

**CITY OF GLOUCESTER**  
**Board of Health**  
**Minutes of the Meeting**  
**December 10, 2020**  
**5:30 p.m.**  
**Remote Meeting Via Zoom**

Board members virtually present courtesy of a system organized by the City's IT Department: Chairperson: Dr. Richard Sagall; Frederick Cowan; Joe Rosa; and Claudia Schweitzer. Present from the Health Department: Health Director: Karin Carroll; Assistant Health Director: Max Schenk. Absent: Vice-Chairperson: Robert Harris

Also present Mayor Sefatia Romeo Theken

The meeting started at 5:30 p.m.

This meeting is recorded by video and audio in accordance with state Open Meeting Law. Consistent with the Governor's orders suspending certain provisions of the Open Meeting Law and banning gatherings of more than 10 people, this meeting will be conducted by remote participation. If you are calling in on a phone you can press Star 9 (\*9) to request to speak. If you are watching on a computer or device there is a "raise hand" button that you can tap or press to request to speak. Please use either of these options during oral communications to be recognized to speak.

**PUBLIC ORAL COMMUNICATION**

There was no "Public Oral Communication".

**NEW BUSINESS**

**DISCUSSION: Recent surge in COVID-19 cases and possible response actions -**

*Mrs. Carroll* shared some recent Covid-19 data with board members. She stated that the positive test rate for Gloucester is 5.9% which is around the State average. She stated that Gloucester has 116 active cases. She stated that the demographics with the highest positivity rate for positive cases in the last few months has been people 20-30 years of age. She stated that the number of deaths state-wide is on an upward trend, but in Gloucester they have not seen any new deaths since early summer. She stated that hospitalizations are increasing state-wide as well. She stated that there are only 2 Gloucester residents currently in the hospital. She stated that ICU's in hospitals in our region are at 100% capacity and staffing is a constraint in hospitals. She stated that Addison Gilbert and Beverly hospital still have capacity. She stated that they are able to find testing for people pretty quickly but turn around can be up to 4-5 days. She stated that she has not heard of plans to expand testing at this point.

*Mr. Cowan* asked if there was testing available in Gloucester. *Ms. Carroll* responded that the Health Department does have some options for people who are identified as close contacts as well as at CVS, but most people have to leave Cape Ann to have a test.

*Ms. Schweitzer* stated that you can pay \$120 at Allen's Pharmacy in Manchester to have a test.

*Mr. Rosa* stated that Beauport Ambulance will also come to your house for \$175.

*Mr. Cowan* asked if people on MassHealth or Medicaid have to pay for testing. *Ms. Carroll* responded that if they are identified as a close contact or have symptoms they would not have to pay.

*Mayor Sefatia Romeo Theken* appeared before the board. She stated the City is working on testing for families that are undocumented as well as the homeless. She stated that she does not know of anyone that needed a test that could not get one. She stated that many restaurants are closing and the City is not closing them, they are closing on their own. She stated that the Health Department has been so essential during this and they have not stopped working.

*Mr. Rosa* stated that he is disappointed with Beth Israel Lahey that they have not stepped up and stopped sending their testing out to Quest. He stated that Quest has no reason not to get testing results any faster. He stated that Beth Israel Lahey is large enough to do this in house.

*Ms. Carroll* stated that the contact tracing team, of 17 paid staff, has extended their hours and are now working from 8-8 on weekdays and 8-4 on weekends. The board commended the contact tracing team.

*Ms. Carroll* stated that Gloucester is back in the red and the wastewater virus level continues to increase. She reviewed the wastewater virus levels data with board members.

The board discussed the rise in mental health issues.

*Dana Martin*, Environmental Engineer, appeared before the board. She asked if the wastewater virus testing will continue into the new year. *Ms. Carroll* stated that they have put the program in the budget for the new year. *Ms. Martin* stated that the data is beneficial.

*Ms. Carroll* stated that there are 116 active cases in Gloucester, 2 in the hospital, no transmission in the schools and no new deaths since May. She stated that the State has reported that 83% of cases are being transmitted within households. She stated that they are very concerned with family gatherings. She stated that the Governor's recent restrictions closing large facilities that usually result in crowding do not really apply to Gloucester. She reviewed some restrictions the board might want to consider implementing. The board agreed to not set any further restrictions on Gloucester residents since residents are already doing what they need to do to keep safe.

*Ms. Schweitzer* stated that grocery stores should put capacity limits on shoppers again. *Mr. Schenck* responded that those restrictions are still in place. Grocery stores can only have 50% of their capacity, including staff.

*Ms. Carroll* stated that they are looking ahead and working on a vaccination program.

The board supports the use of masks and the vaccine when it becomes available. The board commended Gloucester residents for doing better than most communities in the state but there is a lot of virus around and increased vigilance is necessary. They also agreed that they would like to advocate for increased testing.

### **CONCERNS OF BOARD MEMBERS**

Next Regular Monthly Meeting Board of Health- The next Board of Health monthly meeting will be December 17, 2020 at 5:30 pm. The board agreed to have weekly meetings until further notice.

**MOTION** by Mr. Cowan to adjourn.  
Seconded by Mr. Rosa **CARRIED.**  
MEETING ADJOURNED – 6:33 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

---

Bobbi Orlando

Accepted by:

---

Richard Sagall, Chairperson

Documents Referenced:  
December 10, 2020 Board of Health Agenda  
December 10, 2020 Covid Metrics