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Inspection Services  
41 Elm Street

## TOWN OF SOUTHBRIDGE

September 2, 2021 Board of Health Meeting Veteran's Room @ 6:00 pm

Agenda #1- Open Meeting- 6:03pm

Agenda #2- Roll Call

E. Stephens

R. LaRoche

A. Pelletier Postale

N. Duffey

*E. Stephens*  
*R. LaRoche*  
*A. Pelletier Postale*  
*N. Duffey*

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TOWN OF SOUTHBRIDGE  
MASSACHUSETTS

Agenda #3- Re-Organization- For purposes of a re-org, Chair Stephens turns the meeting over to A. Pelletier.

Motion is made by A. Postale to nominate E. Stephens as Chair; 2<sup>nd</sup> by N. Duffey. No additional nominations for Chair.

Roll Call

R. LaRoche-yes

N. Duffey-yes

A. Postale-yes

E. Stephens-yes

Motion passes unanimously by all present. E. Stephens is elected as Chair of the Board of Health.

A. Pelletier turns over the meeting to Chair Stephens for purposes of electing a Vice Chair.

E. Stephens entertains a motion for Vice Chair. Motion is made by A. Postale to nominate R. LaRoche as Vice Chair. At this time, R. LaRoche respectively declines. E. Stephens nominates N. Duffey as Vice Chair; 2<sup>nd</sup> by A. Postale:

Roll Call

A. Postale-yes

R. LaRoche-yes

E. Stephens-yes

N. Duffey-yes

Motion passes unanimously of all present. N. Duffey is elected as Vice Chair of the Board of Health.

#### Agenda #4- Accept Meeting Minutes

a. June 10, 2021- Motion to accept the June 10, 2021 as written is made by A. Postale.

Statement made by R. LaRoche: on Agenda #10- Board Members Announcements it stated R. LaRoche's statement will be forwarded in an email and for the record states he does not conduct public business via email however, did forward an email as a citizen.

Motion is 2<sup>nd</sup> by N. Duffey:

#### Roll Call

E. Stephens-yes

R. LaRoche-yes

N. Duffey-yes

A. Postale -yes

Motion to accept the June 10, 2021 minutes passes unanimously by all present.

b. July 22, 2021- Motion to accept the July 22, 2021 as written made by A. Postale; 2<sup>nd</sup> by N. Duffey:

#### Roll Call

R. LaRoche-abstain not present

N. Duffey-yes

E. Stephens-yes

A. Postale-yes

Motion to accept the July 22, 2021 minutes passes 3-1 abstain (LaRoche).

Agenda #5- Citizens Forum- Resident Maureen Doyle announces the Plant a Tree Program and provides brochures to members of the Board.

Agenda #6- COVID-19 Update- A. Pelletier states the Town is currently in a significant upswing with COVID cases. 9 weeks ago 2 cases and as of September 1<sup>st</sup> in a 14 day reporting period there were 74 cases. Of the 151 cases reported in the month of August, 43 are under 20 years old (school aged).

A. Pelletier states the vaccination rate in town is at 54% (30% Caucasians; 70% Hispanics fully vaccinated) leaving 46% of the Town unvaccinated. A. Pelletier suggests that concentration should be on increasing the vaccination rate.

A. Pelletier report the State is following CDC guidance and starting to organize for boosters after 8 months. The hospital is working with high risk cases for booster shots. In addition, A. Pelletier reports he was recently informed by Harrington that the vaccination and testing clinic

located on South St will be closed for a renovation due to environmental issues. Previously scheduled appointments will be redirected to other Harrington sites and they will not be taking any new appointments until renovations are completed.

A. Pelletier reports DESE has mandated masks for k-12 until they reach an 80% vaccination rate and then they will revisit the mandate.

- a. Discuss potential actions to curtail current outbreak to include but not be limited to a public mask mandate. A. Pelletier and members of the Board discuss clusters, positivity rates, and promoting the vaccine to reach the targeted audience.

R. LaRoche comments he is not in favor of a public mask mandate.

Citizen comments: Councilor D. Adams suggested educating on various social media sites. P. Paquin suggests that creating a short educational video may have a big impact and offers to assist if needed. M. Doyle questions if a video has ever been made for the access channel? E. Stephens states not in a very long time.

Member N. Duffey states she would consider mandating masks. A. Postale states he would also consider this however, also re-education.

Councilor Ryan deeply expresses support of a mask mandate to protect the town's staff and the public's health. Councilor Ryan urges the board to institute a public mask mandate.

R. LaRoche states he is in favor of a municipal building mask mandate but not a town-wide public mask mandate because it will not be enforceable.

R. LaRoche continued that the Town buildings fall under the authority of the town manager and town Council; that they have the final say.

Sara Larose, business owner of Volume Hair on Main St expresses concerns if a public mask mandate is in effect, people will favor businesses in surrounding communities instead additionally, she does not want to police this mandate. Making a very uncomfortable situation for both the clients and business owners. Sometimes even confrontational. Pleads that the Board reconsider this public mask mandate.

Business owner, Russell Labarge also expressed concerns stating it is common sense, if you don't feel well stay home. Don't socialize. Mr. Labarge concludes this mandate will be a hardship on small businesses in town.

A. Pelletier reads a statement from business owner, Jeremy Buteau verbatim (see attached).

E. Stephens states the choice not to be vaccinated is a personal choice however, as an employee of the hospital we cannot deny care for those who refuse to get vaccinated, then get sick. This is frustrating for those who actually need help and can't get the help because of people who refuse to be vaccinated.

A. Pelletier states the Board is to advocate Public Health then advise/provide guidance to the Town Manager on any concerns.

Councilor Ryan strongly recommends the Board mandate masks in public buildings.

Member N. Duffey suggests recommending rather than mandating face coverings.

A. Pelletier requests if anyone has additional ideas on educating the public feel free to share them.

Motion made by R. LaRoche: the Sbdge Board of Health recommends wearing proper face coverings while indoors; 2<sup>nd</sup> by N. Duffey:

Roll Call

E. Stephens-yes

A. Postale-yes

N. Duffey-yes

R. LaRoche-yes

Motion passes unanimously by all present.

- b. Review and offer comments on the Sbdge Public Schools proposed music program- A. Pelletier states Karen Checka provided a revised proposed COVID safety guidance for the music program for the Board's review. Discussion regarding the use and cleanliness of the filters arose. The Board supports the proposed program with R. LaRoche strongly advising the schools to follow manufactures recommendations for proper maintenance and use to achieve its effectiveness as well as safety.

#### Agenda #7- New Business

- a. Proposal by Walgreens to assist on a Flu Clinic- A. Pelletier reports a meeting with Karen Lavigne, the Pharmacy Manager at Walgreens who proposed a partnership public flu clinic in town to include surrounding towns. Two specific concerns discussed included ensuring that uninsured/ underinsured would not be turned away and was this an opportunity possibility to administer COVID 19 vaccines. Ms. Lavigne assured vouchers would be available and volunteers would be on hand to assist with any potential traffic issues. In addition, this event will offer an opportunity to sign up for the vaccines but they could not give them at this event. The potential

date for the event is Saturday October 2, 2021 from 10-2pm at the Town Common if available.

Consensus of the Board agrees with a public flu clinic.

b. Discuss status of Sub-Committee's- A. Pelletier reminds the Board of the very near closure of the Landfill (potentially this year) and request guidance on the status of the Landfill Oversight Committee. R. LaRoche suggest adding on the next agenda the LOC and extend an invitation to all members including Clemence, Plouffe, Markham and Doyle.

With this, A. Pelletier expresses he is available should any member be interested in touring the Landfill.

E. Stephens mentions the Tri-Epic Committee, although no recent meetings continues to be active.

c. West Nile Virus positive mosquito discussion- A. Pelletier announces a positive West Nile case in Southbridge. Discussion relating to the towns inability to opt out of state spraying due to not having an alternate plan. A. Pelletier suggests that in the future the Board may consider spraying or create an action plan. In addition, suggests inviting Tim Deschamp from Central Mass Mosquito Control to the next Board meeting.

#### Agenda #8- Old Business

##### a. Blight-

Idlewood St- A. Pelletier explains the property has been cleaned out and gutted. Resident Darlene Marcucci expressed disappointment regarding the odor filled dumpster that has been left there for weeks. Now with the added rain has increased the scent of the debris infested with urine/mold.

E. Stephens is shocked this property continues to be of nuisance and should not be tolerated.

R. LaRoche orders A. Pelletier to order the owners to correct the violations forthwith.

A. Pelletier assures the Board that first thing in the morning he will prepare an order to the property owner to correct the violations forthwith.

215 Hamilton St- A. Pelletier reports the bank failed to move on this property. The building inspector will communicate with the bank regarding noncompliance and the Town's next step.

495 South St- This property has had a tree fall on in and the owner has been unreachable. The case was taken to court, the court has ordered the owner to demo or repair or, upon failure; the town is to remove it. Through the building department, the Town is preparing a bid to remove it under 30B. Asbestos review is scheduled.

361 Worcester St- The short sale fell through and will now go before the Attorney Generals Office for possible receivership.

Vienna- A. Pelletier reports this property has remained stagnant. He will reach out to owner regarding the overgrowth.

Agenda #9- Chairman Announcements- No announcements

Agenda #10- Health Director Announcements- A. Pelletier announced Household Hazardous Waste is scheduled for September 25, 2021 from 9am-1pm at the Landfill.

In addition, the department will be hosting an electronic waste day at the DPW on September 18, 2021 from 8-Noon. A. Pelletier invites members of the Board to volunteer and be part of the event.

Agenda #11- Board Members Announcements-

a. R. LaRochelle states curbside bulk pick-up continues to be an issue. Bulk is currently placed on the sidewalk for days before and after the scheduled bulk date. Also, Casella continues to pick-up overflow bags left out on the sidewalk.

R. LaRochelle, out of frustration, states enough lip service and insists we need to start ticketing Casella and all the property owners daily. The gateways into town constantly have trash and bulk out.

E. Stephens does not understand why a mattress has been out on Everett St for weeks now.

A. Pelletier reassures the department has been issuing tickets, including this week, as well as speaking with residents and owners for educational purposes.

R. LaRochelle states as far as he is concerned he is done, and questions why there are regulations if not enforced. R. LaRochelle insists that education is done and demands the department issue tickets period.

A. Pelletier agrees that the department will issue tickets per the Boards direction.

b. N. Duffey- no announcement

c. A. Postale- no announcement

Agenda #12- Schedule Next Meeting- October 7, 2021 @ 6:00pm

Agenda #13- Adjournment- Motion to adjourn made by A. Postale; 2<sup>nd</sup> R. LaRochelle;

Roll Call

E. Stephens-yes


R. LaRochelle-yes

A. Postale-yes

N. Duffey-yes

Motion passes unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 8:39pm

PENDING: Body Art Regulations  
Marijuana Permitting



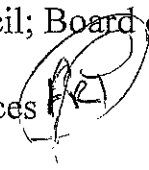


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**TOWN OF SOUTHBRIDGE**  
SOUTHBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 01550-2638

MEMORANDUM

TO: Michael McCall, Town Manager; Town Council; Board of Health

FROM: Andrew Pelletier, Director of Inspection Services 

DATE: September 16, 2021

SUBJECT: Board of Health recommendation

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On September 16, 2021 I, as Director of Public Health, was asked to offer direction as to whether the Town of Southbridge should move to mandate masks in municipal buildings.

Whereas:

Case counts of the 14-day reporting periods through May, June and July were consistently below 25 (often below 10) and are currently above 70 (79 for the current reporting period), and

Whereas:

The positivity rate for the Town of Southbridge was below 3% as recently as early August but is now above 5%; If the color system had been maintained this would put Southbridge back into the "RED" designation, and

Whereas;

The Town's vaccine rate (55%) lags the State average (65%) by 10%, and

Whereas:

Though neither the Town Hall nor the Fire Department have had recent COVID events within the last 2 months, the police department has had 1, the public school has had 30 (4 staff) the library has had none however the library staff is required by the Director to wear masks, and

Whereas;

At the regular meeting of the Board of Health held on September 2, 2021 the Board did vote to strongly recommend the wearing of masks in municipal buildings and buildings open to the public.

Therefore;

Based on the above citations showing a trend toward increasing severity in this current epidemic and, an end goal to keep public service open and accessible; only attainable by keeping the Town staff healthy and in condition to serve our public; I support my Board's vote and advise the

Council to adopt or direct the Town Manager to adopt a mask mandate in municipal buildings in the Town of Southbridge.

Addendum:

Some facts for consideration:

1. The following is the case counts for the previous 5 – 14 day reporting periods

14 Day reporting period stats				
Week of	# pos	# tested	Cases per 100,000 eq	Positivity Rate*
4-Aug-21	21	718	9	2.90%
11-Aug-21	49	861	21	5.60%
18-Aug-21	68	1250	29	5.40%
25-Aug-21	65	1595	27	4.00%
1-Sep-21	74	1705	31	4.30%
8-Sep-21	70	1608	29.5	4.30%
15-Sep-21	79	1538	33	5.10%
*Please Understand that the sample is not truly representative; the sample is taken from a pool of persons who have reason to test and is not reflective of the town as a whole.				

2. Within our Town Hall

We have 4 persons who are not vaccinated (Of 26 persons who were present on Wednesday)

We have 1 person who would seek a medical exemption to wearing the mask

We have 0 persons who would seek religious exemption to wearing the mask

I did not have opportunity to seek similar stats for other municipal buildings

3. Within Massachusetts

Of the 331 communities I've potentially identified 87 that are currently under mask mandates in municipal buildings (closest being Worcester)

Of the 331 communities I've potentially identified 40 that are currently under mask mandates community wide

4. Attached: Draft minutes of September 12, 2021 meeting

Please note these minutes are draft and not intended for public distribution