

FLORHAM PARK BOARD OF HEALTH

February 9, 2022

Minutes

Present: Peter Kleban, Stanley Wisnewski, Sabrina Edmunds, Tana LaPlaca, Raymond Holmes, Thomas Michalowski (arrived 7:05), Jo-Anna Finegan and Jay Rosania

Also present: Joshua Marchal (Council Liaison), Thomas Cantisano (Health Officer), Timothy Zachock (Senior Registered Environmental Health Specialist), Jean Vrablik (Public Health Nurse) and Maryann Lang (Board of Health Secretary)

Absent: Kathleen Greene

The meeting was called to order at 7:02 pm. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited. Ms. Lang took attendance, and stated that the requirements of the Open Public Meeting Act had been met.

Approval of Minutes:

Ms. Finegan made a motion to approve the minutes from the November 10, 2021 meeting. Ms. LaPlaca seconded the motion, and all members present approved.

Approval of Reports:

Ms. LaPlaca made a motion to approve the monthly reports which included: Vital Statistics monthly report for November and December 2021 and January 2022; Pequannock Township monthly report for October, November and December 2021 (please note the monthly report contains the year-to-date report and inspection activity report). Ms. Finegan seconded the motion, and all members present approved.

Communications:

Letter from C. Dente, regarding dumpsters at Sun Valley

A letter from Mr. Dente was sent to Mr. Cantisano and Mr. Kleban, regarding garbage piled near dumpsters at Sun Valley. He stated that he had contacted Sun Valley numerous times, and they have not adequately addressed an ongoing health hazard.

The complaint was forwarded to Gina McConeghy, Registered Environmental Health Specialist, for follow up. She spoke to the maintenance supervisor of Sun Valley regarding the issue, and visited the site. The dumpster conditions were corrected. A letter was sent to Mr. Dente advising him of same.

Report from Health Department Staff:

Mr. Cantisano provided a brief overview of the current status of COVID 19. He stated that infection rates have fallen sharply. He went on to say that it appears that the Omicron variant is so contagious, it has made it difficult for a more virulent strain to compete with it. Omicron has caused less severe illness than previous strains. However, it has the potential to lead to serious illness for unvaccinated individuals, and those not previously infected. Between herd immunity, and vaccinations, the pandemic may be entering an endemic phase. We will likely have low level outbreaks. It may turn into a seasonal virus, such as the flu. Ms. Finegan asked that if people are getting the virus twice, wouldn't the virus just continue? Mr. Cantisano responded that even if people are reinfected, they still have a level of protection from Omicron strains and prior COVID 19 variants.

Mr. Cantisano stated that Governor Murphy has announced that the school mask mandate will be lifted on March 7, 2022. It will be up to local school districts if they want to retain the mask mandate in their schools.

New Business:

None

Unfinished Business:

None

Ratification of Licenses:

The Board ratified licenses issued in November and December of 2021 and January 2022.

Public Hearing - Privilege of the Floor:

Mr. Kleban opened the meeting to the public at 7:10 pm. He stated that each person will be allocated up to four minutes to speak, and that Mr. Cantisano will respond to the questions/concerns raised after the last person had spoken.

Maria Quigley, 6 Insley Road, Florham Park

Ms. Quigley stated that she heard masks will still need to be worn on school buses. If the Governor has lifted the mask mandate in school, why would buses be different?

She asked what the role of the Florham Park Board of Health is in general, and also in relation to advising and providing direction to schools.

Because of COVID 19 there is a mental health crisis. How is the Health Department advocating for Florham Park residents, and what services are being offered to students, and their families?

Shari Marchal, 109 Edgewood Drive, Florham Park

Dr. Caponegro, Superintendent of Schools in Florham Park, sent out a memo that the students can be unmasked as of March 7, 2022. There has been no commentary as to whether there will be additional restrictions on students (such as differences between vaccinated/non-vaccinated individuals).

Nicole Takla, 5 Joyce Court, Florham Park

A lot of guidance comes from the New Jersey Department of Health (NJ DOH), and it seems like the local Health Department's hands are tied. I want to understand the role, between the Board of Health and the schools, in making decisions. Specifically, when it comes to differences between mask/unmasked; vaccinated/unvaccinated and quarantining in school.

The public portion of the meeting was closed at 7:21 pm.

Mr. Cantisano's response to questions/concerns raised in public portion:

The local Health Department is licensed by the State of New Jersey. It is a wing of the NJ DOH, and is driven by State mandates and regulations. The Health Department must be staffed with nurses, inspectors, and health educators. The State relies on the Health Department to have direct contact with the public. There are routine tasks that are required to be performed annually. In addition, there may be emergency issues such as flooding and fire, where the Health Department would be involved. We would ensure properties, that may be damaged or contaminated, are operating safely. Mr. Cantisano stated that if anyone is interested in additional details, to please send him an email or contact him by telephone.

When it comes to the pandemic, some things have been instituted by law, which the local Health Department must explain to the public, and enforce. When there are recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and NJ DOH, we provide clarification on those recommendations. When we can lessen impact on areas not mandated, that has been our practice.

As for the schools and pandemic, the schools must follow State mandates because they are the law. When not mandates, schools can discuss with the Health Department and the final decision is up to the school. With the mask mandate being lifted on March 7, each district can decide whether to continue or not. There will be additional guidelines, and recommendations, released by the State. We will meet with the Superintendents to review, and assist them in making decisions.

Mr. Cantisano's response to questions/concerns raised in public portion (continued):

Mental health services are being provided. Please reach out to us, and we will guide you on what services are available, and to answer questions.

As to masks on buses, a definite answer can't be provided at this time. When the additional guidelines are released by the State, there may be clarification. School buses may fall under public transportation guidelines, which the local school district would not have control over.

We will also need to see what the additional guidelines are as to possible additional restrictions on students (such as differences between vaccinated and unvaccinated, etc.).

Adjournment:

Ms. LaPlaca made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:36 pm. Ms. Finegan seconded the motion, and all members present approved.

Respectfully submitted,
Maryann Lang
Board of Health Secretary