



TOWN OF TEWKSBURY BOARD OF HEALTH

Raymond Barry, Chairman
Robert Scarano, Vice Chair
Maria Zaroulis, Clerk
Charles Roux, Member
Anthony Boschetti, Member

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

EMERGENCY MEETING MINUTES January 7, 2022

The meeting was called to order by Raymond Barry, Chairman, at 11:06 a.m. online via Webex. Present at the meeting were Maria Zaroulis, Clerk and Charles Roux, member. Also in attendance were Shannon Gillis, Director of Public Health and Ashley Pavlakos, Public Health Nurse. Members Robert Scarano and Anthony Boschetti were not present at the meeting.

New Business:

➤ **Discussion of rise in Covid-19 cases**

Mr. Barry stated that since the Covid numbers are rising, the Board members are having a special meeting to address the issue. Ms. Gillis, Health Director, reviewed the current numbers. There have been 499 active cases of Covid. The numbers do not indicate the rapid tests that are being taken at home. These numbers do not get reported into the State's system. The previous week, January 1st, there were 528 cases which is an increase of 377 cases from the end of December. We are amid a surge with increasing numbers weekly. She reviewed the breakdown of cases by ages. The majority of cases are ages ten to forty years old. Mr. Barry shared his screen which showed a graph with the covid numbers from the State's website along with neighboring towns compared to Tewksbury. There has been an increase in the numbers since Thanksgiving. Mr. Barry stated that his concern is Tewksbury has a noticeable increase from the State's rate. Mr. Barry stated that the numbers are under reported than what is in town. There are many factors involved. Home testing kits are hard to find along with the long lines to get a PCR test, which discourage people from getting tested. Covid symptoms can be mistaken for a cold especially in vaccinated people. The Board would like the residents to know that the numbers are increasing but there are steps people can take to prevent the curve from going even higher. Residents and businesses are encouraged to go back to things that can be done successfully in the past to bring the curve down to a low point. Some of these things include the use of face masks per CDC guidelines, handwashing, use of hand sanitizer and social distancing. Ms. Zaroulis agreed but also felt like the large group gatherings without masks seem to be why the numbers are increasing. People need to be reminded that when they gather like that, they need to be extra careful as the risk of contracting the virus or even having the virus and passing it to somebody else is much higher in those situations. Mr. Roux stated that we have lived with this for the past two years. The people in this community are not stupid and the virus is not going anywhere. Mr. Roux stated that he is not anti-mask nor anti-vaccine, but people should know better when to wear a mask, when to get vaccinated and boosted, if they should attend crowded venues, know how to social distance as well as knowing proper hygiene and sanitation. Mr. Roux stated that the Board has the responsibility to inform the public but are not babysitters. If people feel the need or want to wear a mask, then they should. The Board putting out a statement of warning is a good thing to do. Mr. Barry stated that while to Board can make a vote and recommend what residents should do, he instead asked for a vote to ask that the Director put together a public health advisory for the residents to give them all the strategies they can do to minimize the spread of Covid, flu or anything else that might be out there. The Board can meet next Friday to see where the numbers

are at, what has or has not worked and if there is anything else that needs to be done further. A discussion ensued.

MOTION: Ms. Zaroulis made the motion for the Health Director to provide the residents and businesses a public health advisory for the month of January; seconded by Mr. Roux and the motion unanimously carried 3-0 by roll call vote.

Mr. Barry stated that the advisory is to get us past the January surge in numbers.

- Mr. Barry introduced Ashley Pavlakos, the new Public Health Nurse for Tewksbury and Tyngsboro. He stated that she will be formally introduced at the next BOH regularly scheduled meeting. Ms. Pavlakos stated that she fully supports the Board's recommendation and stated that it is a great reminder in order to keep residents safe. Ms. Pavlakos stated that the Town of Tewksbury does not have at home testing kits to give out to the public. She recommended that residents reach out to their health care providers for recommendations. The at home rapid tests that are at Walgreens and CVS are hard to come by but if they can be found, it is an effective way to test and help stop the spread. Vaccines and boosters are our number one defense to this virus right now and encourages residents to get vaccinated. Mr. Barry stated that another meeting will be held next Friday at the same time.

Adjourn:

MOTION: Mr. Roux made the motion to adjourn; seconded by Ms. Zaroulis and the motion unanimously carried 3-0 by roll call vote. Meeting adjourned 11:28 am.

Approved on: 1/20/22