

WINTHROP BOARD OF HEALTH MEETING

AUGUST 6, 2020 6:00 PM

REMOTE PARTICIPATION (HOST: ASTRID WEINS)

MINUTES

PRESENT:

BOARD MEMBERS: Bill Schmidt, Chair; Astrid Weins, Vice Chair; Susan Maguire, Member.

TOWN of WINTHROP: Meredith Hurley, Director Public Health and Clinical Services; Sean Driscoll, Director Parks and Recreation.

OTHER PARTICIPANTS: Karen Chavis

CALL TO ORDER: Chairman Schmidt called the Board of Health meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

PUBLIC COMMENT: none

PURPOSE of MEETING: In light of COVID-19, at the request of Chair Schmidt, an emergency Board of Health Meeting was called to discuss the potential closure of Winthrop basketball courts as well as the status of HEPA filters in the Winthrop Public Schools before school reopens.

1. POTENTIAL CLOSURE OF WINTHROP BASKETBALL COURTS

DISCUSSION:

- Chair Schmidt expressed his concerns about the nightly pick-up basketball games being played at the McKenna Basketball Courts by groups of young men, oftentimes at all four courts where there is no way to enforce social distancing, gathering size and face covering protocols.

- The state has designated basketball, along with some other sports, e.g., ice hockey, as a higher risk sport for transmission of the COVID-19 virus. Reference read by S. Maguire and link forwarded to S. Driscoll:

Higher Risk

Sports that involve close, sustained contact between participants lack of significant protective barriers, and high probability that respiratory particles will be transmitted between participants.

Examples: Football, wrestling, rugby, basketball, lacrosse, ice-hockey, competitive cheer, martial arts, ultimate frisbee

- Some participants felt strongly that if only one court is closed, players will go to another court in town to play, and suggested if one court is closed, all courts should be closed.
- S. Maguire suggested that the Board take a proactive approach by alerting the public to the problem and enforcing guidelines of what is permissible.
- S. Driscoll stated he will be the recipient of many complaints from the community if courts are closed. A. Weins offered to take any complaints he received.
- Concerns were raised about potential restrictions on ice hockey as families have already invested money into the sport which will begin soon. K. Chavis stated that the rink will be following guidelines, and no games will be played, and ice time will be limited to drills.

Document referenced: MA Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs: Outdoor Recreation Reopening Phase III.

DECISION: Since there is no way to enforce social distancing, gathering size and mask protocols at the McKenna Court, the Board felt that the only course of action that could be taken at this time to stop the potential of these games being super spreader events, would be to close the court. Chair Schmidt

motioned to close the McKenna Basketball Courts as soon as possible, seconded by A. Weins, with the caveat that the reason for the closure be clearly stated and posted, vote unanimous. S. Maguire requested that the town provide a 'heads-up' to the community before the court is closed.

The Board did not vote to close the remaining basketball courts in town at Massa, Coughlin, Pond Street, and Pico Parks because Parks and Recreation programs are using these courts in the morning, and wish to allow these neighborhood courts to be utilized by local youth.

In the event a similar problem develops at the remaining sites, the Board would consider closing them as well.

Action Steps: Chair Schmidt will follow up with A. Faison and S. Calla regarding the following:

- In order to effectively close the McKenna Courts, removal of the nets and rims or some other means of covering the hoops will be necessary, as the previous use of ties on the nets is not sufficient because the players simply cut the ties.
- Post signage at the McKenna Courts that would explain the reason for the closure due to the high-risk pick-up basketball games.
- Notify the community of the pending closure in the daily Town of Winthrop Public Health Update for a few days.

2. STATUS of HEPA FILTERS in WINTHROP PUBLIC SCHOOLS:

DISCUSSION:

- A. Weins and Superintendent Howard have been in communication about the current air filtration systems in Winthrop Schools and if they might need to be upgraded to mitigate air transmission of COVID-19.

- Per Superintendent Howard, the schools are equipped with MERV 13 filters, not HEPA filters, however Superintendent Howard is working with the schools' Facilities Manager to assess the current system re: upgrading to HEPA ($\geq$ MERV 15) and if the systems can accommodate such an upgrade without compromising air filtering and flow.
- Per one source, MERV 13 filters appear to be the minimum recommendation to filter out virus particles.

Documents referenced: Email correspondence with Superintendent Howard and Board members dated August 6, 2020. Bryans United Air Conditioning: MERV vs. HEPA Filters: What Are the Differences. HSPH Risk Reduction Strategies for Reopening Schools.

ACTION STEPS: Continue review of the literature to make an informed recommendation.

ADJOURNMENT: The meeting adjourned at 7:00 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Maguire