

## PERU BOARD OF HEALTH MEETING MINUTES

Monday January 3, 2022, 10:30 AM

Community Room 3 E Main Rd

1. The meeting was called to order at 10:37 AM
2. Roll call: present Nanette Mone, Peggy White and Darryl Darby.
3. Nanette recording.
4. Before proceeding to agenda item, Peggy announced three new items that came to her attention via emails in one case only that morning. She stated that since there was no deliberation involved it didn't need to be on the agenda as such.
5. The Hilltown Community Health Center is sponsoring a covid vaccine clinic. Lee-Anne Cronin contacted Peggy telling her that a clinic had been held in Chester and 69 people from ages 5 to 99 were vaccinated. Two dates were offered and Peggy agreed to Saturday Feb. 5, 2022 from 9AM to 12 PM at the Peru community room. Peggy will make a flyer which will include a website and a link to pre-register which Lee-Anne said makes things run smoother. Peggy will ask if walk-ins will be accepted and who is the sponsoring organization and if the shots are free. Peggy will copy Kim Leach as to the flyer. Darryl will contact Kim to get the announcement on the new town electronic sign at least 2 weeks in advance of the clinic. Peggy will leave a flyer at the library and will post it on the town facebook page. Darryl will show Lee-Anne the community room next week so she can get an idea of the available space for purposes of social distancing, etc.
6. Sandra Martin from the Alliance emailed Peggy that another distribution of free PPE's (personal protective equipment) will be available in Great Barrington to be picked up; the contact person is Ned Savisky. Peggy will try to get to GB this week before going on vacation. Peggy thought that she would get only the masks, but Kim Leach stated that with the 250<sup>th</sup> celebration coming, the town could use everything being offered. The items included are hand sanitizer, wipes, N95 masks in all sizes and nose clips that are designed to hold cloth masks more securely to the face.
7. Sandra sent another email to Peggy regarding home covid quick test kits which the towns in the Alliance can purchase with ARPA funds (if they want). The Alliance is doing a bulk purchase. Any town interested will need to sign a contract to order. The Board of Selectman have to sign. Nanette will inform the selectmen (during update of departments) of the chance to get these kits. We should have on hand 3 or 4 times more kits than the town received before in order to test soonest rather than wait for days for an answer. Darryl said he had more calls than he had kits to give out. Peggy suggested that 500 kits be ordered This omicron variant is contagious for only three days. Testing sooner helps to stop the spread. Nanette will contact Sandra to get further details about the ordering process. Peggy also said that if town doesn't want to purchase, maybe the new admin. could be a resource for funds. Also, we should watch for the federal website which is supposed to be up and running in January for individuals to request free test kits. As a segue, Peggy said that the number of cases in Peru per capita is the highest in the state. There is a large need and interest to move forward to protect the community.
8. Next: discussion of mask mandate for Peru town hall. Peggy said that Vern Leach asked her to consider the mandate, asked her to talk to the select board and give them her opinion. Peggy said that at the meeting only she and two others were wearing masks. The other five persons in the

room were not. Bruce Cullett opposed the idea of a mandate because the state had not enacted one; he is not in favor of the towns doing it. But Governor Baker on 12/21/21 while not in favor of a mandate did state that particularly those unvaccinated should wear masks any time one is not in one's own home. He chose to let the municipalities make their own decision. Vern Leach said that in a small town, if someone sickens it could cripple town functions, particularly with tax time coming.

9. In furtherance of her belief in the mandate, Peggy mentioned what has happened to other towns due to sickness and their responses. Hinsdale asked for volunteers for the highway department to help plow; Dalton had to call the state police for help with the dispatcher. Six towns have mask mandates; several are closed to the public. In addition to her survey of the towns, Peggy also took a survey of the Peru town employees most affected and subject to the public. Five responded in support of a mask mandate, one due to age, one due to age and or medical issues, one due to medical issues and two others for other concerns. All were highly enthusiastic in support of the mandate.
10. Nanette mentioned that a friend goes to Florida often and no one is wearing a mask and everything is open. Peggy responded that FL numbers are very high and hospitals are overwhelmed and declared that FL never handled the pandemic responsibly. Yet people are out seemingly unafraid. Nanette went on to say that a family member is a scientist who stated that that the common cold is also caused by a corona virus and predicts that covid as it becomes milder will be assimilated just as the cold is, something that people probably don't realize. Peggy said that looking at the science it is certainly possible. But she did say that with 824,000 deaths nationwide and 20,000 in MA covid still has potential for serious harm particularly in persons with health issues, and the reason still that protection is necessary. If a covid does go in that milder direction we will eventually see the pandemic peter out. Meanwhile the idea is to keep the town functioning. For instance, in NYC 17% are unable to work! Nanette said that most of the deaths were caused by the original covid and we don't know if there will be an uptick in deaths from omicron just because there is a big rise in cases. Peggy said the potential is there just due to the huge number of cases. She says that in the last two years we have seen incredible progress; we now have treatments like monoclonal antibodies and there are now two oral pills on the market. Nanette said that many persons are being turned away from the hospitals indicating less concern on the part of medical community. Peggy stated that it is the same as when someone has the flu and a 101- degree temperature and is advised to rest at home unless the temperature goes higher. The point is that they were sick enough that they could not work.
11. Peggy brought up the email that Bruce Cullett sent to the board members; she disagreed with the premises stated in that email, that masks are not helpful. Peggy said that studies show that they do help prevent the spread. She said it is true that N95 masks are superior but "it is proven" that cloth reduces spread. She discounted Bruce's comments saying that he has no medical background. Nanette remarked that there is a concern about re-breathing CO2; Peggy laughed and said that is ridiculous.
12. At this point Nanette asked Peggy to yield and give Darryl a chance to speak, as we were well acquainted with her views by this time. Darryl said it is the least that we can do and so saying he agreed that we should enact a mask mandate. There was some back & forth regarding how long and when we should review. Nanette stated that she was opposed to a mandate although she wears a mask when out among others. After further discussion about when to re-evaluate, a motion was made by Peggy to enact a mask mandate for the Peru town hall until March 14, 2022 the anticipated

time of the March board meeting. Darryl seconded the motion. It was passed by a two to one vote with Nanette voting against. Nanette lobbied for a review at the February meeting but it was thought that it would be too soon for improvement in a reduction of the number of cases.

Notification to be made by Peggy to interested parties.

13. A motion was made to adjourn with all in favor at 11:22AM.

Minutes respectfully were submitted as a draft by Nanette Mone 01/15/2022

Approved 2-14-22

Nanette Mone Nanette Mone

Peggy White Peggy White

Darryl Darby Darryl Darby

Article attached: Bruce Cullet's email to board members