

TOWN of HINGHAM

BOARD OF HEALTH

Board of Health Public Meeting

January 7, 2022

A posted public meeting of the Town of Hingham, Board of Health (the Board) was held remotely by video conference and telephonic as an alternate means of public access pursuant to Massachusetts General Law enacted June 16, 2021 suspending certain provisions of the open meeting law.

Dr. Shilts called the meeting to order at 9:06 a.m.

Members Present

Kirk Shilts, D.C., Chair

Peter Bickford, Member

Elizabeth Eldredge, M.D., Member

Staff Present

Susan Sarni, Executive Health Officer

Kathy Crowley, RN, Public Health Nurse

Elizabeth Nee, Health Agent

Chairman's Message

none

Town Health Advisory Regarding Facial Coverings

- Dr. Shilts said the meeting was called to discuss the issuance of a Health Advisory on the Use of Facial Coverings in Hingham. He said the draft advisory was created for the benefit of everyone in Hingham as the numbers of COVID-19 cases are rapidly increasing in our area.
- Dr. Shilts said the advisory has a regulatory connection to it where “public spaces” is already extensively defined in our smoking regulations. He also said the Board will be providing guidance for facial coverings on our website that include links to the CDC and the MA-DPH about the proper fitting of masks.
- Ms. Sarni stated that the weekly data regarding COVID-19 show there has been a significant uptick in the last few months. She said 95% of this virus was recorded as the new Omicron variant rather than Delta.
- Ms. Sarni said there will be a vaccine booster clinic organized for January 14, 2022. She also said a COVID-19 testing site in Hingham will open on January 13, 2022.
- Ms. Sarni said the use of face coverings and social distancing is still being required within the schools.
- Mr. Bickford stated that he strongly agrees with the proposed health advisory. He apologized for having to leave the meeting due to a scheduled appointment – and supports enacting the advisory as drafted.

Mr. Bickford left the meeting

- Dr. Eldredge offered her experience as a pediatric anesthesiologist at South Shore Hospital saying that the hospital is now full of COVID-19 cases.
- Ms. Sarni asked the Board if they would consider adding an age threshold to the advisory. Drs. Shilts and Eldredge stated that the broad advisory is for all residents of all ages across the Town of Hingham.
- Dr. Shilts said we should vote on the draft document and then take in public comment. He said we could always amend the advisory based on what we hear.

Thereafter, a motion was made by Dr. Shilts, seconded by Dr. Eldredge and VOTED (roll call);

to approve the Health Advisory on the Use of Facial Coverings in Hingham, January 7, 2022, as drafted.

members in favor: Eldredge & Shilts

members opposed: none

Mr. Bickford was absent

Public Comment

Sue Garland, 18 Maryknoll Drive

Ms. Garland said as an owner of a fitness studio, that this advisory will hurt her business. She said requiring someone to exercise with an N-95 mask is impossible.

Dr. Shilts said the advisory does not mandate the use of any face covering including an N-95 facial respirator.

Barbara Lynch, 3 Westmoreland Road

Ms. Lynch understood that this is an advisory and not a mandate on downtown businesses.

Dr. Eldredge stated that establishments and private businesses can have their own requirements. Dr. Shilts said he hoped every business would still encourage the use of face coverings consistent with the advisory.

Matt Cosman, 12 Summit Drive

Mr. Cosman asked what would cause the Board to rescind the advisory.

Dr. Shilts said that once the surge of infection is waning, likely at the end of our typical winter flu season in 6-8 weeks, the Board will probably rescind the advisory.

Lynn Barclay, 11 Cottage Street

Ms. Barclay requested the advisory be revisited in 30 days.

Dr. Shilts said the Board reviews, discusses and update issues about COVID-19 at every monthly meeting.

Amy Farrell, 95 Central Street

Ms. Farrell asked to confirm that the advisory would be the same for all town owned facilities such as the Lincoln School housing.

Ms. Sarni stated that Town Hall and the schools have a higher mask mandate standard; she will work with Ms. Farrell for informing residents of this town-owned housing complex on the applicable state requirements and our advisory.

Adjournment

The January 7, 2022, public meeting of the Hingham Board of Health adjourned at 9:52a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Sarni, MPH, EHO

Documents used by the Board during public meeting

- *Meeting agenda, 1/7/22*
- *Health Advisory on the Use of Face Coverings in Hingham, 1/7/22*