

**WINTHROP BOARD OF HEALTH
EMERGENCY MEETING
DECEMBER 15, 2020 5:00 PM
REMOTE PARTICIPATION (D. Quist, Host; Meeting Recorded)
MINUTES**

CALL TO ORDER: Chair Schmidt called the meeting to order at 5:03 pm

ROLL CALL: BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Chair: Bill Schmidt; Member: Susan Maguire; Marianne Dalton, Prospective Board Member 1/1/2021.

TOWN MEMBERS PRESENT: Phil Boncore, Town Council President; Austin Faison, Town Manager; Jim Letterie, Town Council member; Tracy Honan, Town Council member; Meredith Hurley, Director Public Health.

CALL-IN PARTICIPANTS: Approximately 100 townspeople

PURPOSE of MEETING: At the request of Town Manager Faison, consider joining other communities by taking a regional approach to mitigate COVID-19 spread by rolling back reopening to Phase 2, Step 2.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT: Chair Schmidt recognized Town Manager Faison and President Boncore for seeking the Board of Health's input regarding rolling back reopening to Phase 2 Step 2.

DISCUSSION:

Council President Boncore: not in favor of rollback to Phase 2 Step 2, states that Winthrop is not comparable to the city of Boston and the other communities choosing to join Boston in the rollback. He noted that neither Chelsea nor Revere will be doing so. Was taken aback to see on the news that Winthrop had decided to do so, mistakenly. Boncore also consulted with Superintendent Howard about the impact on schools should Winthrop rollback. Rollback might restrict use of gyms. Youth activities under age 18 are exempt (Winthrop does have small number of > 18 yo athletes)

Austin Faison: Member of the Regional Metro Mayors Coalition, supports the rollback and regional approaches including assistance to businesses affected. States concern about rising COVID cases in Winthrop. States that BOH is the ultimate authority.

Councilor Letterie: For the record, in complete agreement with President Boncore and not in favor of rollback, states harm will result in local businesses as people will go other communities.

Councilor Honan: A prior Board of Health (BoH) member, will support whatever the BoH decides. States rollback disappointing, "wants decision to be evidence/science

based". Fitness centers, ice rink, bar seating at restaurants, gymnasiums would be affected.

Meredith Hurley: 28 new COVID cases today 12/15/20, 1109 total. 27 deceased, 196 isolated, 886 recovered. Increase since mid-October. Winthrop currently in Red category. There have been no confirmed/verified spreader events originating from fitness/gym/workout places of business.

Lisa Howard: commented on impact on schools. Contacted DESE about autonomy of schools concerning Town rollback discussion. States need to inspect Town Charter to determine if schools are included in the rollback.

Susan Maguire inquired about how many people would be affected in total from the rollback, and for how long. About 1000, from RPM, Oceanside Pilates and Fitness, Trade Winds Health and Fitness. Also boys and girls basketball and hockey. Duration would be 3 weeks.

PUBLIC COMMENT :

K. Chavis states she is disturbed about media report that Winthrop is joining 5 other communities in rollback.

Jack Duyon, Karin Chavis Mike Bocchino, Kathleen Cappuccio, Jack Fobert, Joe Scarfo, Alex Cabassa, and Matt Murray stated their opposition to the rollback, praised the fine job RPM is doing in complying with COVID Guidelines, and stressed the importance of exercise and mental health.

Wendy Millar: poses question about 3-week duration.

Phil Hamilton and Andrew Boimila elaborated on protocols in place at their facilities.

Doreen Pulsinelli: opposed to closings unless there is documented evidence that COVID spread is coming from gyms.

Andrea Cirelli: negative impact on her business in the Center

Patricia Hames (via email to Board Member): supports RPM Fitness

BOARD DISCUSSION:

Bill Schmidt: overview: The primary mission of the Board of Health is to safeguard the health and welfare of the people of the Town of Winthrop. Economic issues are secondary. Supports regional compliance. States that if rollback is in only a few non-contiguous communities, would it even be effective.

Susan Maguire asked M. Hurley to respond to participants stating that Ms. Hurlley referred to the 'science' supports closing gyms? Per Ms. Hurley, no, she did not state that. Ms. Maguire favors regional approach, and actions to mitigate spread. Were Winthrop to rollback, suggest working together on creative exercise alternatives, and revisit any restrictions that impact youth.

Marianne Dalton: states community/household spread is perhaps greater risk than at health club facilities

Chair Schmidt closed with comments that rollbacks may be reinstated statewide soon. Not prepared to take any action this evening, would like to get input from A. Weins, and suggests tabling the issue. Chair motioned to table the discussion, seconded by S. Maguire. Roll call vote: Chair Schmidt, and S. Maguire voted to table the discussion, vote unanimous.

ADJOURNMENT: S. Maguire motioned, seconded by Chair Schmidt to adjourn the meeting at 6:12 pm. Meeting adjourned at 6:12 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Maguire
Board Member through 12/31/2020

Marianne Dalton
Board Member effective 1/1/2021