

**BOARD OF HEALTH  
MINUTES  
July 13, 2021**

The regular monthly meeting of the Board of Health of the Township of Mahwah was held via Zoom video conference. The meeting was called to order at 7:34 PM by Board of Health President, George Cimis.

The Opening Statement was read according to the Sunshine Law and was followed by Roll Call:

**PRESENT:** Mr. Cimis  
Dr. DeMaria  
Mrs. DeSilva  
Ms. Esty  
Mr. Harris  
Mr. Matysiak  
Mrs. Varrato

**PROFESSIONALS:** Mrs. Gina Behre, Health Officer  
Mrs. Diane Homler, Principle REHS  
Mr. Maas, REHS  
Mr. Jeffrey Mason, Attorney  
Mrs. Kathryn Hagan, Recording Secretary  
Mrs. Marianne Campbell, Administrative Secretary

**OATH OF OFFICE**

Mrs. Campbell administered the Oath of Office to the Board of Health's newest member, Mrs. Christy Varrato and the Members offered their congratulations.

**REPORT OF PUBLIC HEALTH NURSE**

In the absence of the public health nurse, Mrs. Behre reported that there has been a slight uptick in COVID cases during the month of June. This is likely due to the increase in gathering limits as well as graduations and other celebrations occurring during the month. A similar increase occurred during June 2020. Specific numbers were not available at the time of this meeting.

Mr. Cimis requested pertinent information regarding the correlation between the J&J vaccine and increased reports of Guillain Barre

Syndrome. He also would like information on the vaccines' efficacy against the current Delta variant. Mrs. Behre will request data from Mrs. Wendolowski to report at the September meeting.

#### **APPROVAL OF JUNE 2021 MEETING MINUTES**

Mrs. Hagan informed the Board of a correction to be made in the June 2021 minutes. The investigation of the one positive COVID case was for the month of May 2021.

Mr. Matysiak requested a correction to Page 4, stating that it was he [not Mr. Cimis] who queried the nature of the organism causing the unsatisfactory water report.

Moved by Mrs. DeSilva and, seconded by Dr. DeMaria and, unanimously agreed by all present to approve the June 2021 Meeting Minutes as corrected.

#### **APPROVAL OF HEALTH ACTIVITIES REPORT FOR JUNE 2021**

Moved by Mr. Matysiak and, seconded by Mrs. DeSilva to approve the Health Activities Report for June 2021.

Mrs. DeSilva queried the animal species involved in the bites that required post-exposure treatment. Mrs. Homler replied that one bite occurred between a Mahwah resident and a raccoon in a park in Sloatsburg, NY; the other was a Mahwah resident who woke up and found a bat in the house. Neither animal was tested for rabies.

Mr. Cimis queried whether the eight animal investigations were all related to bites and rabies. Mrs. Homler replied that the majority of these were nuisance wildlife issues.

Mrs. DeSilva requested information on the unsatisfactory retail food inspection. It was noted by Mrs. Homler that upon routine inspection of Namaste Indian Restaurant, Mr. Grotheer discovered several violations relating to temperature abuse of food caused by a malfunctioning refrigerator. Temperatures ranged between 60-65 degrees in the freezer and walk-in boxes. Thousands of dollars of food had to be destroyed. The establishment was preparing for a party, and Mrs. Homler is confident that Mr. Grotheer's diligence prevented a possible foodborne outbreak. Mrs. Homler was quick to note that the owners were extremely cooperative and voluntarily

closed the establishment until necessary repairs were completed and all equipment was functioning appropriately. The \$500 re-inspection fee was paid, receipts for repairs were received, and both Mr. Grotheer and Mrs. Homler jointly conducted a satisfactory re-inspection the following day.

Mr. Matysiak asked whether a temperature log was being utilized at this establishment and whether this is a requirement. Mrs. Homler stated this was not being done prior to the Unsatisfactory inspection, however, a temperature log has since been supplied to the establishment for future use. Mr. Grotheer explained to the restaurant staff the need to regularly monitor food temperatures as a precautionary measure. Mrs. Behre stated that a temperature log is not a requirement of Chapter 24 retail food inspections, however, the inspectors do encourage all establishments to maintain one. The FDA requires temperatures of specific foods to be maintained and monitored regularly, and a log is the best way to ensure this is being done.

Mr. Cimis requested an update on the potentially dangerous dog, Alamo. Mrs. Homler stated that upon consultation with the Township Attorney, Tyco was instructed to write a summons to the dog's foster, Mr. Cabibo, as well as to the rescue organization (Eleventh Hour Rescue.) The court date is set for August 17<sup>th</sup> at 5:00 pm via Zoom with Mahwah Municipal Court. A request for discovery has been received from Eleventh Hour's legal counsel.

Mrs. Behre also consulted with the Township's legal team and was pleased to report that one attorney in the group has extensive experience dealing with dog bite cases and is familiar with Eleventh Hour Rescue. He stated that transporting the dog out of state to a sanctuary as requested by Eleventh Hour is unacceptable and requested a court summons be issued immediately with the possibility of declaring the animal "Potentially Dangerous."

There being no further questions or comments, the Health Activities Report for June 2021 was unanimously approved.

**APPROVAL OF HEALTH OFFICER'S REPORT FOR JUNE 2021**

Moved by Dr. DeMaria and, seconded by Mrs. DeSilva to accept the Health Officer's Report for June 2021.

Mrs. Behre stated that NWBRHC is continuing to work in conjunction with New Bridge Medical Center to administer vaccines to the homebound population.

Meetings have taken place with Mrs. Behre and the Township Administrator regarding a replacement for the Principal Health Inspector position. The position and job description will be posted in house for the required ten-day period (mandated by the Collective Bargaining Agreement) prior to being opened up to the public via the League of Municipalities' job board as well as other social media vehicles. Once the deadline for applications is met, eligible applicants will be screened and interviewed accordingly.

HARP received correspondence from the State Health Department that Mahwah's vaccination rate is currently below the desired seventy percent mark. NWRHC currently has both the Moderna and J&J vaccines available and was in the process of planning a drive-up clinic in conjunction with HARP to reach this goal. HARP has the Pfizer vaccine, therefore, the clinic could have been available for individuals 12 years of age and older.

Coincidentally, while plans were being formulated to hold such a clinic at the municipal building on July 20th, news was received that a similar clinic was already scheduled at Ramapo College for that same day. Therefore, our clinic has been put on hold for the time being. Once data is received regarding the success of the Ramapo Clinic in reaching preferred goals, the Health Department will reassess the need to host another clinic.

Mrs. Varrato queried which vaccines will be offered at the Ramapo Clinic. Mrs. Behre responded that Ramapo will have both Pfizer and J&J vaccines available. Mrs. Behre stated that NWRHC currently has an abundance of Moderna vaccine available and will host another clinic if need dictates.

Mrs. DeSilva queried how the State determines the percentage of individuals vaccinated from a particular municipality. Mrs. Behre replied that this information is tabulated from the New Jersey Immunization Information System (NJIIIS) which is connected to a national database. If a resident is vaccinated in a State other than New Jersey, their vaccine status will be visible to the local municipality.

Mrs. Behre informed the Board of an App entitled "Docket" which allows individuals to view their vaccine status in the event they misplace their vaccine cards. She encouraged the Board Members to download the App and become familiar with it when time allows.

Mr. Mason queried the masking guidelines for the K-12 population for the upcoming school year. Mrs. Behre stated the CDC will be coming out with guidelines prior to the start of the new school year, at

which point the NJDOH will make their recommendations Masking rules will be up to the individual community based on local transmission rates, however, NJDOH guidelines are generally followed for uniformity Statewide. Much of the controversy regarding mask wearing is due to the fact that the younger population is unable to be vaccinated at this time as well as the increase in school-age cases.

Mr. Cimis queried whether data is being gathered pertaining to antibody testing. His concern stems from the fact that the current Delta variant appears to be immune to the available vaccines. He also queried the nature of the metrics being utilized requiring masking protocols to remain in place. Recent data indicates COVID-related hospitalizations are substantially lower than last year, and the healthcare system no longer seems to be overwhelmed. Mr. Cimis believes that antibody testing is the true standard that would indicate the likely spread of the virus rather than an individual's vaccine status.

Mrs. Behre replied that the status of antibodies is being addressed at the Department of Health where it pertains to vaccines among the college-aged students.

Mr. Cimis queries the claims made by the pharmaceutical companies stating that the current vaccines have a 97 percent success rate in producing antibodies in recipients. He feels this is an exaggerated statistic and would like to see post-clinical studies conducted to justify such claims.

Mrs. Behre stated that studies are currently being conducted regarding the current vaccines effectiveness against the Delta variant. When a breakthrough case is suspected, the State Health Department is notified and a lab capable of testing for the Delta variant is utilized. Data is continually being gathered and analyzed.

Mrs. Behre will reach out to HARP regarding current hospitalization statistics for reporting at the next meeting. She did state that much of the statistical data is available by County on the NJDOH HUB. Mrs. Wendolowski may be able to provide numbers more specific to Mahwah.

Mr. Matysiak inquired as to the outcome of the June 9<sup>th</sup> Council meeting regarding the legalization of cannabis. Mr. Ervin reported that the legislation is worded in such a way that if Mahwah chooses to do nothing, the Township will automatically opt into the program allowing us no control as to where such facilities may be located and what licenses will be issued. If the Township chooses to opt out, this decision can be changed at any point in the future. In this way, if submissions come before the Planning Board for a distribution

facility, the Township will have the ability to control where that activity would be permitted and what licenses would be issued. There were many questions regarding the taxation of product and the legality of taxing something which is still considered illegal at the Federal level. Township Council has drafted an Ordinance opting out at the current time.

There being no further questions or comments, the Health Officer's Report for June 2021 was unanimously approved.

**PAYMENT OF BILLS**

Moved by Mrs. DeSilva and, seconded by Mr. Harris and, unanimously agreed to by all to pay the bills for June 2021.

**REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES**

None presented.

**REPORT OF ATTORNEY**

Mr. Mason suggested the Board consider providing a COVID Retrospective report to the residents regarding how Mahwah was affected by the pandemic for the Fall Newsletter. Issues which could be addressed might include mortality statistics, transmission rates, vaccination effectiveness, necessity of boosters, etc.

**CORRESPONDENCE**

No correspondence to present.

**OTHER BUSINESS**

Due to the recent water-related deaths which have occurred within the Township in recent years, Mr. Ervin suggested more education regarding water safety be made available to the public at the beginning of every

swimming season. Mr. Cimis suggested information regarding hiking safety be included as well. These are topics which may be considered for the Spring 2022 newsletter.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

No public present.

A motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:42 pm was made by Dr. DeMaria and, seconded by Mr. Matysiak and, unanimously agreed to by all present.

The next meeting is scheduled for September 14, 2021, at 7:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathryn Hagan  
Recording Secretary