HAMILTON BOARD OF HEALTH

PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES

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**Date:**                      January 12, 2022

**Location:**                Meeting held remotely via Zoom

**Members Present:**   David Smith (Chairman), Dr. Giselle Perez, Christopher Small

**Members Absent:** All members present

**Director of Health:** Dennis Palazzo

**Others present:**    Darcyll Dale, Laurie Wilson, Rachel Lee (Public Health Nurse),

Dr. Jean Ramsey, and Peter Mirandi (Health Dept. Consultant)

**Call to Order**

David Smith called the meeting to order at 5:25 pm with a quorum established.

**Roll Call:** David Smith (Chairman) — present, Giselle Perez — present, Christopher Small — present.

**Minutes**

Motion made by David Smith to approve the minutes from October 7, 2021, and December 21, 2021. Seconded by Christopher Small.

**Roll Call Vote:** David Smith — aye, Giselle Perez — aye, Christopher Small — aye.

According to the Open Meeting Law, Laurie Wilson reminded the board that the chat function on Zoom needs to be off during meetings.

**Director’s Report**

Dennis Palazzo introduced Peter Mirandi to the board. Peter Mirandi is the town’s health department consultant. Peter Mirandi and Dennis Palazzo will alternate attendance at the Board of Health Meetings.

**Epidemiology and Emergency Preparedness – Rachel Lee, Public Health Nurse**

**COVID Update on positive cases in town and area wide trends in hospitalizations and deaths.** David Smith shared the COVID-19 updates from the Public Health Nurse, Rachel Lee. There are 64 positive cases in Hamilton; however, this number is an underestimate due to unreported positive results from at-home rapid testing. David Smith said information would be posted on the town’s website once they find out how individuals can report positive results on the state’s infectious disease database. Hospitalization data: The latest data from DPH says that North Shore Medical Center and Salem Hospital have 77 cases, and Beverly Hospital reported 57 cases. Essex County hospitals report there are only 22 beds available out of a maximum capacity of 1000 .

**Updates on COVID vaccinations, town-wide percentages and future clinic plans**

Rachel Lee joined the meeting from the vaccine clinic held at the Council on Aging. She said about 200 people were attending the clinic on January 12. She shared COVID data from the Hamilton-Wenham Regional School District health nurse leader Lea Tabenkin. From December 23 through January 5, the number of cases reported at each school was: High School 46, Middle School 28, Cutler 8, Buker 11, and Winthrop 8. From January 5 through 12, case numbers were: High School 19, Middle School 13, Buker 28, Cutler 8, and Winthrop 13.

Dr. Giselle Perez asked Rachel Lee if she had data on close contact transmission in schools. Rachel Lee did not have that data but will ask the district nurse, Lea Tabenkin, to share that information if it is available.

The latest data shows 84% of Hamilton residents are fully vaccinated, meaning they have had two MNRA vaccines or one J&J vaccine. In addition, Hamilton is up to 45% of residents who have received the booster shot. In the 65 plus age group, over 95% of residents are vaccinated, and 90% have received the booster shot.

Rachel Lee reported that the age group of highest percentage unvaccinated individuals is 20 to 29-year-olds.

**Planning for future clinics**

They are doing well with the Pediatric clinic numbers and are considering adding clinics in towns with fewer unvaccinated 5 to 11 year olds.

**COVID Test Kits**

The committee discussed the best way to make the 750 at-home rapid test kits available to Hamilton's most at-risk individuals. Dennis Palazzo joined the meeting and said the town has kits available to purchase on the website and will reorder as needed. Rachel Lee suggested reaching out to key people in town such as Chief Burnett, Lea Tabenkin, and Theresa Woodbury to help identify individuals in greater need of a test kit. Christopher Small asked how people can access a COVID test if they can not afford one. Dennis Palazzo said those individuals who can not afford a test should call him directly to request a test kit. Dr. Jean Ramsey asked for clarification on how those who do not have internet access can purchase a COVID test. Laurie Wilson said individuals could call or go to the Hamilton Dispatch Center to buy a COVID test.

**Mask Mandate**

The board discussed their thoughts and concerns about the Board Order issued on December 22nd requiring everyone wear a mask in indoor public spaces and agreed to keep the mask mandate in place but continue to review it, at minimum, at every Board meeting.

**Open Town Forum**

The board discussed having an Open Town Forum on COVID. All members of the board supported holding a town forum on COVID. David Smith said he would look into possible dates to hold the forum and consult with the Board of Selectmen on the idea.

**Public Input**

Many residents had joined the Zoom meeting and David Smith at this point opened the meeting to comments from them by asking anyone wishing to speak to “raise their hand” on Zoom and they would be recognized by unmuting them.

* Beth Herr, 270 Asbury Street, commented on COVID, state mandates, town mask mandates, and mental health and she recommend the website: healthrightsma.org.
* Colleen Peterson, 22 Lake Drive, commented on quarantine guidelines.
* Lisa Johnston, a non-resident, commented on Board of Health guidelines.
* Others spoke but did not provide their name or address.

**Documents Covered**

PowerPoint on how to purchase COVID test kit

**Adjournment**

Motion made by David Smith to adjourn the meeting at 7 p.m. Seconded by Dr. Giselle Perez.

**Roll Call Vote:** David Smith — aye, Dr. Giselle Perez — aye, Christopher Small — aye.

Respectfully submitted as approved at the meeting of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

by Jennifer Woodin.