

January 12, 2021

Members Present: Chairman John Meaney, Kevin Lamb, October Cellana, Director Heather DeMarsico, Director William Meranti, Melissa Martin

Others Present: Angie Eillison (Administrative Officer), Tammy Daniels (I Berkshires), Francesca Paris (Berkshire Eagle)

Via Zoom ONLY

At the beginning of this meeting, Chairman Meaney read Governor Bakers March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L.c.30A, &18, and the Governor's March 15, 2020 Order imposing strict limitation on the number of people that may gather in one place.

Chairman Meaney made a motion to accept the minutes of the previous session. Unanimous vote.

Review of North Adams COVID-19 data:

Mayor Thomas Bernard thanks the board for coming together to make decisions based on the data. Being passed the holiday and expectations of our increase in numbers, looking at the data and discuss where we are at based on the data.

Health Director DeMarsico informs the board that according to the Public Health nurse and Maven we currently have 10 new cases, no cases in the last couple days, total 50 cases. There are several cases that have not yet met the Maven system yet, roughly 8-10 cases. We have plateaued from our spike, we have had 7-8 people drop off then 7-8 are added. Several cases are coming from restaurants, nothing from museums, gyms, retail. Should we be thinking of imposing more stricter regulations or is it just bad luck on there part, or is it because people are congregating?

Chairman Meaney asked if there were 50 active cases? Director DeMarsico replied yes. He also asked the positivity rate, which we do not have. Mayor Bernard stated as of last week we were 461. The chairman asked if restaurants were following the guidelines? Director DeMarsico informed the board that she had 1 bar / restaurant establishment that clearly was not following the protocol, with 6 positive cases that have not hit Maven. Other than that, its not a large number from one specific place, it's just that a majority number of cases seem to be coming from restaurants.

Chairman asked to review the current capacity and gathering limits, the director informed the board that we are still at 25%, phase 3 step 1, Everyone should be wearing masks until they're served. She is inspecting a lot of restaurants and they are complying, most restaurants that are busy are going above and beyond, they are spraying, disinfecting, 25% capacity, not sure if its just bad luck.

Mayor Thomas Bernard regarding Gov. Bakers additional restrictions right before the holidays, the reduction to 25%, 10 people indoor and 25 outdoor limits that was extended to 1/24/2021. Everyone is operating under those guidelines right now.

Member Lamb asked if these 6 cases were from one restaurant were patrons, employees, a mixture? Director DeMarsico stated 2 employees and the rest were patrons. Were the 4 patrons of the same group asked member Lamb? Family, no replies DeMarsico. The director informed the board that's it's a private club and they

were all regulars. So, we don't know if they were there at the same time and has it been traced asked member Lamb. DeMarsico stated it had been traced and they were all there at the same time as well as the 2 employees. a cook and a bartender. So, it may very well be an isolated case of poor compliance or its just a trend with restaurants that have positive case. Member Lamb asked if we could discuss the specific institution or is this not being disclosed?

Director Meranti stated we would prefer not too, whether that's an actual problem as far as HIPA or any regulation. We are not intending to single anyone out tonight, it just feels that are cases that are developing from a family or business, is tracing back to a restaurant / bar scenario. Not all cases but a significant number are. Tonight's meeting is to see if the board would increase our own particular regulations to make things stricter for restaurants or not. A week ago, he was more concerned than this week even given the circumstances, there hasn't been an enormous spike that he was expecting seems to have kind of plateaued.

Member Cellana stated that there were a couple of things, anytime you have food and employee positive, it's a great place for transmission. Businesses if closed to indoor dining and no one is doing it around them, then those people will go to other places. So, are we solving the problem, hurting our businesses? This is why we brought this to the board, we don't want to cause more harm than good stated DeMarsico. No percentages just personal knowledge a majority have been traced back to restaurants with a couple restaurants that have had quite a few cases. Prior there was another restaurant that had 4 cases and we closed them for a period of time. 90% of our restaurants have had at least one case replied DeMarsico.

Mayor Thomas Bernard, the people that are going to restaurants for indoor dining right now are more risk tolerant and if we were to reduce the options for them in North Adams, they would not become less risk tolerant, they would look to communities for the opportunity for dining. So, potentially we would be moving people to another community and bringing the risk factor back to North Adams. There is also an economic impact to any decision around any further restrictions for many establishments. Public Health is an issue right now but also recognize our business community to remain strong and vibrant and viable.

Member Lamb stated that we do not want to harm our small businesses, but not knowing the specific of this situation, its hard to know whether this was an isolated case. To make a decision on imposing further restrictions without knowing more may be difficult.

Director DeMarsico stated that she didn't believe that Williamstown and Adams are on board with any further restrictions with their restaurants. If we were to make stricter regulations, they would just go elsewhere. That's why we brought this to the board to see how you felt about it.

Chairman Meaney suggested putting it out there that we have been monitoring the data with an uptick in restaurants, maybe a press release for awareness. Without additional data, he would be hesitant to do anything additional. Member Cellana stated that its just out there, numbers are high and spreading. If there is a facility that is consistently putting out positive cases, they we would need to audit to get more detail. When you choose to go out to eat, your taking a different risk, sometime take out also. The behavior is not going to stop stated Cellana.

Mayor Thomas Bernard, the good news is that Bill and Heather have developed a good relationship with the establishments and are very clear on the expectations of what we are looking at and for. In addition to that direct relation of communication, that states we are not prepared to impose further restrictions at this time, if it's the will of the board, but we are just reminding the establishments of the guidelines. In other communities,

private clubs have to follow the guidance for restaurants. So, if you're functioning as a restaurant you have to follow the guidelines.

Chairman Meaney asks the board if we want to put something out there, public service announcement or something, or do we want to monitor things. Member Lamb asked what evidence do we have for releasing something like that, mail, print? It could be a community announcement as well stated Meaney, if people think it would be helpful. Member lamb stated it could not hurt to let it be known the board and the City are monitoring the situation and if things progress, restaurants, clubs or whatever are not within the guidelines we will reconsider what we're doing in the City of North Adams. Chairman Meaney stated that maybe target just the restaurant industry.

Director Meranti mentioned that if we want to avoid alarming the public, but we do want to inform the restaurants, then we should probably make it targeted to the restaurants to inform them that we are watching, do as good or better than you're doing or the board may have to reconsider looking at stricter regulations.

Member Cellana stated that in that correspondence, remind them about the regulations, remind employees to do a health check, don't come to work if your sick, to reinforce in the letter.

Mayor Thomas Bernard thanked the board for coming together and the outreach send the single that were not looking to take drastic issues but will act if data goes in another direction.

Chaiman Meaney brought up by-weekly meetings to look at the numbers and data so we have a better idea of where we stand. Let's watch this together as we move forward. The board agreed.

Motion to adjourn by Chairman Meaney and seconded by member Lamb. Motion carries.

Meeting adjourned @ 4:58pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Melissa J. Martin

Approved:

Chairperson

Member

Member

CC: City Clerks

