

Board of Health meeting July 13, 2020.

Inquiries from Board members received by the Health Department:

Inquiry: Getting daily or weekly percentages out to the public, let the public know what percentage of those tested for COVID-19 in the town are positive.

Response: As was stated previously, it takes a long time to go through all non-positive results. As was noted in the most recent weekly update sent to the Board of Health on July 7, our department is aware that there are still a large number of negative results missing from several rounds of testing at The Chelsea. After contacting the lab several times, they admitted that their priority was on entering positive results, and that they had hired summer help to enter all the backlogged negative results. This has been reported to NJDOH several times, and today they elevated the priority of this issue for them to resolve. I was trying to only present accurate data, however, as was noted in the July 7 update, preliminary data without those negative results from The Chelsea has been included in the charts and tables, and a chart with a weekly 7-day positivity rate has been added to the Health Department COVID-19 page. There is a 3-week lag on those rates to allow time for labs to enter all negative results, which they are much slower on than positive results. When we run a search for non-positive results for each day, we have to open each case to ensure that the case is a PCR test (not a serology test), that the result is negative and not inconclusive or invalid, and to confirm that the address is entered correctly and that the case is for a Montville resident. Some cases are for individuals who work in the Township (for instance, if a business in Montville requires all of their employees to get tested, their work address might be entered as a primary or secondary address and it shows up in our counts). Sometimes the address is entered for a street that does not exist in Montville, and our township was erroneously chosen in the drop-down box by the person entering the data. There are roughly 3200 (at today's count) non-positive results that had to be sifted through.

Inquiry: Consider meeting with the restaurants and encourage them to keep a journal of names and contact information of all diners so that contact tracing can be more efficient, should this even be a DoH role, or the Township Committee?

Response: The Health Department can ask restaurants if they would be willing to keep track of such information. However, the Board of Health or Township Attorney should review this request, as questions of how to keep that information private may be an issue. Who at the restaurant will be tasked with gathering that information? Where will this information be stored securely so that other employees or members of the public don't have access to a list of customer's names, home addresses, phone numbers, email addresses, etc.?

Inquiry: What is the role of the Board of Health and DoH in preparing for any re-opening?

Response: When under a state-wide declared State of Emergency and Public Health Emergency, all decisions on reopening are at the direction of the Governor. Directives from the Governor are issued via Executive Order. At the end of each Executive Order, there is a paragraph stating that "The State Director of Emergency Management, who is the Superintendent of State Police, shall have the discretion to make additions, amendments, clarifications, exceptions, and exclusions to the terms of this Order." If such changes are made by the Superintendent, they are done by issuing an Administrative Order. Both Executive Orders and Administrative Orders are enforced by law enforcement agencies. There are

circumstances in which the NJ Department of Health Commissioner issues guidelines or clarifications to Executive Orders that are issued and that affect businesses, programs, or activities that are regulated by public health agencies. In this case, NJDOH issues Executive Directives which are enforced by health departments. There is also another paragraph at the end of each Executive Order that states that “No municipality, county, or any other agency or political subdivision of this State shall enact or enforce any order, rule, regulation, ordinance, or resolution which will or might in any way conflict with any of the provisions of this Order, or which will or might in any way interfere with or impede its achievement. Therefore, the answer to this inquiry is that the Health Department’s role in re-opening is to ensure compliance with Executive Directives, and to assist law enforcement as needed in a consultative manner in enforcing Executive Orders or Administrative Orders. The Board of Health does not have a role to play in re-openings under a state of emergency, as they are prohibited from enacting any order, rule, regulation, ordinance, or resolution which will or might in any way conflict with any of the provisions of an Executive Order while the state is still operating under a state of emergency.

Inquiry: What is the interaction between DoH and the water department in view of the recent water main break in which the citizens were not warned of the break and the presence of brown water, and that 50% of the callers to the water department were told to boil water and 50% told that there was nothing to worry about.

Response: During the incident in question, contractors working on a development at the corner of Hook Mountain Road and Bloomfield Avenue hit a 12” water pipe. They notified the Township, and upon inspection, DPW workers found that a nearby reserve tank that maintains pressure on the line was draining. The DPW workers closed the valve to end the draining, and to preserve the pressure in the line. At all times, positive pressure was maintained in the line. Turbulence in the line caused sediments in the pipe (minerals such as calcium, iron, and manganese) to become suspended in the water, temporarily discoloring it. Per the Sophia Heng, an Engineer for the Township, the water in the system is tested regularly as required, and the levels of these minerals are within acceptable ranges for drinking water. As per the NJDEP Water Main Break Guidance Manual, this is what is called a “Controlled Outage”. During this Controlled Outage, the water system was not required to issue a Boil Water Advisory. After the repair is completed, chlorination and de-chlorination procedures must be followed, and the water tested for total coliform and chlorine residual. The results of the sample were no coliform present, and chlorine residuals were within the allowed limits (less than 0.2ppm). I spoke with the Water and Sewer Department and they said their policy was to inform residents who called that boiling water was not necessary, but they are free to do so if they wish. The staff there said that they did not tell anyone to boil their water, and that a Boil Water Advisory would be required to be issued before they would inform a resident to boil their water. Regarding communication between the Water and Sewer Department and the Health Department, the Water and Sewer Department notifies the Health Department of water main breaks that qualify as “Uncontrolled Outages” as per NJDEP, in which there is a loss of positive pressure, and a Boil Water Advisory is issued. Regarding informing the public, because the area of the Township affected was limited, and positive pressure was not lost, they did not issue a notification to residents.

Inquiry: How can we better get information out to the public.

Response: The Health Department’s COVID-HD page is updated daily with both case information and news items. The Township has also issued several press releases with further information. This topic has

been added to the agenda for the 7/13/20 Board of Health meeting for further discussion by the body as a whole.

Inquiry: Where are we in the tick bite prevention effort. I haven't seen any warning in the grassy areas above the library/high school, in other city property.

Response: Lars Darling of DPW confirmed that all Tick Prevention signs (previously shown to the Board) were posted at the entrances of all Township parks, trails, and fields. He confirmed on July 1 that this sign was present in both the Community Park, and in the parking area behind the library that has access the grassy areas above the library/high school.

Inquiry: We discussed having all places that sell vaping supplies post a warning about its dangers.

Response: Signage with warnings about the dangers of vaping were distributed to and subsequently posted in all businesses within the Township that sell vaping supplies in during January of this year.