March, would be the timeframe to review this Order again.

Dr. Abraham was in support of employers continuing to report COVID-19 cases in the workplace in an effort to monitor trends.

On a motion made by Dr. Abraham and seconded by Jennie Fishman and on a roll call vote; Dr. Abraham, aye; Jennie Fishman, aye; and Stephen Vigeant, aye, the Board of Health voted to keep the Executive Order to require employers to report COVID-19 cases in the workplace in effect. Unanimously approved 3 – 0.

6. **Review meeting schedule.** The next scheduled Board of Health meeting will be held on Friday, March 4, 2022 at 8:00 a.m. via Remote Participation.
7. **Adjourn.** Dr. Abraham made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 4:57 p.m., seconded by Jennie Fishman ( thank you for all the hard work!) and on a roll call vote; Jennie Fishman, aye; Dr. Abraham, aye; and Stephen Vigeant, aye. Unanimously approved 3– 0.

Correspondence:

- Board of Health Meeting Minutes – January 14, 2022