



# CPHS Oversight Board

## Online Meeting Minutes

### February 24, 2022

**Public Health**  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.  
**Cooperative Public Health Service**

Franklin Regional Council of Governments

#### Member Attendance:

Ashfield	Caroline White	Gill-	Jeff Blomstedt
Bernardston-	Jean Page	Hawley-	absent
Buckland-	Terry Estes	Heath-	Barbara Gordon
Charlemont-	Doug Telling	Leyden-	absent
Colrain-	Nina Martin-Anzuoni	Monroe-	absent
Conway-	Jackie Choate	Northfield-	absent
Deerfield-	Alex White	Rowe-	Maggie Rice
Erving-	absent	Shelburne-	Fritz Vohr, Ron Kelter

**Staff Attendance:** Randy Crochier, Lisa Danek Burke, Liz Jacobson-Carroll, Meg Ryan, Kurt Schellenberg, Phoebe Walker, Maureen O'Reilly

#### Introductions & Town/Mask Mandate Updates

- **Ashfield/White:** The mask mandate remains, but will be reviewed again at 3/14/22 meeting – a couple of weeks after the school break has ended.
- **Bernardston/Page:** Septic-related inquiries pertaining to home sales are picking up. The possible rescinding of the mask mandate will be discussed at the 3/3 BOH meeting. Page asked for advice regarding intra-BOH communication; Crochier will follow-up with her.
- **Buckland/Estes:** The BOH and BOS agreed to rescind the mask mandate as of 3/7. The Town Hall will re-open to the public on 3/1, and the public will be asked to wear masks. McCusker's Market and other businesses may retain their mask mandates. CPHS may begin using part of the police headquarters building as a field office and storage space.
- **Charlemont/Telling:** The BOH rescinded the mask mandate on 3/07 and has notified the superintendent. A new restaurant will be opening soon.
- **Colrain/Martin-Anzuoni:** The BOH's mask mandate for all businesses remains, but will be reviewed at the 3/1 meeting. The BOS mask mandate for all town buildings has been rescinded; the school building is owned by the Town, so there is some confusion about jurisdiction. Martin-Anzuoni is no longer the chair of the BOH, but will remain on the CPHS OB and emergency planning committee.
- **Conway/Choate:** Choate will be administering only a few more covid vaccines to housebound residents, and is turning her attention to residents who received a J&J vaccine and now need an MRNA booster shot. *Walker thanked Choate for her extensive volunteer work administering 118 vaccines to homebound residents throughout the CPHS!*
- **Deerfield/White:** the BOH rescinded the mask mandate on 2/18. The Town is contracting with Curative to provide ongoing PCR testing at the senior center three days a week.

- **Gill/Blomstedt:** The mask mandate remains. The town will soon be home to the first cannabis business in the CPHS district; Crochier recommended that the BOH consult with FRCOG's Partnership For Youth on related concerns.
- **Heath/Gordon:** The existing mask mandate will be discussed at the 2/23 BOH meeting. Gordon would like to delay rescinding it until a few weeks after school vacation. The library continues to provide window service. The COVID Coalition conference was cancelled. Ryan trained Town Nurse Rabbitt and BOH member Gruen to proctor COVID-testing for municipal staff, which they are planning to do soon. Gordon is concerned that although the number of reported cases is dropping, it may reflect the tip of the (home tested/not reported) iceberg.
- **Shelburne/Vohr:** The BOH is rescinding the mask mandate as of 3/7.

Based on information found by Ryan, Crochier furthered conversation regarding whether and when to rescind mask mandates; data points to consider include case counts (in each town, county and state), MWRA wastewater trends, deaths, hospitalizations, increases in the occurrence of local clusters, school cases and absences, and vaccination rates. Blomsted suggested that the CDC may be significantly underestimating case counts, due to the popularity of home tests. He noted that the Franklin County test positivity rate remains high at 169/100,000, and rhetorically asked "Haven't we learned from the last two surges?" The state epidemiologist Catherine Brown says that reaching a low transmission rate under the current definition is unattainable, Walker said (note that the CDC changed their definitions the next day after this meeting). Gordon remains concerned about unvaccinated young children and the vulnerable immune-compromised. Martin-Anzuoni said that many people are simply fatigued and do not want to hear public health messaging on the matter. Blomstedt floated the idea of using electronic signs that broadcast the risk level daily – akin to risk messaging about fires in the west – in the future, if needed. Walker requested suggestions, from Ashfield and other towns, for text indicating that while a mask mandate may have been rescinded, mask wearing is still recommended. Gordon would like to see BOHs encouraging communities to continue to allow and assist, indefinitely, residents' remote participation in open meetings.

### **Approve Meeting Minutes**

With a motion by Gordon seconded by Kelter, the minutes of the January 20, 2022 meeting were approved unanimously.

### **Public Health Nursing Report**

Ryan noted that CPHS, like the rest of the state, is promoting personal responsibility and best practices for risk reduction: vaccines, masking, and newly limited contact tracing. Their COVID work is increasingly focused on prevention and mitigation, as the virus is here to stay. She spoke of offering convenient COVID testing to town employees and home tests to food pantry customers, of COVID therapeutics, and of the availability of funds for the funerals of COVID victims. The CPHS nurses/epidemiologist team is returning to non-COVID public health topics such as chronic disease, the opioid epidemic, and age-friendly communities through walk-in wellness clinics, town newsletter articles, educational support and messaging. She reviewed channels for reaching vulnerable populations, requested additional suggestions, and reminded members to encourage residents to complete the age-friendly communities survey. Walker will post a pdf and a link to the survey on the meeting page on the frcog calendar.

**PHE Workplan** – tabled until the next meeting

### **Health Agents Report**

Danek Burke reviewed the elevated numbers, by town, of Title 5/well and community sanitation applications in 2021.

Shellenberg continues to work toward identifying and permitting existing short-term rentals (STRs), he said, ensuring that requirements regarding drinking water, septic systems, food service, air quality/mold exposure, smoke and CO detectors, and pools/spa are met. Additional housing/zoning concerns pertain to the set-up of the STR (within, attached to, or detached from a primary dwelling), and its' egresses and locks. The existence of or need for building permits is considered, too. To qualify for a permit, an owner must apply to their town for a business license, pay a \$75 fee, and ensure that their property passes a zoning review as well as water quality and sanitation checks. In one year, the number of STR applications to CPHS increased from 7 to 32, Shellenberg reported. He reviewed FY20 quarterly tax revenues, by town, collected by the state and the municipalities. Members from towns not collecting the "local option" tax may want to ask town officials about that, Crochier suggested. Danek Burke summarized agents' proposals for revising CPHS private well and Title 5 inspection policies, which are especially important in the absence of state regulations. She will present a draft of these at the next meeting; upon adoption by the CPHS, they will be filed with the MA DEP.

Danek Burke spoke of the need to revise the CPHS fee schedule, despite a 2020 update. Considerations include equity between fees for septic haulers and installers; a fee amounts for commercial vs. residential permits; and the potential introduction of late fees for overdue and incomplete permit applications. The possible need for the permitting of body art businesses has come to agents' attention, too, she said. Field work pertaining to the annual permitting of septic systems, wells, food services, lodging, tobacco sales and public pools/spas is picking up. Agents continue to address unsafe housing issues, and to identify properties for consideration under the Attorney General Office's Abandoned Housing Initiative.

Finally, agents are progressing through the Foundations for Local Public Health Practice course offered by the MA Health Officers Association and Boston University, as time allows, and recommend it to BOH members. Walker explained that the course will be required following the passage of legislation enabling the state to establish and require workforce credentials and performance standards for health department staff and board of health members. Crochier noted that members may want to begin the free, on-line, self-paced course now, before the requirement is in place.

<https://sites.bu.edu/masslocalinstitute/2021/06/29/foundations-for-local-public-health-practice-3/>

### **Budget Reports**

Walker announced that the FRCOG Council passed the FY23 budget! Then she referenced fiscal reports for the Public Health Excellence Grant, the Age-Friendly Planning Grant, the CPHS town assessment history, the CPHS municipal funds budget, and the Contact Tracing and Epidemiology grant. She asked members to review these before the next meeting, noting that they reflect an effort to economize slightly, saving some funds to buffer the loss of income from the Town of Deerfield's withdrawal from the district. She is seeking input regarding the use of PHE grant funds for educational programming and outreach to vulnerable populations; Crochier invited members to contact him with dates of upcoming events presenting opportunities for CPHS involvement.

### **Upcoming BOH Training Opportunities**

In addition to the Foundations course mentioned earlier, BOH members are encouraged to consider attending four FRCOG/WMPHA training sessions – on epidemiology, neighborhood renewal, summer camp inspections, and private well legislation -- to be offered in the coming weeks. Topics for next Monday's COVID Roundtable include tobacco cessation efforts and Mohawk Area Public Health Coalition (MAPHCO) After-Action Report on the local FRCOG-coordinated COVID response.

**The meeting adjourned at 6:52 PM.**

**Documents Viewed or Referenced:**

- CPHSOvBrd Agenda 2022.02.22
- CPHSOvBrd Minutes 2022.01.20
- Oversight Board slides 02.24.2022 final
- Age-Friendly Survey flyer
- Printable Age-Friendly Survey
- Public Health Excellence Grant 2022\_02\_16
- age friendly grant 2022\_02\_16
- CPHS town assessment history FY19 to approved budget for FY 23
- CPHS Municipal Funds Budget 2022\_02\_16
- Contact Tracing and Epidemiology Grant 2022\_02\_16