

Holyoke Board of Health  
 Monday, October 4, 2021 at 6:30 P.M.  
 Holyoke, MA 01040  
 ZOOM  
**Meeting Minutes**

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MAR 28 2022

**Holyoke City Clerk's  
 Holyoke, MA**

Attendance: Patricia A. Mertes, Chair  
 Dr. Esteban A. Del Pilar-Morales, MD, Vice Chair  
 Dalila Hyry-Dermith, Clerk  
 Sean Gonsalves, RS, Health Director  
 Deborah Schaier, PHN  
 Beatriz Colon, Head Clerk

Patricia A. Mertes, Chair called the meeting to order at 6:36 p.m.

At this meeting the Board will discuss to approve a mask mandate in the City of Holyoke. Mr. Gonsalves emailed a draft to the Commissioners with language based on Springfield's mandate. Mrs. Schaier suggested adding a section specifying public and work indoor spaces. Mr. Gonsalves suggested adding retail businesses and covered malls. Springfield's language includes common areas of multi-business units (which covers inside malls) and other stores are indoor workspaces. Mrs. Schaier also wants to cover group homes. The draft does not include group homes because they are not a public area. Public transportation and buses fall under the federal mandate.

They discussed when to begin implementation of the mandate. Springfield voted on Friday and the mandate began on Monday. This gave people time to comply. If passed, a summary will be sent to the newspaper and posted on website giving it time for circulation. Ms. Hyry suggested beginning October 6, 2021, starting at 12:01 a.m. This will give a twenty-four (24) hour transitional period.

Ms. Mertes asked the public to introduce themselves. Susan Smiley, Chief Operating Officer for the Girls Scouts of Central and Western Massachusetts. She wants the organization to be up to date in all requirements and keep everyone healthy.

Ms. Mertes asked if the reason we are doing this is because the state of emergency is over and certain state requirements are no longer in effect? Mr. Gonsalves explained the Board has the ability to pass local regulations. With a state of emergency there is no need to give notice of meetings. The Board vested authority in him to be able to make any necessary decisions without the need to meet. During the last meeting we spoke to the Mayor but he was not sure the city was ready to commit any outside resources to enforce management of a mandate. He would like a press release. The way it works is when the Board votes and passes per quorum, language is published in local newspaper and posted on the website this serves as notice to the public. It is not too different from other mandates. Last mandate was only in effect for a week before the state jumped in and instituting their mandate. The local authority was not the lasting verdict.

Mrs. Schaier asked how long will the mandate be in effect? Should we wait until a new Mayor is voted in? Springfield's mandate is until November 1, 2021. The Board can choose to do it for thirty days, wait until October 6, 2021, rescind it or pick another date. Mr. Gonsalves suggested leaving a date of November 1, 2021, unless amended or

rescinded. Dr. Del Pilar suggested doing it until December 1, 2021. During the next meeting in November, they can look at the numbers and decide whether to rescinded or extend the mandate. He prefers to extend it rather than having to meet again and run the risk of one of them not being available for the meeting.

Ms. Mertes wants to know what is the choice based on? In the last two fourteen-day reporting periods the case count has plateau. It has remained the same with 260 cases. Many towns have seen a decrease in cases. Holyoke, Springfield, Wilbraham and a few others have seen a slow growth. Our rate went from 49.1 to 49.6, the smallest increment growth in a while. The goal is to bring down the current numbers in preparation for the Holidays and slow down the case counts in schools. Schools have a higher than average case count based on the size of our community. We also want to possibly suppress any bump we might see from the Big E with its largest attendance ever recorded.

The state asked Mr. Gonsalves what the BOH sees as a contributing factor and what strategies we have for mitigation. He believes remote learning will mitigate a lot of cases but the state is not ready for that yet. Dr. Del Pilar would rather keep the mandate on until the pandemic is over. However, doing it for two months will give them a chance to look at everything and access the mandate again. This will give the public access to the meeting to voice any concerns or questions. December 1, 2021 unless otherwise amended or rescinded.

Ms. Hyry would like to continue meetings thru Zoom. The state's decided to do virtual meetings until April 2022. Mr. Gonsalves feels this is better and more accessible to the public.

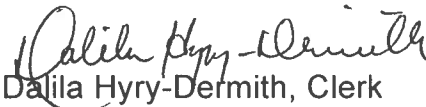
Ms. Mertes proposed to adopt a city-wide mask mandate beginning Tuesday, October 6, 2021 until December 1, 2021 unless otherwise amended or rescinded. Seconded by Ms. Hyry and Dr. Del Pilar. All in favor 0 opposed. Mr. Gonsalves will sign the document tomorrow and it will be posted on website. A press released will be send to a local newspaper.

Mr. Gonsalves would like the Commissioners to help in the upcoming interviews for an open position for inspector. There are many applicants, and the interviews will be done virtually. Past interview questions will be used. He four candidates and will email them the applications. The scheduled date is October 19, 2021. If anyone cannot make it or needs to re-schedule he will inform them.

The next BOH Meeting is scheduled for November 1, 2021.

Mrs. Mertes adjourned meeting at 7:02 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

  
Dalila Hyry-Dermith, Clerk

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