

**Easthampton Board of Health  
Meeting Minutes  
February 22, 2022  
50 Payson Ave., Easthampton, MA 01027**

**PRESENT:** Maggie Hebert (MH); Aimee Petrosky (AP); Beth Rist (BR); Bri Eichstaedt (BE), Health Director; Brian Chapdelaine (BC), Health Inspector; Jackie Sienkiewicz (JS), Recorder.

**Also Present:** Megan Ward Harvey (MH); Bridget Diggins (BD) Public Health Nurse, Nicole LaChapelle (NL), Jean Pao Wilson (JW), Emily Boddy, (EB), Shelly Fournier (SF), Scott Callahan (SC), Sean Attic (SA), Evin Ziemer (EZ), MI Free (MF), Jen Sandler (JS), Donald Torrey (DT), Jed Stamas (JS), Katrina R. (KR), Jessica C. (JC), Andrea Darby, Myssie Casinghino, Tala Elia, Homar Gomez, Christopher Norris, Patrick Brough, Allison Leclair (AL), Alesxis Hosea, Amy Gauger, Sarah S, Captain Dan Constantine, Western Mass News, Ryan F., Ryan Huxley, Jasmin, Benjamin Hershey, Catherine P., David Kinstle, Black Labyrinth, James Phillips, J.P. Kwiecinski, Gunnar & Grayson, Lindsi Mailler, Andrea Marks, Matt, Kerry, Helen

Meeting held on Zoom and recorded.

<b>Motions</b>	<p><b>A motion to open the meeting</b> at 5:31 PM. was made by BR and seconded by MH. <i>All in favor – 3, Opposed – 0. Vote was taken by roll call.</i></p> <p><b>A motion to approve</b> the meeting minutes of December 7, 2021 and January 4, 2022 was made by BR and seconded by AP. <i>All in favor – 3, Opposed – 0. Vote was taken by roll call.</i></p> <p><b>A motion to approve</b> the meeting minutes of February 1, 2022 was made by BR and seconded by MH. <i>All in favor – 2, Opposed – 0. I abstained. Vote was taken by roll call.</i></p>

**Public Speak:** NL, 123 East St, Easthampton, Mayor, thanked the BOH and Health Department staff for all of their work during this pandemic. NL also thanked this Board and department for guiding the City around several challenges during this time and basing their decisions on good science. NL spoke about the verbal and written abuse and threats of job loss and/or credentials to BOH members and staff from residents.

JW, resident, said that it was important to listen to other opinions and has the legal right to speak in this forum. JW stated that if this was truly about public health then there would be discussions about myocarditis, a side effect listed by Pfizer, to the vaccine. JW finished by stating that none of the BOH members had medical qualification to mandate medical interventions as directed under Mass General Law.

EB stated that she was the parent of an Easthampton student and asked that the BOH exempt the Easthampton schools from the mask mandate. EB said that the schools had the ability to take steps to control the school's environment and to make it safe for children to remove their masks unlike a truly public space. EB said that the BOH should allow the school system to make their own decisions regarding masks.

SF, a resident at 80 Maple St, stated that she was a member of Citizens of Easthampton group. SF said that the group had obtained legal advice and were ready to file papers that the BOH had violated state and federal laws with regard to operating without a physician as a member of the Board. SF said that her son has struggled with the mask mandates. SF said that she never signed up to have her son tested for COVID without parental consent. SF said that her son asked for a mask exemption while in school but this was declined by the school.

SC, Westview Terr, said that it was time for the BOH and other boards and committees to stop overreaching their authority. SC stated that he was notifying the BOH, Mayor and City, that the BOH is illegal and does not comply with MGL Chapter 111 Section 26. SC also said that the BOH was in violation of Open Meeting Laws and that he was only able to find minutes for meetings through January 2020 online. SC said that since the BOH was illegal, all mandates were null and void as were the positions of health director and inspector.

SA, Summer St, said that as a resident of Easthampton he wanted to thank the BOH and Health Department for all they have done and had to put up with. SA said that he hoped that the BOH would continue to follow the metrics and use the mask mandate accordingly.

EZ, resident of 25 East Maple St, said that she was thankful and confident with the work the BOH has done. EZ said that it was a complicated maze to follow with all the information and was grateful to have the BOH following the science. EZ also said that the kids that she sees at Maple School while volunteering were fine with wearing masks.

MF, of Northampton St, stated that the CDC, on January 14, 2022, updated its guidelines on cloth and surgical masks and their ineffectiveness against smaller particulates. MF said if the Board does not heed the request of the people and stop this, the Board would be held accountable.

JS, a resident of Williston Ave and a parent of a student in Easthampton schools, said that she appreciated the work of the BOH during the last two very difficult times. JS said that Easthampton was fortunate to have the expertise that we have available to the community. JS thanked all the Committee and Board members and staff that used science to make difficult decisions for the community and trust that they will continue to make these decisions going forward again, using science.

DT, 17B School St, asked the Board when the mask mandate would be lifted for gyms. DT said that it was very difficult to breathe while working out and wearing a mask. DT asked where and what the science was when it came to masks in bars. DT thanked the Board for the tough job they had.

JS, 13 Meadowbrook Dr, echoed what others had mentioned about the risks to children from experimental medical interventions. JS stated the vaccines for Covid-19 were not true vaccines and adverse effects were being ignored. JS asked that masks be optional for all or at least for schools. JS said that experts were now calling this an endemic and people would have to live with it. JS also asked that the BOH follow Open Meeting Law. JS stated that the laws state that there must be public speak and none were allowed at the last meeting.

KR, a resident of Westfield, said that she refuses to give her business to any town or community that violates a person's right to make their own medical decisions. KR stated that masks and vaccines were under emergency use and thus considered experimental and mandates concerning either were in violation of federal law.

JS stated that the Easthampton Board of Health was operating in violation of Mass General Law.

- **Discuss current COVID-19 case numbers, trends and metrics. To include update from contracted Epidemiologist Megan Ward Harvey:** MH discussed the current COVID-19 metrics using the most recent Dashboard, attached. MH stated that reported Covid cases and hospital case rates were both declining. MH said that the number were likely under reported due to the availability of home test kits. MH reviewed the safety of vaccines and the various treatments that may be available. MH discussed the various side effects associated with the Covid-19 vaccines. MH reviewed data used in considering mask mandates. MH showed the vaccine rate for zip code 01027, including race, ethnicity and age. MH answered questions from the Board and BE about cases, the dashboard and sewage data.

**Discussion on Board of Health order titled: "COVID-19 Mandatory Policies and Procedures for Wear of Masks or Other Face Coverings in the City of Easthampton":** The Board discussed various options of the mask mandate. Topics included the timing of the state's new guidelines with regard to a return of students from winter break and the bump in cases that might be associated with the timing of the updated CDC guidelines for masks and vaccine rates. Also discussed were the decrease in positivity rates, availability of at home tests, a decline in hospital capacity rates and updated Mass DPH guidelines. The Board discussed daycare centers where some children were not eligible to be vaccinated at this time. Federal guidelines concerning masks on public transportation was addressed. Educational support and outreach was discussed as a way to help business navigate DPH guidelines if the local mandate was lifted. School Superintendent Leclair answered questions from the Board concerning existing and future mask guidelines for the Easthampton schools, home and in school testing and how the City mandate will affect the schools. AP stated for the record that any vote that she made concerning the mask mandate was based on the science and not the threats of lawsuits. AP said that decisions made by her as a member of the Board of Health were made with the best interest of the public health of the residents and visitors to the City. MH stated that 40 years of knowledge and experience as a nurse is what she used to make informed decisions regarding COVID and not politics. BR said that as a physician's assistant, she used information from her work experiences and trusted

colleagues and from information provided at BOH meetings to make her informed decisions concerning masking and other public health decisions.

**A motion was made** by BR and seconded by MH to end Easthampton's mask mandate effective March 9, 2022 due to concerns of possible increases in COVID case after the school winter vacation with a recommendation that people continue to wear masks if they are unprotected and that guidelines by the MA DPH be followed. *A vote was not finalized on this motion due to a request for more discussion and clarification of the motion by AP.*

The Board discussed the option of lifting the mask mandate effective 2/23/22 for the City but not effect the masking policies in place in the schools.

**A motion was made** by BR and seconded by AP to amend previous motion stating that the mask mandate for the City of Easthampton be lifted starting February 23, 2022. *All in favor: 3, Opposed 0. Vote taken by roll call.*

- **Health Director General Update:** BE stated that office had given out COVID-19 rapid test kits to businesses in Easthampton. BE said that any leftover test kits would be given to at risk residents.  
BE explained that it was once again budget-planning time. BE suggested that due to timing, a BOH meeting may be needed to go over the proposed budget and that she would let them know as soon as possible.  
BE also informed the Board that the mayor's office had received high praise for the City's Public Health Nurse, Bridget Diggins.

**A motion was made** by AP and seconded by MH to adjourn the meeting. *All in favor: 3, Opposed 0. Vote taken by roll call.*

Meeting adjourned at 6:57 PM.