

Manchester Board of Health

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, January 13, 2022

Virtual Meeting

Members present:

Paula Falias

Joan Colarusso

Dr. Martin Hahn

Dr. Tonya Colpitts

Members absent:

Peter Colarusso

Covid Update, Public Health Nurse Pamela Crehan

Paula Falias called the meeting to order at 8:35 a.m.

With Public Health Nurse Pamela Crehan out of the office, Ms. Falias asked Ellen Lufkin to read Nurse Crehan's report, which included the following:

As of 01/12/22:

Manchester percent positivity: 16.4%

Essex County percent positivity: 29%

Numbers from positive pcr reported in Maven:

Total cases to date: 487

January 1 – 13 cases: 48

Active cases in 5 day isolation: 5

Non active cases in day 6-10: 30

Dr. Hahn added the following information:

Hospitalization, ICU beds used in Essex County as of 01/11/22: 93%

Of 68 staffed adults ICU beds, 27 are non-covid patients and 36 are covid patients

Manchester resident Eric Bradford attended the meeting and was questioning the members on the case reporting numbers, specifically the numbers that the nurse reported at the end of December.

He said he had communicated with Nurse Crehan and following that communication still disagreed with her Covid numbers reporting, specifically reporting on the active case numbers. At issue was his disbelief that the active case numbers for the week were so much lower than the case numbers.

Dr. Hahn noted that the numbers are difficult. He stated that the number 47 was he believed the number of cases for the month of December but would check with the nurse on her return.

He noted that the State and CDC define what an active case is, and that while he may disagree, the Board can not make up their own criteria for definition of an active case.

Further, that the State system has only pcr testing as reported (with some antigen testing as probable) and home tests are not going into the State reporting system.

He noted that the numbers are still useful, giving an idea of trends over time.

As regards Mr Bradford's comments that incorrect numbers are being used to make Covid related decisions, Dr. Hahn noted that the Board had in fact used other criteria and discussions beyond numbers for decision making including regarding mask mandates.

Dr. Colpitts thanked Mr. Bradford for his input, noting that the Board appreciates that he wants Manchester by the Sea to be cautious. She stated that the Board takes all of this very seriously. She also noted that the CDC definition of an active case needs to be kept in mind. Further, if there are to be changes to the definition of an active case that is a discussion to be had at or with the State or C.D.C. She stated that the Board can not change the State and CDC definition of an active case.

Mr. Bradford noted that calculated as it has been, the number of active cases reported will always be low. He stated that his problem is with the numbers reported on 12/30/21, stating that 53 cases with only 15 active is impossible.

Dr. Colpitts noted that there is a cumulative case number that is reported. She repeated that the Board can not change the definition of an active case and that cases that no longer meet that definition must be removed from the active case count. She stated that the Board must continue to report this way and suggested that there may be a need for increased awareness on the matter.

Mr. Bradford stated that active equals cumulative.

Dr. Hahn replied that active does not equal cumulative

Mr. Bradford repeated that 53 cases with 13 active does not work.

Mr. Robert Coyne of 115 Beach Street asked that the Board post their recent meeting minutes online.

Ms. Filias noted that they are available from the office but will also be posted online.

Resident Gayle Gang requested that school Covid numbers be placed in the Town's weekly newsletter "The Tide". She said that she had gone to the school Covid dashboard and was surprised the school had 70 Covid positive people. She felt that residents should know the school numbers.

Dr. Hahn thanked Ms. Gang for her input.

He repeated to Mr. Bradford that hospitalization numbers were used in the mask mandate decision.

In reply to Ms. Gang he said that we could report school numbers, but as the school does antigen testing, it may cause confusion. He also wished that the State Covid reporting was more transparent, as he felt that a lot of cases were falling under the radar. Dr. Hahn also agreed that he would follow up with Nurse Pam Crehan regarding Mr. Bradford's comments on the Covid numbers reported.

Mr. Bradford stated that for over a year, the numbers had been reported in the same manner and that the active case number is wrong, that 53/13 is wrong. He asked the Board if they were still going to report the numbers in the same way, stating that if they were, he was going to go to the State.

Dr. Hahn replied that the Board sees that they are calculated per the State guidelines.

Dr. Colpitts noted that the Board will look into it, but that there is a difference between cumulative and active cases.

Mr. Bradford stated he was right about the math and that if the Board does not change he will go to the State.

Dr. Hahn replied that the Board does not make the definition of active case.

Mr. Bradford said that pressure was placed on the Board of Health, as was spoken about earlier.

Joan Cottler suggested the matter be tabled, that Dr. Hahn speak to Nurse Crehan, and that the Board then get back to Mr. Bradford, including any necessary corrections.

Water Quality Task Force

Ms. Filias asked Ms. Cottler if she would consider being an alternate representative to the task force, to back up Mr. Colarusso who had already agreed to represent the Board of Health on the committee.

Ms. Cottler said that she would think about serving as alternate to the committee.

113 Ocean Street, Mario Covino

Dan Ottenheimer of Mill River Consulting came before the Board to present plan revisions to an approved septic system plan on file. Before his presentation, Mr. Ottenheimer thanked the Board for the work that they do to protect the public health. Mr. Ottenheimer said the revised plan was designed to accommodate and increase in rooms from 5 bedrooms to 6 bedrooms and that no variances were requested. Ms. Filias noted that Board of Health Consultant Engineer Gerry McDonald had already reviewed the revised septic system plan and was recommending approval. Ms. Filias made a motion to approve the septic system design plan for 113 Ocean Street in Manchester, plan dated 0/02/20 and last revised on 01/11/22. Ms. Cottler seconded the motion. Members, by roll call vote approved the motion to approve the plan.

Ms. Filias, in favor

Ms. Cottler, in favor

Dr. Hahn, in favor

Dr. Colpitts, in favor

Covid Testing

At the request of member Peter Colarusso, members discussed Covid-19 testing available thru Care Access. Ms. Filias noted that Mr. Colarusso, thru his Lynn Chamber of Commerce work, had been on a committee setting up Covid testing thru CareAccess. Dr. Hahn who had reviewed the testing information provided by Mr. Colarusso noted that CareAccess is a clinical trials company, with a 60% positivity rate, which is high (here 20-29%) so he doubts that they are doing antigen testing. He noted that there is confusion on the company policy on reporting and not in favor of using the company for testing. Ms. Filias agreed she was also not comfortable and suggested that the matter be tabled and possibly revised at a future meeting.

At 9:28 a.m. Ms. Filias made a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Dr. Colpitts.

By roll call vote, members voted in favor of the motion to adjourn the meeting.

Ms. Filias, in favor

Ms. Cottler, in favor

Dr. Hahn, in favor

Dr. Colpitts, in favor

As submitted,

Ellen D. Lufkin