



**TOWN OF SHREWSBURY**  
Richard D. Carney Municipal Office Building  
100 Maple Avenue, Shrewsbury, Massachusetts 05145

Date: March 4, 2022  
To: Board of Health  
From: Kerry Stockwell, Principal Department Assistant  
Re: Board of Health Meeting Minutes – IN-PERSON

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

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Central MA Regional Public Health Alliance (CMRPHA):  
Karyn Clark, Director  
Micah Blondeau, Regional Environmental Health Specialist

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

Shrewsbury Public Schools:  
Dr. Joseph Sawyer, Superintendent  
Patrick Collins, Assistant Superintendent of Operations and Finance  
Jon Wensky, School Committee Chairman

Public Attendees:  
Colleen Powers – 59 Bumble Bee Circle, Shrewsbury, MA  
Corinne Hogseth – 61 Seminole Road, Acton, MA

NOT IN ATTENDANCE: Julie VanArsdalen, Regional Environmental Health Coordinator (CMRPHA)

The next meeting of the Board of Health will be held on **FRIDAY, March 4, 2022 at 8:00 a.m.** in the Selectmen's Meeting Room at the Richard D. Carney Municipal Building located at 100 Maple Avenue, Shrewsbury, Massachusetts 01545, at which time and place the Board of Health will consider the following agenda:

- 1. Call to order.** The meeting was called to order at 8:06 a.m. by Stephen Vigeant.
- 2. 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 has been reviewing the data for both the positivity rate in the county as well as the waste water from the Blackstone Area. There is no evidence of surges. Both consistently reflect a low level. Dr. Abraham would like to make a motion to rescind the mandate effective immediately. Jennie Fishman seconded the motion. Steve Vigeant agreed with Dr. Abraham on his assessment and all of the data received from Dr. Hirsh and other public health agencies and feels it's the right time to lift the mandate. Stephen Vigeant asked if there was a motion to rescind the Order.

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 rescind the Executive Order to require face coverings in all schools (public, private, parochial and charter) K-12 effective immediately. Unanimously approved 3-0.

At this time, Jennie Fishman commented that she watched Dr. Sawyer's presentation on his plan to move forward with metrics and thinks that's a great plan. It's good to hear that we're building on what we've learned in terms of seeing any spikes in the schools. She thought it was great.

Joe Sawyer asked the Board if he could make a comment. He wanted the Board to help him understand why there was no discussion around the correspondence he had sent last night in considering that the regulation not be

rescinded effective immediately so that the schools had time to operationalize the rescission of the mandate. He wished his email had been acknowledged and discussed before the vote was taken.

Dr. Abraham explained that the vote today was to consider the rescission of the regulation and an effective date based on the available evidence and data. That's what this Board makes. The operational piece is a different issue and he respects Dr. Sawyer's position and is happy to discuss how we operationalize. It's very different from analyzing science and evidence. The Board has received a fair degree of commentary since the last meeting and has questioned our competence. The Board of Health has a seasoned Chairman and an Epidemiologist whose daily job has been to provide data to keep the Board informed, as well as a physician member who is a board-certified infectious disease specialist who is part of a national task force that weighs the evidence around COVID-19 and publishes recommendations. The Board also continues to be supported by two (2) outstanding public health professionals (Karyn Clark, Director of Public Health and Dr. Michael Hirsh, Medical Director for the City of Worcester). They have worked night and day to analyze and evaluate the data. Given the history of surges after school vacation, the Board decided to delay lifting the mandate until the vacation was over and discuss at today's meeting. He understands the challenges of the operational piece but convened today to evaluate the data and make a decision.

Question: Can we make the date and time effective?

Answer: No, because a vote was already taken.

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

Karyn Clark explained that this regulation was put in place in the City of Worcester as well as Shrewsbury and the other Alliance communities. She believes it's important to leave this in effect. At one point, Governor Baker had an Order requiring businesses to report positive cases to their Local Board of Health (LBOH). When that Order was rescinded, that piece went away. As such, that is why the Alliance towns issued this mandated. There is still some degree of the virus out there. Positive cases can and will happen. For that reason, we still want to be able to get that information. She respectfully requested to keep the Order in place and leave it as an agenda item to revisit at a future Board of Health meeting.

Dr. Abraham said that she was right on. The access to testing has increased with home-based kits but those results do not get recorded in any system. We don't want to undercount the number of positive cases. We need the data to be able to make informed decisions before there is a surge.

The other Board members were in agreement to keep the Order in effect. Jennie Fishman commented that we do not want to take all measures away.

### **4. Review and approval of Minutes from the February 15, 2022 Board of Health meeting.**

On a motion made by Dr. Abraham and seconded by Jennie Fishman and on a vote; Dr. Abraham, aye, Jennie Fishman, aye; and Stephen Vigeant, aye, the Board of Health voted to approve the Minutes from the February 15, 2022 Board of Health meeting. Unanimously approved 3 – 0.

### **5. Review and Discuss the Central MA Regional Public Health Alliance (CMRPHA) Updates.**

Micah Blondeau conveyed that businesses are still struggling with staffing turnover and the ability to hire.

Karyn Clark added:

#### Regional Public Health Staff

Thanked Micah Blondeau and Julie VanArsdalen for all their hard work.

#### Retirement

After twenty two (22) years of service, Patricia Bruchmann, Chief of Public Health Nursing is retiring on March 11, 2022. It is also her birthday and everyone is invited to a celebration next Friday at Meade Street in Worcester. If you cannot attend, please feel free to send her well wishes. She has been an incredible leader throughout the pandemic and worked seven (7) days a week. We are truly grateful for her tenure. Publicly acknowledging her for all the dedication and hard work for the Alliance.

#### Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP)

The new Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) came out in October but due to the pandemic surge, the project got buried. It's being reconstituted by their Communications Specialist and a few other folks from her team as well as others. This is the blueprint on how to support public health. Zach Dyer has been hired as a Consultant to take this project on. He had previously worked for the Worcester Department of Public Health (WDPH) for a number of years. His consulting business is called Trend Line and he will work on a business plan and cost analysis for the

Alliance. We need to step back and have him dig into it and understand how people feel about the Alliance, the services provided, any challenges as well as successes and identify gaps. He will meet with the Chairman of each Board of Health in the Alliance as well as Town Managers.

#### Accreditation

Zach Dyer is also assisting WDPH in becoming re-accredited. Back in 2016, the City of Worcester's Division of Public Health was the first Health Department to be awarded national accreditation (even before the State or Boston). Unfortunately, reapplying had to be delayed twice due to the pandemic. A current community plan as well as a myriad of other documentation needs to be lined up before you can reapply. There will be a half day staff retreat to include exercises, talking to community and the info he's pulling from business plan can help inform strategic plan. We meet once or twice a week to stay on track. Like to reapply over the summer. Nice to get into these important projects and get the direct feedback from the folks who receive the services.

#### Acknowledgement

Karyn Clark personally and professionally thanked the Board of Health, her team, Kerry Stockwell and the Town Manager's office for all of their support. To Dr. Abraham's point, the level of abuse that the Health Department and the Board of Health has taken has been difficult and it's not contained to just Shrewsbury. Many public health colleagues have left their positions because of this discourse. We understand the frustration. No one wants to remove masks more than we do. We have been questioned on authority and there has been a lot of politics which made it challenging to do our work. Our credibility has been damaged due to so many changes at the State and Federal level. The Board of Health's strength and resilience helps us. Thank you for leadership and support. She is grateful and wanted to express that on behalf of herself and staff.

Steve Vigeant thanked Karyn Clark and her team for being an invaluable resource to the Board and a source of strength. Dr. Abraham extended his sincere gratitude for Pat Bruchmann's service and sends well wishes for her retirement. Steve Vigeant echoed Dr. Abraham's sentiments. She was also instrumental in the development of Shrewsbury's Emergency Response plan. Karyn Clark will be sure to pass along all of the accolades. Jennie Fishman expressed her gratitude as well. Keeping stability and diplomacy in light of the commentary has been challenging. She is concerned about children who still want to wear a mask and hopes that the vitriol from some parents don't filter down. Karyn Clark said there shouldn't be mask shaming and is fully supportive of anyone who wants to still wear a mask.

- 6. Review meeting schedule.** The next scheduled Board of Health meeting will be held on Friday, April 15, 2022 at 8:00 a.m. in the Board of Selectmen's Room at the Richard D. Carney Municipal Building, 100 Maple Avenue, Shrewsbury, MA 01545.

Question: Will there be a discussion around the Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP)?

Answer: Yes and it will take up approximately a half hour of time.

- 7. Adjourn.** 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 adjourn the meeting at 8:29 a.m. Unanimously approved 3– 0.

#### Correspondence:

- Board of Health Meeting Minutes – February 15, 2022