

Sudbury Board of Health

Virtual COVID-19 Meeting 4/28/2020

Attendance: Carol Bradford–Board Chair, Linda Huet-Clayton–Board Member, Susan Sama–Board Member, Bill Murphy–Health Director, Phyllis Schilp–Public Health Nurse, Bethany Hadvab–Town Social Worker, Beth Porter–Health Administrator, Scott Nix–Sudbury Chief of Police, Jaine Dretler– Select Board, Jennifer Roberts–Select Board, Bella Wong-LSRHS Superintendent, Ellie Gottlieb–Sudbury Resident, Kay Bell-Sudbury Resident.

4:01: Carol Bradford called meeting to order.

Phyllis Schilp Public Health Nurse COVID-19 Update:

Long Term Care Facilities continue to report the highest number of COVID positive cases. Not reported are that 22 of the 42 long term care COVID positive numbers are health care workers. Testing continues in the Sudbury long term care facilities.

Lack of Access to PPE continues to be a problem for most health care agencies.

New Funding for Long Term Care can be applied for, but the process is time consuming. For staffs that are already stretched thin and exhausted, processing the paperwork has become a daunting task.

CTC: Community Tracing Collaborative. Phyllis continues to assess the start-up challenges of the program. Confidence levels needed to improve with respect to timely and efficient contact tracing before we can invest in the program.

COVID-19 Positive Employees that work in Sudbury, but reside in other towns, are not reflected in the Sudbury numbers.

Bethany Hadvab Town Social Worker COVID-19 Update:

Increase in needs: Bethany has started increases in residents asking for help. Bethany's intern has been processing increases in Hope Sudbury Applications.

Social Worker Website: The Website is being continually being updated. New resources and links are being added.

Health Inequities: Concerns were raised regarding populations of people that have limited access to health care. There are many non-insured Sudbury residents that have not reached out to the Social Worker's Office in the past. Bethany is concerned that there will be a surge of these families and individuals contacting her once they have no other options.

Food Insecurity has risen from 9.3% (pre-COVID) to 40%. These numbers are attributed to loss of employment, limited food supply, and fear of exposure to COVID-19.

Neighbor Brigade: Volunteer based organization in town has begun collecting gift cards and distributing them to residents in need. Many gift cards are from local restaurants.

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Scott Nix Sudbury Police Chief COVID-19 Update:

PD has been collaborating with Bethany Hadvab to get messaging and information out to Sudbury residents. Also, Bethany has coordinated efforts to work with the PD Social Worker to work on mental health evaluations.

Chief Nix: indicated that there is a large volume of calls with false claims to get officers to address people who are not social distancing. He attributes this to an escalation in fear due to messaging in the media.

Bill Murphy-Health Director-COVID-19 Update:

Face Coverings: There has been influx of complaints that the Town has not mandated the use of face coverings while in indoor public spaces. Until now the Town has followed CDC guidelines and advisories regarding the use of facial covering. The Attorney General's Office modified a ruling indicating that local government can make this mandatory. Grocery stores and all other essential businesses will operate under an advisory only.

PROS: Instituting a mandate creates a level playing field for essential establishments and all customers to follow a uniform procedure. A mandate is consistent with many other cities and towns in efforts to prevent the spread of COVID.

CONS: The reluctance to make facial coverings mandatory are: improper use of coverings, a false sense of protection, Issues with enforcement and that there is no scientific basis that facial coverings are effective in mitigating the spread of COVID-19. Other issues would include the improper disposal of face coverings and supplying to those who are more vulnerable and less capable. The residents will not have ample time to procure face coverings – a grace period for residents will be given in order to address the mandate.

Dr. Hoenig: believes that there is no downside to the residents wearing face coverings but he does not endorse the effectiveness due to the lack of scientifically based evidence.

Face Covering Mandate- points defined:

- The public would have to wear facial coverings inside essential businesses.
- A CDC link in the mandate showing how to properly wear face coverings.
- Messaging that face coverings are not to replace the proven methods of mitigating the spread of COVID-19 such as proper hand washing, social distancing, cleaning high touch surfaces, not touching hands to face.
- Messaging for individuals who should NOT wear face coverings. Children under 2 and people with respiratory problems.

VOTE: Motion to adopt facial coverings mandate as-written: Carol Bradford, Health Chair called vote to motion: Linda Huet-Clayton, Board Member seconded motion. Motion passed 3-0-0.

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Public outreach for the mandate will include posting on the town website, Twitter and Facebook. The post will be sent out (via email) to food establishments, pharmacies, convenience stores, liquor stores and any other essential businesses open to the public. The mandate will also be sent out to all residents via the Sudbury Emergency Alert System.

LSRHS Graduation Ceremony: Bella Wong – Lincoln-Sudbury School Superintendent. Graduation has become an important topic for parents and seniors. They would like a live graduation as opposed to a virtual graduation. Options are: Postponement. Have students come up with creative ways to have a virtual graduation.

Town Meeting: Jaine Dretler and Jennifer Roberts Select Board Members, would also like to get the Health Board's input as to when Town Meeting could be held. The Select Board members Dretler and Roberts were assessing dates in June.

Town Election: Mail in ballots were discussed but there are laws and constraints that preclude running a postal election only. Postponement would be the best solution.

BOH's Response to Graduation, Town Meeting and Town Election: As the scientific community evaluates the projection of COVID-19, it is obvious to the Board of Health and the Health Director that holding events that would bring hundreds of residents in close proximity would pose a risk to the participants and the community. It is unclear as to when we can go back to a "new normal". Susan Sama illustrated that by social distancing we are keeping the curve of COVID-19 down. This means that the longevity of virus is extended but minimizes positive cases at the same time and lessens stress on the health care system. The Board advises reevaluating to see where the trend is and where it will go. If pushed for a definite answer, at this point in time, the Board and Director will not support events that put undo risk on community members especially the elderly.

Opening Town Buildings: Bill Murphy, Bill Barletta (Sudbury Facilities Director) and other department heads have been collaborating on how opening the buildings will be accomplished. Employees will be mandated to wear face coverings and keep a safe distance from residents and vendors. Plexiglass windows are an option and have been used by many essential businesses throughout the Commonwealth. Staggering schedules of employees in each department for social distancing and cleaning high touch surfaces will be addressed. Strategies between departments will continue.

Meeting was adjourned at 5:46.