

Tuesday, January 4, 2022
Board of Selectmen Meeting Minutes
Gala Room, Town Hall
7:00 p.m.

Members Present: Leah Gibson, Chair
Stephanie McGowan, Vice Chair
Seth Ferguson, Clerk
Mark Elfman

Also Present:
William Keegan Jr.*, Town Manager
Christina Metcalf, Community Info. Specialist
Katie Lang*, Executive Assistant
*Attended remotely

1. 7:00pm Citizen's Input – No input

2. 7:05pm Public Health Covid Update - Public Health Nurse Tom Kenvin and Director of Public Health Matthew Brennan to give update on Covid testing, vaccine, and booster shots.

LG – Over the last 2 weeks with the Omicron variant, the world has changed.

MB – In the last 14 days we've seen 171 cases and our percent positive rate is 9.3%. These are some of the highest numbers I've seen during the pandemic. Norfolk County is an area of high transmission and the State and CDC recommends that people do wear a mask. The CDC estimates that 83% of the cases are the Omicron variant, the State believes different.

LG – With home tests, those numbers don't seem to be making it to you to be reported. If a parent calls in with a student case is that added to our count of Covid cases?

MB – It is not. We do have people who call and report their case and then we can educate them with the current protocols to keep them and the community safe. The at home test kits aren't as accurate but it's good to be tested and they play an important role. I sent off for 500 tests today and get them for residents that can't find them. The numbers are likely far higher for those who aren't reporting or testing.

LG – Are we actively making contact tracing calls right now?

TK – We are prioritizing the calls we make. Since December 20th we've had this 452 new cases and since January we've had 100 cases. It has become impractical to call. Lots of encouraging news is that we will see it peak in a few weeks and if South Africa data translates to our numbers. We are still reaching out via phone calls or text messaging. We are putting our efforts where we can make the greatest difference in terms of larger clusters?

SM – Would you say the numbers now are the highest they've been throughout the pandemic?

TK – I would say yes, I think because of the mass testing and more people testing. Omicron is presenting as a head cold and symptoms are mild. It's not getting into the lungs and just staying in the throat.

SF – Is fever synonymous with Covid symptoms with omicron?

TK - Throughout the pandemic its seen 30%-40% patients have had fevers and the fever threshold has changed over the pandemic. In a hospital setting a fever was 100.4 and now it's down to a 100 to encourage people to be cautious and be tested. We've seen people who are asymptomatic and people who have vague symptoms. We are also seeing flu now.

MB – Vaccination update 75% of the Foxborough population is totally vaccinated, 32% are boosted. The CDC will meet tomorrow and it is expected to announce that 12-15 year olds will be able to get boosted.

LG – When can you get boosted if you have had Covid?

TK – For the adult population it would 2 – 4 weeks after isolation and recovery and for the pediatric population a month between receiving vaccinations.

LG – There are two booster clinics, one at Town Hall and one for the schools for 16 years old and up. Should the nurses be reporting the cases into Health/Fire? Also what kind of communications can we put out to keep the community educated?

MB – We'll be doing that working with Tom and Christina to get more messaging out there.

SM – What is the quarantine?

MB – It depends on if you are boosted or just fully vaccinated and it changes. You isolate after testing positive after 5 days. If you have no symptoms you want to wear a mask and test on day 5. Please reach out to the Health Department or Public Health Nurse.

LG – Anything that the Board needs to address or worry about?

TK – It really comes down to a small things. It comes down to 2 things, wearing a mask and getting vaccinated. The at home tests are good. You might have a several days before testing negative than positive. The viral load then peaks which is why we have the isolation protocols we place. If you have symptoms to be suspicious and test. If you have symptoms but test negative it warrants some further investigation to be sure.

LG – I know everyone is working around the clock and we thank you for all of your hard work.

SF – As we move through the variants, with hospitalizations and breakthrough cases, what is the data we're seeing?

MB – Looking at the data, at the height of the pandemic, at that time 3,965 people were hospitalized. More people are testing which is why we are seeing more hospitalizations.

LG – We've only had 2 deaths in Foxborough, right?

TK – That is correct. This Omicron variant is starting to look like a seasonal flu. This is starting to move into an endemic and not a novel pandemic virus.

MB – With the breakthrough cases, 36% of those have been boosted. We are finding that it is less severe in the people that are vaccinated.

SF – Do you think we will have another variant?

MB – We are hoping that Omicron is less severe and hopefully it's not outcompeted by another variant.

TK – I agree, we are worried about another mutation. If we learn anything from South Africa they are seeing cases fall off and severe illness also drop. We could see this annually much like a flu and be getting a flu shot.

MB- If you have symptoms you should be tested, follow the isolation protocols.

LG – Thank you a million times for what you are doing and please be kind to everyone.

3. 7:25pm CSAAC - Overview of Annual Report and Appointments to CSAAC – Rev. Bill Dudley

BD – To give you a few highlights of our year. We continue to work with Senator Feeney and Rep. Barrows on a law creating more mandated reporters in Massachusetts. We testified in front of the legislature and they are working on that issue. We are continue to do training to prevent child sexual abuse. The president of Darkness 2 Light, Kate Brewer, came to meet with us to improve the format and video for the training. Some of us will be in a

documentary on Netflix in February. Our goals are to keep up the awareness of child sexual abuse, that it is a very serious issue and that is ongoing in this and every other community.

3.2 CSAAC - Appointment of Doug Suess and Jim Cannata to the Child Sexual Abuse Awareness Committee for a term to end 5/31/22 and 5/31/23 respectively

Lynda Walsh - Doug Suess will be the new Rec representative and Jim Cannata will be replacing Rob Lucas.

LG – Will there be training for Boards and Committees?

BK – I think so but I would have to check with Mike.

Motion to appoint Doug Suess and Jim Cannata to the Child Sexual Abuse Awareness Committee for a term to end 5/31/22 and 5/31/23 respectively by S. Ferguson, 2nd by M. Elfman. Approved, 4-0.

4. 7:35pm Assistant Town Manager's Update – Given by Town Manager

5. 7:45pm Town Manager's Update

BK – Mike did give an update sent to you regarding the vaccine mandate. The requirements for doing this is a federal issue. It will be talked about at the U.S. Supreme Court on January 7th.

- We have the following recruitments going on right now:

Building Commissioner – Scott Shippey starts 1/24/22

Public Health Inspector – Cameron Shamey started yesterday

Tree & Park Supervisor – Jim Caffin started yesterday

Fire – Department Administrator – in process

Water Department Coordinator – accepting applications

Library Director – in process

Community Case Worker – accepting applications

FT Van Driver – accepting applications

Police Officer - accepting applications

Food Inspector and Housing Inspector – accepting applications - Regional grant funded with Foxboro, Mansfield, Norton, Easton, Plainville, Sharon

- Union Contract Negotiations - all in progress

- OSHA Emergency Temporary Standard (ETS) - Conditional Vaccination Policy to Union Presidents for discussion and impact bargaining.

LG – We were looped in to negotiations and acknowledge receipt but will continue to let Mike handle that in negotiations.

SM- As of right now are you waiting for the Supreme Court decision on Friday?

BK – We are circulating the information now per Labor Counsel, so that we are prepared and able to execute in a timely manner. If we don't have to do anything then we won't, but we want to be prepared if we do have to

implement the policy. There are a lot of considerations to be made with this mandate and to look at all the options and maintain our level of services.

I did testify in front of the Joint Committee on Public Safety and legislature about the Civil Service bill that was voted on at Town Meeting. We are hoping that we can get the third reading done soon and then within the next 30-40 days and have the bill ready to go.

5.1 Update regarding options for Trash & Recycling for Town – We put out the survey and received 400 responses. 80% of respondents said they were satisfied. Several improvements that were mentioned were communications and bulk pick up were significant issues raised.

SM – I think 400 is a good response. I think there is a difference between the service then and now.

5.2 Update on American Rescue Plan Act Funds - waiting to see if the regulations come out this month. This will allow us to consider a number of financial considerations and what we can do. Until we get that guidance it is difficult for us to make any recommendation on how to spend those funds.

5.3 Update on Town Snow Parking Ban – during the winter months we will inform residents of any parking bans to be enforced during a snow storm but this is only during a snow event in order to let DPW clear the roads. This policy has worked well.

LG – This is more for residents to be able to access parking Uptown.

SF – As far as trash service I thought it was to get a better rate and now it seems about price.

BK – Generally speaking the price we have is a competitive price. There is some level of satisfaction with the current company that is the majority trash provider for Foxborough.

SF – Comparing it to the electric program, I thought we would get into something with a group rate at the outcome of this process.

SM – At the beginning of this discussion, we thought it would be that as well. We're finding out it's hard, unless it would be part of our taxes, which is the problem with negotiating the price.

BK – We don't have a contract with the service, they are collector of choice but that doesn't give us any negotiation power with us. They could come to an agreement but then change because of market conditions. We could put it out to bid and get things paid for through the town and based on negotiated prices. There are pros and cons to that. We didn't get a strong indication that people were unhappy with the service we have.

SF – Would you say this process is over?

BK – I don't think this is over. We identified the issues and can talk to the company and then revisit the issue if issues are resolved.

LG – When do we get budget books?

BK – You should have them next Monday.

6. 7:55pm - Selectmen's Update

6.1 New Business – Ed O'Leary submitted his resignation effective immediately. It was a pleasure to thank Ed for. We will resume with the 4 of us in the meantime. Nominations for open seats will be going up later this month.

2022 Dog licenses are now available.

DPW picks up Christmas Trees now until January 14th.

SM – I would like to see the salaries back into the Annual Report.

6.2 Old Business - Uptown Common Stakeholders meeting – the intent of that meeting is to get all the people who use Uptown.

7. Action Items

7.1 Olive Garden - Approve Change of Officers for GMRI d/b/a Olive Garden from Joseph G Kern to Lindsay L. Koren as Vice President and Secretary and William R. White to Angel Simmons as President and Treasurer.

Motion to approve a change of officer for GMRI d/b/a Olive Garden from Joseph G. Kern to Lindsay L. Koren as Vice President and Secretary and William R. White to Angel Simmons as President and Treasurer by S. Ferguson, 2nd by M. Elfman. Approved, 4-0.

7.2 BOS - Approve new Public Participation Policy for all Boards, Committees, and Commissions

LG - We had a chair training in the fall and School Committee has a great public participation policy and we heard in that training that other boards and committees would like to have something like that. This is the generic policy that has come out of that discussion.

Motion to approve the new Public Participation Policy for all Board, Committees and Commissions by S. Ferguson, 2nd by M. Elfman. Approved, 4-0.

8. Adjourn – 8:12 pm

Motion to adjourn by S. Ferguson, 2nd by M. Elfman. Approved, 4-0.