

Meeting Minutes of the Chelsea Board of Health – Emergency Meeting on Instituting a Mask Mandate  
November 30, 2021

**Attendance: Names of members and Participants**

Board members, City of Chelsea staff and guests were introduced.

Board Members:

- Corinna Culler
- Allen Jackson
- Joshua Merson
- Olay Bayode

City of Chelsea Staff:

- Tom Ambrosino, City Manager
- Dr. Flor Amaya, Director of Public Health
- Paula McHatton, Public Health Nurse
- Cheryl Watson Fisher, City Solicitor

Guests:

- Judith Garcia, City Council Vice President
- Naomi Zobot, City Councilor

**Discussion on Implementing an Indoor Mask Mandate**

At several previous Board of Health meetings, the Board had discussed implementing an indoor mask mandate, given certain metrics. Recently, relevant metrics in Chelsea have increased, prompting the call for this meeting. Specifically:

As of November 25:

- The COVID-19 positivity rate in the City has increased to 3.08%.
- The incidence rate has increased to 23.4/100,000.
- And, as of November 30, the City has a total of 9,740 total cases, an increase of 57 confirmed cases since last Friday. The City is averaging 11 new cases/day over the last 5 days.

Josh Merson noted the need to have appropriate metrics in place to allow the Board to rescind a mask mandate when necessary. The Board then discussed how the current metrics compare to CDC and state guidance on transmission. For example, Dr. Amaya reported that according to the CDC, Suffolk County is an area of “High” transition.

The MA Dept. of Public Health currently uses a color-coded scheme, and according to the State’s categories, the City is at the cusp of the yellow/red (high transmission) categories.

City Manager Tom Ambrosino noted that the City hasn’t seen fewer than 4 infections/day in a long time. He agrees that, given the case numbers and other

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metrics, the City should institute a mask mandate. But he worries about the appropriateness of using daily infections as a metric.

Dr. Amaya noted that other local municipalities like Boston do reference the CDC guidance in their mask mandate ordinances, reference Suffolk County, and then go on to note specific city-based metrics. She also noted that when the mask mandated was rescinded in mid-May, Chelsea was seeing about 20 cases/week.

Ola Bayode reminded the Board that in previous discussions, there was agreement that the Board would take up the issue of whether to institute a mask mandate at the appropriate time, and felt that given the recent metrics, and data from the wastewater monitoring project, this discussion was timely and appropriate.

Corinna Culler agreed and moved the Board through a review of the draft order, focusing on language, metrics, and a date when the mandate would go into effect. Edits to the draft document included:

- Adding references to both the CDC and MA DPH guidance and where recent Chelsea metrics and transmission rates fall in relation to that guidance.
- Clarifying the period being looked at for transmission comparisons (through 11/29/21).
- Specifying that the order will go into effect on Friday, December 3 at 5am.

City Manager Tom Ambrosino suggested the mask mandate could be lifted when cases return to about 35 cases/week. Josh Merson agreed. Dr. Amaya questioned how many weeks the City should be at or below 35 cases/week before the mandate is rescinded. Ola Bayode suggested looking at a 3-week average, which had support among the Board. Cheryl Watson Fischer noted that other local city officials are recommending letting their Boards of Health have final decision on rescinding a mask mandate.

The Board agreed that it may consider rescinding the mask mandate when:

- The incidence rate returns to < 5 cases/50,000 population.
- The city experiences 4 or more consecutive weeks where there are less than 35 cases per week.

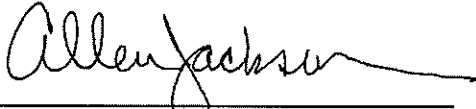
By unanimous vote, the Board agreed to accept the edits to the draft order to institute a mask mandate.

Once the document is signed, Dr. Amaya will share it with Cheryl Watson Fischer, who will oversee distribution to licensed establishments throughout the City.

Two public comments were received, one from Christina Alonzo of La Collaborativa and Sara Arman & Warda Arman. Both comments were in favor of the mask mandate.

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The meeting adjourned at 6:47pm.



Allen Jackson, Clerk

12/14/2021

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