

**WHITMAN BOARD OF HEALTH MEETING MINUTES**

**Tuesday, August 24, 2021**

**Members present:** Danielle Clancy - Chair  
Dawn Varley – Vice Chair  
Brandon Griffin - Clerk

**Staff present:** Dan Kelly – Health Inspector/Dept. Head  
Dina Amado- Administrative Assistant

**Others present:** Lincoln Heineman – Town Administrator

**Danielle Clancy called the meeting to order at 9:36 a.m.**

**Danielle Clancy read the following:**

*The meeting is an in person meeting following open meeting laws and is open to the general public and is therefore not being recorded or posted to YouTube.*

**Chair** Danielle Clancy asked for a motion to approve meeting minutes for 8/10/2021 BOH meeting.

**Motioned:** Brandon G

**2<sup>nd</sup>:** Dawn V

**Vote:** 3 –Yes 0 -No

**Minutes to last meeting Approved.**

**Chair** Danielle Clancy asked for a motion to accept the Health Inspector’s Report and Read File.

**Motioned:** Brandon G

**2<sup>nd</sup>:** Dawn V

**Vote:** 3 –Yes 0 -No

**Health Inspector’s Report and Read File Accepted.**

**Dan Kelly asked to share some new information with the Board:** Discussed a request from resident and business owner Brittany Cavallo a local realtor who would like to host a Pumpkin Patch event in the park on or around October 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2021. Discussed she held a movie night in the past with success. Explained this is a free event for the people who attend and that Ms. Cavallo covers all costs. Stated she plans to have small pumpkins and allow children to paint the pumpkins to take home. Also stated she planned to talk with Police, Fire and DPW.

**The Board discussed and had no objections.**

**Chair** Danielle Clancy asked for a motion to accept the licenses as issued.

**Motioned:** Brandon G

**2<sup>nd</sup>:** Dawn V

**Vote:** 3 –Yes 0 -No

**Licenses accepted as issued.**

**Chair announced meeting will move to discussion regarding current Covid situation.**

**Dan K:** Discussed there are no changes since the last discussion. Mentioned that Silver Lake on the 10<sup>th</sup> held a meeting with their town council present. Stated town council confirmed the BOH has no legal authority over the schools or school system. He stated he believes that DESE will be adopting a mandate shortly. Stated Mr. Riley who had petitioned for the legal right to make the mandate should be announcing a mandate shortly. Mr. Kelly advised that in his opinion the Board has historically followed DESE guidelines as well as the CDC and should continue to do so. Mr. Kelly shared that Gov. Baker stated that 75% of the state is vaccinated with 85% receiving their first shot. He also stated that 65% of 12-15 year olds have been vaccinated. Mr. Kelly stated he did not believe those numbers to be accurate. He stated that the actual number for Whitman as of 2 weeks ago, there were 8,387 Vaccinated or 55% of the Town.

**Danielle C:** Stated as the vaccine coordinator for the town she did not trust the states numbers either. Stated Baker stated approximately 13.69% of the state is not vaccinated however she does not believe that to be an accurate number based on her experience.

**Brandon G and Dawn V** both reiterated they did not believe the numbers from the state were accurate.

**Dan K:** Stated he believes that the vaccine is working. Even though there are some breakthrough cases the people vaccinated are surviving the Delta variant based on the data being supplied.

**Danielle C:** Addressed attendee Lincoln Heineman and stated she would like to once again discuss the schools as well as the incentive for town employees to be vaccinated. Ms. Clancy stated she talked with Barbara White and historically the BOH never interfered with the schools unless they were asked for their opinion or recommendation. She stated that WEMA or the Town's Emergency Management team planned to offer clinics for vaccines soon.

**Dawn V:** Agreed with Danielle's statement, and reiterated that the Board never interfered and only advised or recommended if asked to do so. Further stated the Board would need to speak with town council for further guidance if that was something they were going to be asked to do.

**Dan K:** Stated Kingston did a mask mandate for municipal buildings and found out that they had no legal jurisdiction over the school buildings or grounds. Also found out that DESE doesn't either. There is no legal disciplinary action that DESE can take if someone does not follow their mask mandate. They are not allowed to refuse, suspend or even give a detention to someone who refuses to wear a mask.

**Lincoln H:** Stated if you mandate a mask for the school or town that you would need to check with town council on the legalities of such a mandate.

**Danielle C:** Stated if you mandate the town buildings you can just exclude the schools.

**Brandon G:** Disagreed with that statement. He is strongly in favor of masks to keep kids safe but feels it is an all or nothing or kids will be bullied.

**Dawn V and Danielle C** both agreed and stated it would need to be all or nothing even if doing testing.

**Brandon G:** Stated the board shouldn't be making any changes.

**Lincoln H:** Stated he relies on the schools council on deciding what they need to do for their schools.

**Dan K:** Stated the school will follow DESE and whatever mandates that DESE puts into place and he feels that the BOH should do the same. He stated unless the BOH is specifically asked for guidance from the schools they should end the discussion.

**Brandon G:** Stated he agrees because the school board already voted.

**Dan K:** Reiterated he feels that the board should let the schools decide their own policies unless asked for a recommendation from the board or if there is any significant changes to the current Covid situation.

**Dawn V:** Suggested that the BOH should no longer discuss school mask mandates and should put in that the BOH will no longer have any further discussion about it going forward.

**Lincoln H:** Suggested the wording, BOH will no longer have any further guidance or requirements on school mask mandates unless the facts on the ground significantly change.

**Chair Danielle C asked for a motion to let schools decide their own mask policy and that the BOH will no longer have any further guidance or requirements on school mask mandates unless the facts on the ground significantly change.**

**Motioned:** Brandon G

**2<sup>nd</sup>:** Dawn V

**Vote:** 3 –Yes 0 -No

**Motion carries as stated.**

**Brandon G:** Then stated he would like to make a motion to amend the motion just voted to amend significant changes because he would like to address in the future depending on DESE mandates. After brief discussion with the board he rescinded his motion and reiterated his yes vote to the original motion as carried.

**Chair Danielle C made a motion to move on with the meeting and end discussion of school mask mandates.**

**Motioned:** Dawn V

**2<sup>nd</sup>:** Danielle C

**Vote:** 3 –Yes 0 -No

**Motion carries as stated.**

**Chair Danielle C began meeting discussion on town buildings mask mandate.**

**Dawn V:** Stated everything should stay as is. She asked if there were any current cases in the Town Hall.

**Dan K:** Responded to Dawn inquiry stating there were currently no known cases in the town hall that he is aware of. Stated we does receive an update as far as cases and the #'s from the last report are showing lower than the prior report. He also stated however that in the last couple of weeks we have had days where there were 12 positive cases in a single day. He mentioned that the CTC are not doing the contact tracing as they have in the past and that Dina Amado the BOH Administrative Asst. has begun helping with the contact tracing efforts along with the two public health nurses.

**Dawn V:** Stated that the mask mandate was originally in place by the selectmen with the 3% positivity rate guideline. She asked Lincoln H what the selectmen's thoughts are on this mask mandate for town buildings where the positivity rate is currently above the 3%.

**Lincoln H:** Stated the selectmen follow the BOH recommendations and they will likely continue on that stance.

**Dawn V:** Stated she doesn't think that the BOH needs to close town hall but that was the standard they had put in place to re-open.

**Lincoln H:** Stated that vaccination rates and positivity rates came down and that led to the governor ending the state of emergency and the re-opening.

**Danielle C:** Stated the BOH should continue as we have been. Also stated .0023% of our population out of our roughly 15 thousand residents is such a minute number and that number can skew both up and down depending on the number of people getting tested. Stated she has trouble with the rates given when not everyone is testing. Stated she doesn't feel the need to change anything.

**Brandon G:** Stated he agrees with Danielle regarding her statement. But he also felt the BOH strongly recommend a school mask mandate because he believes they needed that. He felt that the Dan Kelly statement read at the School Board meeting was much better than what Gil Amado the Hanson health agent submitted.

**Danielle C:** We have many public buildings and the board has already put in place the recommendation to wear a mask and get vaccinated. Stated the flyer and advertising that ran looked good.

**Dawn V:** Agreed with Danielle stated even though the signs are there not everyone is wearing a mask.

**Lincoln H:** Stated all department heads have been reminded.

**Danielle C:** Asked Lincoln if the board needed to discuss his incentive program.

**Lincoln H:** Stated he was more interested in this board's opinion on a vaccine mandate for town employees. Stated companies and private employers and even some public entities have mandated vaccines for employees.

**Danielle C:** Stated as an employer you can mandate or pay for the test once a week. Asked Lincoln if the town plans to pay for testing if they are planning to mandate vaccines.

**Dawn V:** Asked how the discussion moved from incentives for town employees to get vaccinated to mandating vaccines.

**Danielle C:** Voiced that she felt that a vaccine incentive program would be a selectmen issue as far as if they are going to offer a personal day to employees to get vaccinated. Stated that giving all employees a personal day to be vaccinated could be a cost issue to the town.

**Lincoln H:** Stated that the cost for a personal day incentive is minimum and it would need the BOH recommendation or opinion whether or not we as an employer require or mandate the vaccine would be a selectmen issue but historically they have listened to the BOH.

**Brandon G:** Asked Lincoln H are we talking about town of Whitman Police and Fire and are they going to be required to be vaccinated also.

**Danielle C:** Stated you can't pick and choose on one department or group or class and not the other. Stated she is not in favor of a vaccine mandate and believes people have the right to choose to vaccinate or not.

**Lincoln H:** Stated you would not be able to choose as far as who would be mandated it would be all or nothing.

**Dan K:** Stated he is not in favor of a vaccine mandate and believes people have the right to choose to vaccinate or not.

**Brandon G:** Stated he would be in favor of just recommending vaccines which they have already done.

**Dan K:** Asked Lincoln H if you are going to mandate vaccines are you then going to mandate booster shots so that the mandate is in place for the rest of time. You are talking a mandate that could potentially last forever like a flu vaccine.

**Danielle C:** Asked Lincoln H if the incentive for a personal day would be offered to employees that are not vaccinated due to medical or religious reasons.

**Lincoln H:** Answered he would not be in favor or propose that people with medical or religious be given the personal day. Stated American Airlines gave a personal day and with the new Pfizer vaccine approved by the FDA that then moves to a vaccine mandate question.

**Dawn V:** Stated she would be in favor of an incentive for employees to vaccinate but would not be in favor of a mandate. Also stated people with medical or religious should be given the benefit as well.

**Danielle C:** Stated if you want and incentive program I am all for it but I am not in favor of a mandate.

**Lincoln H:** Stated if the BOH says no to the mandates it would be great to have a vote on that.

**Chair Danielle C** asked for a motion to recommend a vaccine mandate requirement for all town employees.

**Motioned:** Brandon G

**2<sup>nd</sup>:** Dawn V

**Vote:** Danielle C – No  
Brandon G – Yes  
Dawn V - No

**Motion does not pass.**

**Dawn V:** Stated she agreed that it should be the responsibility of the department head or managers to advise staff to wear a mask and get vaccinated. Reiterated that the board already voted on recommending masks and vaccines per CDC.

**Danielle C:** Stated that the majority of the town employees have already been vaccinated.

**Dan K:** Stated there is only a small number who for whatever reason did not get vaccinated and that he doesn't have an exact number of who is not but in the town hall itself the number of vaccinated is high. Stated if you try and mandate a vaccine then you will most likely lose people.

**Lincoln H:** Agreed with Mr. Kelly; stated you are probably right, there will be court cases as well but that is for the courts to decide.

**Dawn V:** Stated schools can require certain shots be administered before kids are allowed to attend so they could possibly mandate the vaccine.

**Lincoln H:** Stated now that the vaccine was approved by the FDA it is a different conversation and no longer a concern over certain legalities.

**Dawn V:** Stated our job as a board is to protect the residents of our town.

**Danielle C:** Stated we can always revisit this issue should the numbers change.

**Dan K:** Reiterated if things change in the event of a large spike in positive cases then revisit the mandate. Believes for now there is no need to discuss as the vote was already taken.

**Brandon G:** Stated I don't base this concern on if Dawn or Lincoln respond to my house but what about police or fire. Stated they should be vaccinated and wearing masks.

**Lincoln H:** Stated Police and Fire have protocols already in place on how they respond to calls. Stated they respond in masks and if a case is a suspected Covid case then they use N95 masks and increase their safety measures accordingly.

**Brandon G:** Answered fire is less of a concern but if you got pulled over by police and they are not required to be vaccinated or are not required to wear a mask I wouldn't want them coughing on me.

**Danielle C:** Stated as this issue is already resolved we need to move along and schedule the next meeting.

**Chair proposed the next meeting be held on September 28<sup>th</sup> at 9:30 AM.**

**Dawn V:** Stated that date was fine with her.

**Brandon G:** Asked why the meetings were held at 9:30AM. Stated he has had people comment to him asking him why they were not held at night.

**Dina A:** Advised she believed that the board had moved their meetings to the morning during Covid and it cut down on the cost of paying an additional fee for a recording secretary. Advised it was scheduling and a cost saving measure.

**Dawn V:** Advised the meetings have always been in the mornings since she joined the board years ago and it hasn't been an issue.

**Lincoln H:** Stated the money is not an issue and if the BOH wanted to have their meetings at night then the money for the recording secretary would be found and paid.

**Dina A, Dawn V and Danielle C** all mentioned that the Board schedules when they want their meeting held.

**Brandon G:** Stated that was fine with him he just wanted to ask the question as he was asked by someone else.

**Danielle C:** Stated she has not heard any comments regarding the BOH meeting times and if anyone has a problem or would like to change the time of the meetings they can talk to her about that. Stated the meeting and agenda are posted for the public to attend. They can't just show up and speak unless they are added to the agenda but they are welcome to attend any meeting as an observer.

**Chair** Danielle Clancy asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting at 10:27 AM.

**Motioned:** Brandon G

**2<sup>nd</sup>:** Dawn V

**Vote:** 3 – Yes 0 - No

**Meeting adjourned**

True copy attest: \_\_\_\_\_

Brandon J. Griffin – Clerk BOH

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Filed with Clerk's office \_\_\_\_\_

DRAFT