

CITY OF GLOUCESTER
Board of Health
Minutes of the Meeting
October 15, 2020
5:30 p.m.
Remote Meeting Via Zoom

Board members virtually present courtesy of a system organized by the City's IT Department: Chairperson: Dr. Richard Sagall; Vice–Chairperson: Robert Harris; Frederick Cowan; Joe Rosa; and Claudia Schweitzer. Present from the Health Department: Health Director: Karin Carroll; Assistant Health Director: Max Schenk.

Also present Mayor Sefatia Romeo Theken

The meeting started at 5:30 p.m.

This meeting is recorded by video and audio in accordance with state Open Meeting Law. Consistent with the Governor's orders suspending certain provisions of the Open Meeting Law and banning gatherings of more than 10 people, this meeting will be conducted by remote participation. If you are calling in on a phone you can press Star 9 (*9) to request to speak. If you are watching on a computer or device there is a "raise hand" button that you can tap or press to request to speak. Please use either of these options during oral communications to be recognized to speak.

Mayor Sefatia Romeo Theken appeared for the board. She thanked board members and members of the Health Department for all their hard work during the pandemic. She stated that the City has an uptick in Covid-19 cases in Gloucester and it is a cluster that they are working on controlling. She stated that the City did not shut any restaurants down, some restaurants shut down voluntarily. She stated that it is a lot different between March and now because they have much more information about the virus.

Ms. Carroll thanked the Mayor for getting the testing set up so quickly.

PUBLIC ORAL COMMUNICATION

There was no "Public Oral Communication".

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

To be presented at the meeting of November 5, 2020

COMMITTEE REPORTS

No "Committee Reports".

NEW BUSINESS

Discussion re: Phase 3, Step 2 COVID Protocols - *Ms. Carroll* presented data to board members based on the discussion at the last meeting regarding moving ahead to the next step in the reopening phases. She stated that Phase 3 started in August and September, and Phase 3 Step 2 started about 2 weeks ago for any communities who were not in the "red". She stated that the biggest changes are the increase in occupancy to 50% maximum occupancy or 250 people for indoor performance venues; fitting rooms are allowed to open; slight increase capacity at gyms, libraries, museums, and driving and flight schools. She stated that there was no increase in private gatherings inside or outside, but outside gatherings at a venue or public place increased to 100 people. She stated that the positive test rate for the State is at 1.3% and a week ago it was 1.1%. She stated that Gloucester's current positivity rate is 1.9%. She stated that Gloucester has had no new deaths since the summer. She stated that there is very little hospitalization, but that number is climbing as well. She stated that the cluster in Gloucester affected a lot of businesses. She stated that if the city is in the "red" for 3 weeks, schools will move back to Phase 3, Step 1. She stated that the State does not do wastewater level testing, so they cannot compare their data to the State's. She stated that the schools have set a testing threshold which is 2 or more cases that seem to be linked, 3 or more in one grade level, 3% of a school building, and/or 2 or more on a school bus. She stated that if any of those criteria are met then they can request a mobile testing unit from the State. *Mr. Rosa* asked if any representative from the schools is concerned about the rise in cases. *Ms. Carroll* stated that the superintendent has discussed with her the concern among teachers and the need for more availability of testing at the schools. She stated that they have requested the free round of testing from MIT. She stated that the mobile testing at Stage Fort Park will continue for 3 more days next week and people only have to give very limited information.

Mr. Harris asked how old you had to be to get tested at the mobile site. *Ms. Carroll* responded that she was not sure but would find out for *Mr. Harris*.

Mr. Cowan asked if there were specific instructions for the library. *Ms. Carroll* responded that she will get that information for *Mr. Cowan*.

Ms. Carroll stated that as of October 15, 2020, there are 53 active cases in Gloucester. She stated that the schools reported 2 cases two weeks ago and 1 case last week. She stated that the EMT's in the City have not transported anyone in the City with Covid-like symptoms for quite a while. She stated the City's two long-term nursing facilities are 100% in compliance with the State's testing guidelines.

The board discussed the community Halloween event scheduled for Thursday, 10/29, 2-4pm. *Ms. Carroll* stated that children will receive a treat bag after they walk through downtown. She stated that if the City is in red for 3 weeks then they would have to limit the amount of people allowed in a public place. *Chairperson Sagall* stated that he does not see the need to do any

events such as these in the City with the amount of Covid cases rising. *Ms. Schweitzer* agreed with Chairperson Sagall and stated that she is concerned with children and not wearing masks.

Mayor Sefatia Romeo Theken stated that it is better to have a controlled event than have parents taking their children out without any guidelines. She stated that Main Street will be shut to cars and the event will only be for toddlers to 5th graders. She stated that the stores have been told that they are not allowed to hand items out. She stated that there will be resource officers and trained volunteers to ensure everyone is following the guidelines. She stated that beaches were open all summer and restaurants and schools are open, so organized events can be done safely.

Mr. Rosa stated that people are going to go out on Halloween, so why not give them a place to go where there are guidelines in place to keep them safe. He stated that this event would probably be safer than what goes on at the beaches or eating at a restaurant.

Chairperson Sagall stated that he agreed with the controlled event but he didn't think the board should sanction the event.

Mr. Cowan stated that he feels that this is an important thing to do for the City. He stated that there is a similar outdoor drive-thru function planned for earlier that day at the Senior Center. No food or drink will be offered. Wearing of medical masks by all will be strictly enforced. Before exiting the parking lot, a goodie bag will be placed in the senior's car in a contact-free manner. *Mr. Harris* agreed. He stated that kids are playing sports and going to school and the board should not pick and choose what groups are allowed and which are not. *Mr. Rosa* agreed as well. He stated that he feels the biggest problem with transmission is indoor venues around food.

Mr. Cowan shared [COVID-19 Command Center Situation Report for October 15, 2020](#)

Discussion re: Whether to extend the Eviction Moratorium issued by the Board of Health and Mayor on April 10, 2020

Mr. Schenk stated that in April the Board of Health created an eviction moratorium to help prevent homelessness and the spread of Covid-19 and not long after that Governor Baker created a statewide moratorium. He stated that the Governor has decided not to extend the current moratorium in Massachusetts.

Mr. Rosa stated that they realize that renters are under a burden but the landlords also have a burden to pay their mortgages. He stated that banks should assume some responsibility. *Mr. Cowan* stated that properties should not be foreclosed on during this same time.

Mayor Sefatia Romeo Theken stated that a letter should be written to the Senator and Congressmen on behalf of landlords to go after mortgage companies.

Mr. Schenk read a statement from a representative from Action, that stated they were in favor of extending the moratorium.

The board agreed to continue the item until the next meeting.

OLD BUSINESS

No "Old Business".

OTHER DEPARTMENT UPDATES

No "Other Department Updates".

CONCERNS OF BOARD MEMBERS

Next Regular Monthly Meeting Board of Health- The next Board of Health monthly meeting will be on November 5, 2020 at 5 pm. The board agreed to change the meeting times to 5 p.m. and to continue to meet every two weeks as needed.

MOTION by Mr. Cowan to adjourn.
Seconded by Mr. Rosa **CARRIED.**
MEETING ADJOURNED – 7:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Bobbi Orlando

Accepted by:

Richard Sagall, Chairperson

Documents Referenced:

October 15 2020 Board of Health Agenda
BOH/Mayor Eviction Moratorium
Governor's Phase-3, Step-2 order