



May 17, 2021 Board of Health Meeting

Meeting held via WebEx

The Board of Health convened in open session at 5: 15 pm

The meeting was called to order by Merrey Price

Board Members Present

Quorum is reached

Merrey Price

True Vue

Martha Nieman

Terry Miskulin

Jennifer Eddy

Emily Berge (left at 6:06 prior to vote)

Don Bodeau (arrive at 5:19pm) (left at 6:15pm)

Mark Kaeding (arrive at 5:25pm)

Staff Members

Present:

Lieske Giese

Marisa Stanley

Gina Holt

(recorder)

Order of Agenda Request to pull items from Consent Agenda

- None made

Public Comment:

- None received

Business Item

- a. Review and provide input to City of Eau Claire and Eau Claire County Mask Mandate
 - The City of Eau Claire City Council and the Eau Claire County Board will have meetings tomorrow to consider repeal of the existing face mask ordinances.
 - The Board of Health's responsibility is providing feedback to both the City Council and County Board.
 - The Board of Health and the Health Department have a statutory obligation to consider the health of the public in this decision.
 - The decision is being prompted based on a change in CDC guidance last Thursday related to use of a face mask if vaccinated. The recommendation was an individual based recommendation and not a community or a general organizational strategy recommendation.
 - Face mask use has been a standard mitigation strategy that has been helpful to slow the spread of disease. Distance and face mask, as well as all the other risk mitigation strategies working together help reduce risk and are critical in prevention.
 - The progression of disease and the protection of an effective vaccine mean that we are at a very different spot now in the pandemic than we were even several months ago. We are currently averaging 7 cases per day and we were seeing 200 cases per day in November at our highest peak of illness. Case numbers remain fairly flat and fairly low. Natural immunity at this point is likely impacting disease spread. Vaccination rates are also impacting disease spread.
 - Fully vaccinated individuals are now seen by the CDC to be safe to not wear a face mask and not distance in many situations as well as not test in most situations and not quarantine as a close contact to a case unless symptomatic. This is good news that the vaccine is working.

- The CDC continues to recommend mask use by all individuals, including those that are vaccinated, in healthcare, public transportations, shelters, K-12 schools, correctional facilities, and by those that are unvaccinated individuals (both by choice and by inability).
- While close to 43% of the county population is fully vaccinated, 47% of the population in Eau Claire is not vaccinated. In most general community settings it can be estimated that a sizable portion of the population is not vaccinated. In some community settings like schools the vast majority of the population is unvaccinated. In public settings it is impossible to know if someone is vaccinated. In private interactions and in personal decision making we can evaluate our risk based on vaccination status.
- Those under the age of 12 are currently not eligible to be vaccinated. This population is estimated to be about 15,000 people in the county. Some people with specific health conditions also can't be vaccinated.
- The public health goal is protect the population, to be sure that everyone has the right information to protect themselves and others, and to be sure that organizations and businesses can have the technical assistance they need to support healthier practices.
- Our first dose vaccination numbers continue to be low. We likely are not going to reach the 80% vaccination targets for a long time. We do likely have natural herd immunity from disease to some level. Right now the science is not clear how long this natural immunity lasts.

Question and Answer with Board of Health:

Q: What level of herd immunity is recommended. A: The goal coming from the state is 80% vaccination.

Q: What are the number of UWEC students that are vaccinated? A: We do not have those numbers at this time. It is not a mandate at UWEC. In Eau Claire 18–24-year-old age group is roughly 30% vaccination rate.

Q: What is the deliverable tonight? A: Providing input and what we are looking at as our obligation in terms of protecting community health so we are going to speak specifically as a group to the idea of what are the basic principles and science that we believe that the City Council and County Board need to be focused on in whatever the next steps are.

Q: How do we think about and factor in the region that we live in? A: Vaccination rates vary throughout the state and nation. The bigger variance is that the younger populations are less vaccinated than the older populations.

Q: What are the trends that the health department will be watching for if things loosen up? A: Moving forward we will continue to watch case numbers. If we start seeing significant change that will be a marker that something is going on. Disease after vaccination is also being tracked as well as variant strains. Outbreaks and in what settings they are in is something that will continue to be a focus. Making sure that people that are sick and exposed are not potentially infecting others.

Summary of input by the BOH:

The Board of Health has the responsibility for protecting the health of the public, including all people in Eau Claire County. The evidence is clear on the personal and community public health benefit of wearing masks. Masking is only one of many mitigation strategies and all these strategies work together. Those that are vaccinated are now largely seen as protected by the vaccine by CDC from the research done and this is a success of the current pandemic response.

The Board of Health has reviewed the proposal by the City Council and County Board to repeal the Face Mask Ordinances and has the following feedback and recommendations. These are based on the CDC recommendations and public health principles of disease control and risk reduction.

- Masks be worn by all unvaccinated individuals including those that are currently not able to get a vaccine.
- Masks be worn by both vaccinated and unvaccinated individuals in the specific settings outlined by the CDC including:
 - Healthcare
 - Corrections/Jail
 - Shelters
 - Public Transportation
 - K-12 schools
 - Any business location that determines the need
 - Any remaining high risk transmission settings – childcare, close contact indoor activities
- Basic public health strategies be prioritized including disease investigation, outbreak investigation, contact tracing, isolation and quarantine of cases and close contacts, and testing of symptomatic and close contacts in order to support slowing the spread of cases in the unvaccinated and working to avoid the development of a variant strain.
- Continued monitoring of disease rates, hospitalization rates and deaths as well as vaccination rates happen to be sure any policy changes can be put in place by the health department if necessary.
- The community gets vaccinated at a high rate to protect against increase of cases, variant strains developing that are resistant to vaccines, waning natural immunity from previous disease.

Motion to provide summarized input to the City of Eau Claire and Eau Claire County regarding the mask ordinance: Martha Nieman

2nd Motion: Emily Berge

Motion Carried: Yes (unanimous roll call vote) Jennifer Eddy -aye, Mark Kaeding-aye, Terry Miskulin-Aye, Martha Nieman-aye, True Vue-aye, Merrey Price-aye

Requests from Board members for future agenda items to be given consideration

- a. None made

Next scheduled BOH meeting is May 26, 2021 at 5:15 p.m.

Merrey Price adjourned the meeting at 6:37 p.m.