

**CITY OF SALEM
BOARD OF HEALTH
MEETING MINUTES**
Virtual Meeting held via Zoom
and also
Recorded by SATV
October 13, 2020

MEMBERS PRESENT: Dr. Jeremy Schiller, Paul Kirby, Geraldine Yuhas, Datanis Elias, Sara Moore

OTHERS PRESENT: David Greenbaum, Health Agent, Suzanne Darmody, Public Health Nurse, Maureen Davis, Clerk of the Board, Patti Morsillo, City Council Liaison

ATTENDEES ADDRESSED: Mark Blanchard, seeking variances, Alan Hanscom, SATV and resident

TOPIC

DISCUSSION/ACTION

J. Schiller read aloud that, pursuant to Governor Baker's orders, there exists COVID-19 Emergency Open Meeting Law Guidance regarding the implementation of virtual public meetings.

1. Call to Order

7:02pm

**2. Approval of Minutes
(September 8, 2020)**

G. Yuhas motioned to approve the minutes. S. Moore 2nd. All in favor. Motion passed.

3. Mark Blanchard – Request for two variances to City of Salem Board of Health Regulation #27, Body Art Regulation

D. Greenbaum shared his screen showing the proposed floor plan for the tattoo studio. The plan showed plexiglass dividers for COVID restrictions. M. Blanchard is asking for a variance to have artist space workstations be in an open floor plan, and a variance for the clean room requirement. D. Greenbaum suggested that the Board ask how customers could have privacy if needed. M. Blanchard said they would put 7-foot tall movable barriers around the client if privacy is needed. He said he has worked with the same open floor plan in Cambridge for two years now. He had to get a variance there, too. P. Kirby asked why people need to get a variance. D. Greenbaum said it goes back to about 25 years ago when most communities outright banned body art. Body artists sued cities and towns and the State, and they won. The idea was basically that you can't prevent somebody from making a living and that's what was being done. The State put out a model body art regulation. Most cities and towns either adopted it as it was written or amended it to include things they felt weren't included but should be. Salem was one of the first to do it. The regulation has changed a lot over the years. He said he rewrote the current body art regulation in 2009-2010. Because the regulation has the requirements in it, to change that would require a variance from the Board. He would like to reach out to Cambridge to see how the open floor plan concept is working. He didn't have a chance to do that before the meeting. The clean room variance should not be that much of an issue. The Board has issued those in the past. He would like to see the plexiglass for COVID requirements be closer to the floor. The Board has been pretty stringent about not allowing no walls whatsoever, but there is one shop that has glass walls with a curtain system for privacy.

The body art industry is changing and some of the older requirements are starting to be outdated, so we do need to update our regulation. We were hoping to update it in January or February, but then COVID hit. We will include members of the industry in the update process.

P. Kirby asked if his shop is a new build out.

M. Blanchard said it was and that he has secured the location with the landlord over the last few months.

J. Schiller said we would like to get more information before we decide.

S. Moore said she agrees it would be helpful to get more information, and it seems as though, where he is in the process, one month wouldn't delay the opening of his business.

M. Blanchard agreed and said there is plenty to do in the meantime. He also said he will make changes to the plexiglass if need be.

G. Yuhas asked how many people would be in the shop at the same time, including the artists.

M. Blanchard said it is by appointment only. Customers cannot bring guests, only themselves. It is just him and one other artist, so at most there would be four people in the shop at any given time.

P. Kirby moved that the Board seek advice from the Cambridge Health Department regarding the body art variance and place the item on our agenda for the November meeting. D. Elias 2nd. All in favor. Motion passed.

4. Updates on COVID-19

D. Greenbaum said he and the inspectors were out downtown on Friday night, Saturday and Sunday for four or five hours each. The real issue is that we have seen an increase in tourism downtown on weekends and it is very concerning and unnerving to see the amount of people that are coming to downtown. They talked to the businesses to try to get them to understand the urgency in this. It has been a struggle for us and for them to try to maintain their lines and maintain distance. He feels overall, mask compliance has been very good. On Saturday he had an inspector from the Dept. of Labor Standards helping with the COVID requirements. He will probably have them come out again sometime soon. Having the presence from the State has been helpful for us.

The City is looking at what's taking place downtown and strategizing ways to alleviate the lines and crowding, etc. We are meeting with the downtown businesses tomorrow to discuss it. By Friday there should be some sort of plan in place.

J. Schiller said the number of people is huge. He wonders if we will see a spike in cases from out-of-towners.

D. Greenbaum said we haven't seen an increase in cases from tourists. Over 600 visitors filled out the local travel form. The staff has started reaching out to them to confirm the information they provided is accurate and see if they are willing to provide a copy of their negative test results if they have it. The people coming in on day trips are what is pushing the numbers over the top. Hopefully people will wait to come until 2021 once they understand there is nothing to do in Salem this year. Halloween is on a Saturday, with a full moon and daylight savings time.

D. Greenbaum said the police tried to limit access coming into the pedestrian mall to make it one way, but there are still swarms of people.

P. Kirby asked if restaurants are allowed to seat at 100% capacity.

D. Greenbaum said there is no specific capacity limit, but they must self-limit to have tables six feet apart.

J. Schiller asked if we received any feedback about not allowing the expansion for seating.

D. Greenbaum said the restaurant owners were not happy about it at first, but now they are appreciative because they realize there are just too many people downtown. They feel we could go even further at this point. The City is looking at everything to determine the best course of action going forward through Halloween.

S. Moore asked if a decision has been made about trick or treating.

D. Greenbaum feels we will follow the CDC and DPH recommendations, but no final decision has been made.

J. Schiller heard on NPR they are encouraging people not to go to Salem. We need more of that message out there and we need to get it out there early. If we could do that through the State or the Governor's office, it would be helpful.

D. Greenbaum said that messaging is part of the ongoing conversations, but nothing has been finalized.

P. Kirby said he is worried Salem will end up as the biggest super-spreader event in the country and that would be devastating.

G. Yuhas feels as a Board we have done the best we can.

J. Schiller asked if there is any way the Board can play more of an active role. It is unimaginable to think that 100,000 people would come to the City in the pandemic.

D. Greenbaum said there is only so much we can do, but just knowing the Board is always willing to meet at a moment's notice is reassuring.

The Board thanked D. Greenbaum and the inspectors for their courage going out in the crowds.

Attendee Alan Hanscom from Washington Square said he was wondering if it's possible to consider having the police there for a curfew. It's pretty scary.

D. Greenbaum said there is a large police presence, especially on Friday and Saturday nights. Conversations are ongoing and the City will reach out once a decision has been made.

5. Discussion on Health Disparities and Race Equity

P. Kirby asked about any updates on the task force.

D. Greenbaum said he knows they are meeting, but with COVID things have slowed a little. He will update the Board as he gets information from the Mayor.

S. Moore said she and Kerry Murphy are revisiting a Robert Wood Johnson Foundation grant that they had in mind before COVID. They are hoping to do a broader health assessment in the City with a focus on racial and socioeconomic disparities when it comes to Health. They will have a particular focus on developing some initiative around facilitating more urban agriculture opportunities in Salem, such as school gardens, etc. She will keep everyone updated.

6. Chairperson Communications

J. Schiller is impressed that we have gotten universal cooperation in the City. With what could have been viewed as a devastating economic impact with businesses struggling, etc., it is inspiring that everybody seems to be on the same page. We could have easily experienced a lot of pushback that we are reacting in a way that is beyond State guidelines, but businesses

really seemed to understand that Salem is in a unique position, this month specifically. The Board is really appreciative to the City and our community for understanding that mask compliance is what it's about. The businesses have really understood what we have had to decide, which is ultimately better for them in the long run. He has received several emails from servers that work in the restaurants who are extremely concerned. We have done the right thing. He is really proud of the Board and really proud of the community. He said he and D. Greenbaum have been in constant contact and D. Greenbaum has been awesome. The Board has been very reactive to whatever is going on.

7. Monthly Reports-Updates

a. Public Health Nurse's Report

S. Darmody reported that tomorrow is the first drive-through flu clinic at the CLC. It's been a lot of planning and she is nervously excited. She and the nurses from other communities work together on cases and also help out at each other's flu clinics.

J. Schiller asked if our Facebook page is active with comments about the Board or if people are feeling good about the response, etc.

S. Darmody said our page does not get a lot of activity.

S. Moore feels the Mayor gets most of the praise and criticism.

S. Moore said she spends a good amount of time on social media and she doesn't really see people talking about the Board.

S. Moore said she is so glad for the opportunities for kids to get flu shots at school. She hopes the clinics are well attended.

S. Darmody said Charlene, the school nurse leader, worked with CVS to make it happen. There are a lot of dates for clinics coming up.

D. Greenbaum said he got a report that at the first flu clinic at Horace Mann today, 70 kids and staff were vaccinated. That is about 25% participation, which is average for that type of event. It's a start, but he hopes it will get better. We hope to get 75-80% or more. Kids can go to any one of the schools to get vaccinated, not just their school. All kids will need to be vaccinated by the end of December, whether they are remote or in-person learners.

P. Kirby asked if there is any sense of how effective the flu vaccine will be.

S. Darmody said she hasn't heard anything yet. So far, she has only heard that Australia had a mild flu season. They believe it is because people were wearing masks and taking other preventative measures due to COVID.

Copy available at the BOH office.

b. Health Agent's Report

D. Greenbaum said Police, Fire, EMS, Health and NSMC all do weekly situation reports. They have been doing the reports for six months now and will continue to do so until after the pandemic is over and we have an effective vaccine.

J. Schiller asked if there was a way the Board could be informed of an increase in hospitalizations due to COVID. We have the data to know about increases in cases, but it would be helpful to know if hospitalizations increase, too.

D. Greenbaum will share all the reports with the Board, including NSMC. We are definitely seeing more cases of younger people.

c. Administrative Report

August and September reports were submitted.

Copies available at the BOH office.

d. Council Liaison Updates

P. Morsillo said she is a member of the Affordable Housing Trust Fund Board. They are sending an invitation to the Planning Board to meet to discuss a way around the inclusionary zoning ordinance, which didn't pass. Right now, the Planning Board asks developers to provide 10% of their units at 80% AMI. They are going to ask them to provide 10% at 60% AMI, which was the inclusionary zoning ordinance numbers. She feels that will probably go through until we can get a real ordinance. There should be an ordinance.

She also reported that there was another block party request. It did not pass, but the vote was not unanimous. The vote was 6-5.

J. Schiller asked if there is anything else the Board can do to help. That's ridiculous.

S. Moore said it is concerning that it was such a close vote. She wonders if the Board should just say no to block parties until after the pandemic.

P. Morsillo said D. Greenbaum is always asked and he is always very clear that this is not the time to have a block party.

D. Greenbaum feels the Board and he are on the same page. He feels comfortable, and the Board is comfortable, with him speaking on the Board's behalf. We can't prevent people from coming to the City, but we should prevent other large gatherings like block parties.

J. Schiller said the Board is clear in saying what is happening downtown is dangerous and concerning. The Board should be vocal to say that's not what we want to be happening - at all.

D. Greenbaum found it distressing that one of the Councilors made mention of another block party that was voted down. He was told they held it anyway without a permit and without the road closed. The Councilor attended and said it was fine. He found that disturbing.

P. Kirby motioned to approve the reports. G. Yuhas 2nd. All in favor. Motion passed.

8. New Business/Scheduling of Future Agenda Items

J. Schiller said earlier G. Yuhas mentioned the possibility of discussing smoking downtown. We can put it on as a future agenda item, but we have to be careful about what we are going to regulate because of enforcement issues, etc.

G. Yuhas didn't think of it as something they needed to vote on. She thought maybe just putting up a sign to say please do not smoke in the pedestrian mall because there are so many people. People have their masks off longer when smoking than when they are just taking a sip of coffee.

J. Schiller said after Halloween and with the colder weather we may see a little bit of a break with density.

D. Greenbaum said this weekend the smoking was not overbearing. For the most part after people were done smoking, they put their masks back on.

Attendee Alan Hanscom feels social media is good because the reports from Dominick in the Mayor's office end up on various neighborhood association's Facebook pages.

He is part of Moderna's Phase III clinical trial at Brigham and Women's Hospital. He wanted people to know they are still looking for more people, but they want people of color because they don't feel like they have enough and that's a vulnerable group.

MEETING ADJOURNED:

**P. Kirby motioned to adjourn. S. Moore 2nd. All in favor. Motion passed.
8:05pm**

Respectfully submitted,

Maureen Davis
Clerk of the Board

*Next regularly scheduled meeting is
Tuesday, November 10, 2020 at 7:00pm
Virtual Meeting Via Zoom*