

# The Town of Bedford COVID-19 Public Forum



WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 2021  
7:00 PM

# What we would like to accomplish

- ▶ Respond to questions and concerns and listen to comments expressed by the Community on the ongoing impact and regarding the path forward on the coronavirus epidemic.
- ▶ How we will do this?
  - ▶ Provide a summary overview of the Town's organizational structure
  - ▶ Provide a summary presentation of the COVID response to date and expectation of the way forward.
  - ▶ Respond to resident's questions posed through email and chat.
  - ▶ Open up the forum to comments from participants.
    - ▶ Reminder of the rules of public comment and civil discourse

# What we would like to accomplish

- ▶ The forum will be moderated by Barry Keppard, Director of the Public Health Department at the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC)
- ▶ All questions and comments will go through Barry, who will determine if the question has been previously answered
- ▶ The moderator has the right to enforce rules around civil discourse.

# Who will be available tonight

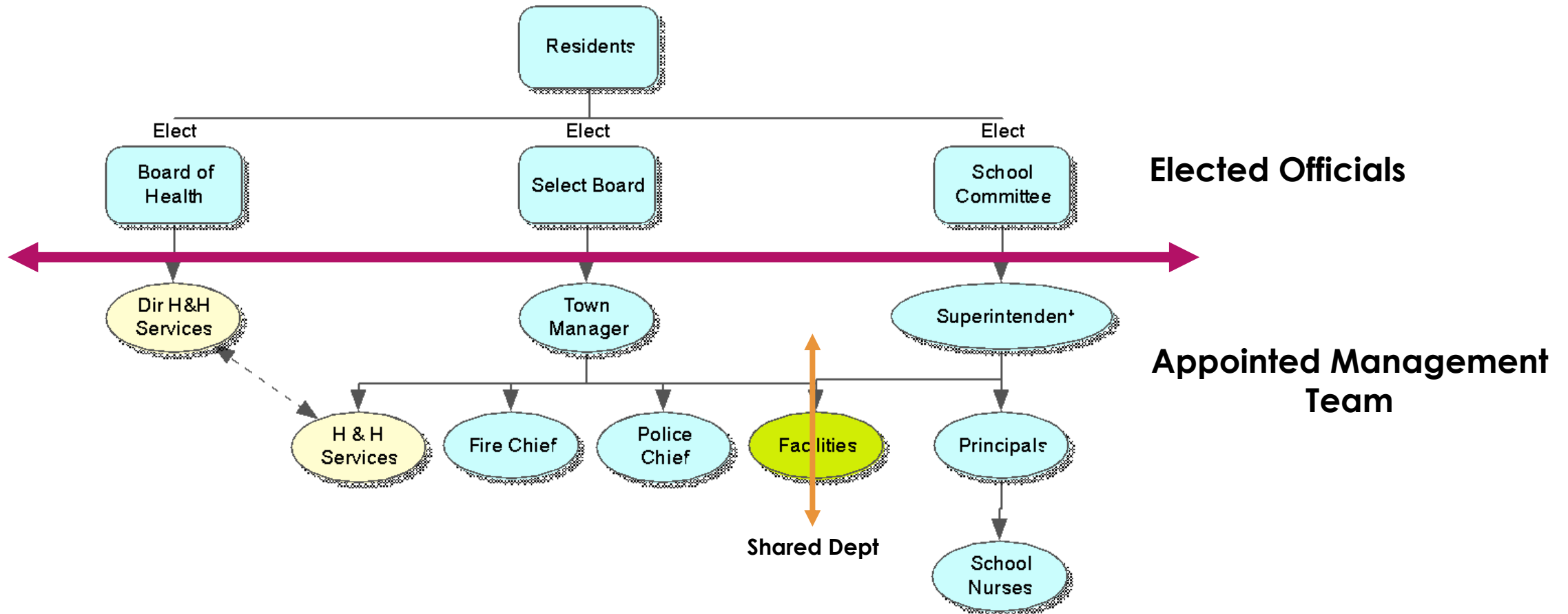
## ▶ **As panelists**

- ▶ From the Select Board
  - ▶ Ed Pierce, Chair
  - ▶ Margot Fleischman, Clerk
- ▶ From the School Committee
  - ▶ Dan Brosgol, Chair
  - ▶ Sarah Scoville, Vice Chair
- ▶ From the Board of Health
  - ▶ Sarah Thompson, Chair
  - ▶ Anita Raj, Vice Chair

## ▶ **On the line and available**

- ▶ Sarah Stanton, Town Manager
- ▶ Heidi Porter, Health and Human Services Director
- ▶ Philip Conrad, Superintendent of Schools
- ▶ Taissir Alani, Facilities Director
- ▶ Other staff are on the call if needed

# Town's Operational Organization



# COVID-19 Arrives in Bedford

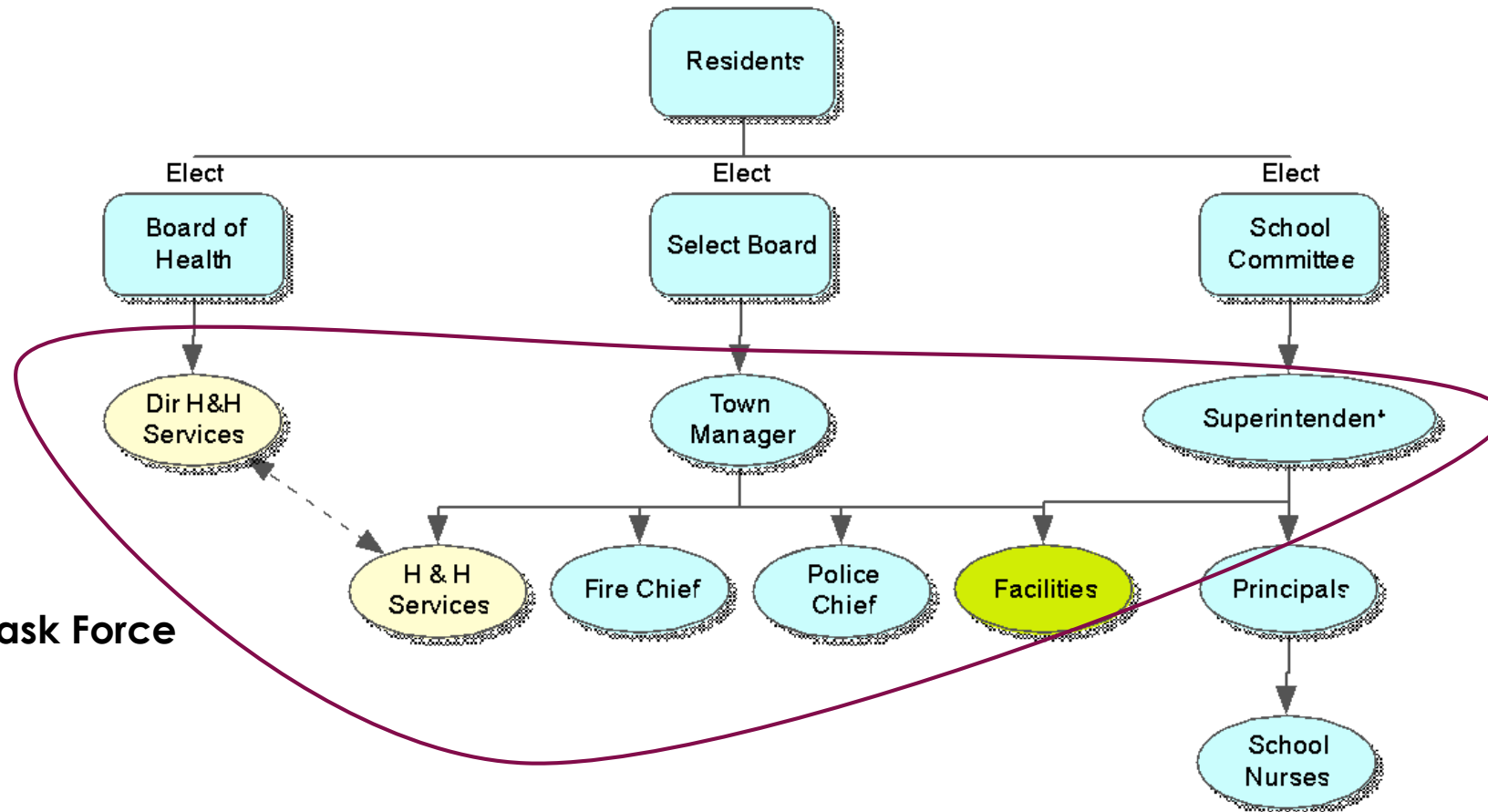
## March 2020

- ▶ In response to the first community case of COVID-19, and the need for centralized response, the Town Manager, in partnership with the Superintendent of Schools, established a COVID-19 Task Force working group on March 8, 2020.
- ▶ The working group reports out daily, through the Town Manager, to the community from March 2020-July 2020, weekly July 2020-November 2020.
- ▶ The daily report identifies all the members of the Task Force, and provides updates on the ever-changing COVID-19 landscape in Massachusetts.
- ▶ A daily COVID-19 community dashboard was created in December 2020, replacing the need for weekly outreach.

# The COVID- 19 Task Force

- ▶ Sarah Stanton, Town Manager
- ▶ Jon Sills, Superintendent of Schools (March- July )
- ▶ Philip Conrad, Superintendent of Schools (July- Present)
- ▶ Heidi Porter, Director of Health and Human Services
- ▶ Robert Bongiorno, Police Chief
- ▶ David Grunes, Fire Chief
- ▶ Taissir Alani, Facilities Director
- ▶ David Manugian, Department of Public Works Director
- ▶ Chris Laskey, Code Enforcement Director
- ▶ Colleen Doyle and Amy Fidalgo, Assistant Town Managers

# COVID-19 Task Force



COVID-19 Task Force

## Purpose

1. Discuss emergency orders & guidance issued by state, CDC, DESE & others.
2. Implement guidance & orders for their Departments as they determined
3. Report out to Town State provided data
4. Outreach to community & businesses in need of help
5. Report back to their board or committee



# COVID-19 Impact on Bedford

## March 2020

- ▶ Schools closed 3/13/2020, and did not re-open for in-person learning until 9/18/2020
- ▶ BOH declared a Public Health Emergency and issued an Emergency Order on Personal Services on 3/19/20; Health and Human Services Director serves as Agent to enforce the BOH's Emergency Order
- ▶ All public meetings suspended by executive order of the Governor
- ▶ All Town buildings closed

# The response to COVID-19

## Facilities

- ▶ Upgrades to support social distancing measures and safe public health protocols for our teachers, students, and staff to support in-person learning
- ▶ Plexiglass installed, six foot markings on the floor, Town buildings open by appointment.
- ▶ Curbside pickup and drop-off for the Bedford Public Library

## Programs and Administrative Functions

- ▶ Established a community food bank
- ▶ Support local business with friendly outdoor dining regulations
- ▶ Establishment of an emergency relief fund to support Bedford residents most in need
- ▶ Youth and community mental health counseling forums

# The Response to COVID-19

- ▶ Free Fire Department/Pro EMS/Broad Institute COVID-19 testing programs for employees and residents
- ▶ Town programs running- Summer Adventures, Kids' Club
- ▶ Summer baseball and softball permitted for field usage
- ▶ Preparation and planning for COVID-19 vaccine administration in accordance with statewide vaccination planning
  - ▶ Drive-thru flu vaccinations for employees and residents
- ▶ Successful in-person municipal, state and federal elections, Annual Town Meeting and High School graduation

# FY21 Budget Town Meeting - July 2020

Finance Committee allocates Reserve Fund to support unanticipated school costs, and assure successful reopening for the 2020-2021 school year.

Town and School budgets reduced to account for revenue reductions as a result of COVID-19. (Revenue was estimated to decline by over \$2 million in 2020-2021.)

Projected revenue decline as a result of COVID-19:

- ▶ Reductions to local meals and hotel taxes
- ▶ Increase in building permit revenue and new tax revenue from Ultragenyx at 175 Middlesex Turnpike. 100,000 square feet of new construction.

# COVID-19 Financial Support

Funds to help COVID-19 related costs:

- Over \$1.8 million in CARES act funding
- Federal and State grants for PPE, food insecurity, social distancing measures, community testing, and school reopening.
- 100% of vaccine distribution costs covered.
- Targeted state grants for school technology and school reopening.

# School Opening, September 2020

- ▶ School Committee votes for hybrid model 8/5/20 and re-affirms plans on 8/31/20
  - ▶ Hundreds of residents watched both meetings, which took over 9 hours combined
- ▶ Schools reopen 9/18/20
  - ▶ Cost of hybrid model exceeded budget by \$800,000
- ▶ 2 days in-person, 3 days remote for most students
  - ▶ Cohort A- Monday/Thursday
  - ▶ Cohort B- Tuesday/Friday
  - ▶ Cohort C- 4 days for some high-needs learners
  - ▶ Cohort D- all-remote
  - ▶ Cohort E- 5 days for most intensive needs

# BPS “Six Pillars” of Safety for re-opening

- ▶ Mandatory mask wearing
- ▶ 6 feet of social distancing
- ▶ Regular hand washing/sanitizing
- ▶ Nightly disinfecting of classrooms
- ▶ HEPA filtration in all classrooms
- ▶ Increased air flow in buildings
- ▶ Pool testing is now the seventh pillar (as of February 2021)

# Fall 2020- School Committee actions

- ▶ School re-opening goes well and with low COVID-19 numbers
  - ▶ Dozens of new staff hired to make the model operational
  - ▶ 40 confirmed student cases from 9/18-12/31
  - ▶ Close contacts quarantined
  - ▶ Temporary BHS closure due to 10 cases in one week
- ▶ In mid-October, the School Committee began to discuss phased re-opening for more students to return 4 days per week
- ▶ Cohort C expands late October
- ▶ SC votes for continued Cohort C expansion, four-day Kindergarten return (Cohort K), and Cohort G (older students who are struggling) expansion in early 2021
- ▶ Expansion of in-person cohorts learning costs an additional \$500,000
  - ▶ School budget now exceeds approved TM budget by ~\$1.25 million
  - ▶ Are there additional Town funds to expand in-person learning for this school year?



# November - January 2020

## BOH activity - BOH

- ▶ BOH meets more frequently to address multiple issues
  - ▶ Support for Staff and Community Testing Program through the Broad Institute
  - ▶ Formalized process for public participation in meetings
  - ▶ Continued staff participation in COVID-19 task force
  - ▶ Evaluated available data and continued to encourage maximum social distancing in schools
  - ▶ Clarified authority of HHS Director to act on behalf of the BOH as their Agent
  - ▶ Clarified authority of BOH relative to school safety protocols and interventions
  - ▶ BOH affirmed their support for existing BPS Protective Measures, including testing, to minimize the risk of SARS-CoV-2 infection in students/staff

# The COVID-19 vaccine - BOH

- ▶ Established community vaccine clinic program and initiated distribution of the vaccine to residents
  - ▶ Vaccine clinics are similar in format to the yearly Flu Clinics
- ▶ Health Department is prepared to give up to 1000 doses per week.
- ▶ Town will receive approximately 100 doses per week through February
- ▶ Due to limited supply distributed to Bedford, residents are advised to seek any available venue for vaccine
- ▶ First vaccine clinic held today, February 10th, 100 doses administered to Phase 1 eligible residents and those aged 75 and older
- ▶ Variants of the virus have been identified in Massachusetts
  - ▶ At this time, the CDC indicates that the vaccine has been shown to be effective against the U.K. variant.

# January 2021

- ▶ Schools and BOH reaffirm commitment to masking and 6-foot distancing
- ▶ Schools consider budget scenarios for FY22 including full-day/5-day return (3.8% increase) and return with some remaining safety protocols (~7.5%)
- ▶ Cohort C expands at all schools to include students who receive >25% accommodations
- ▶ 155 Bedford cases in early January, including 25 in BPS with an additional 70-80 close contacts quarantining at home
- ▶ Phase 1 of MA vaccinations begin

# February 2021

## Where are we now?

- ▶ Kindergarten returns to 4-day/full-day on 2/1/21
- ▶ FY22 departmental budgeting completed
  - ▶ Town Meeting will be Saturday 5/15/21
  - ▶ Select Board's budget at 5.01%
  - ▶ BOH budget at 6.21%
  - ▶ Schools
    - ▶ 3.8% for return to pre-pandemic Pre-K-12 education for BPS
    - ▶ 7.5% for continuation for COVID-19 recovery budget
    - ▶ \$450,000 reserve for out-of-district Special Education costs
    - ▶ Public hearing was 2/2/21 and FinCom presentation 2/4/21

# February 2021

## Where are we now? - BOH

### Bedford Case Count - Confirmed and Probable Cases

Resident Population	Case Count Totals <sup>▲</sup>	Current Active Cases
Health Care (HC)/Long Term Care (LTC) Facilities	147	4
Community (non HC/LTC) (*4)	596	14
Community Total	743	18

\*4 - Community cases are residents of the Town of Bedford, including but not limited to those in single-family homes, apartments, special needs group homes and those living at Hanscom Air Force Base.

Data as reported on the Bedford COVID-19 Dashboard found on the homepage of the Town Website - BedfordMA.gov and acquired from the Massachusetts Virtual Epidemiologic Network (MAVEN).

# February 2021

## Where are we now? - BOH

### COVID-19 Data - Bedford School Community (as of 02/09/21)

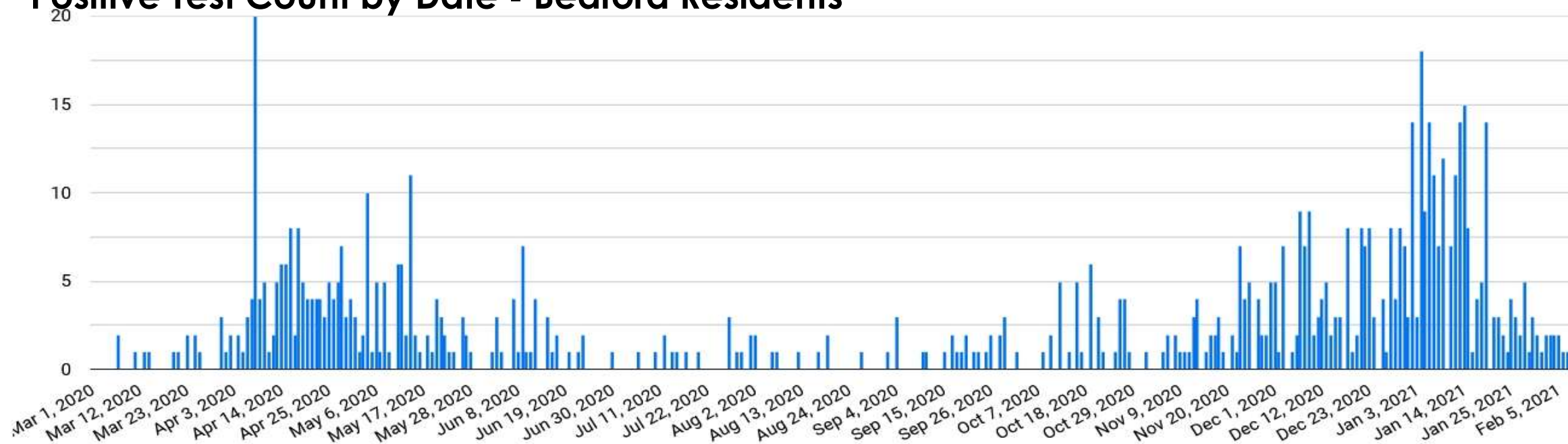
School	Total Confirmed Cases - Active	Total Confirmed Cases - Recovered	Total Confirmed Cases to date
Davis	0	17	17
Lane	0	13	13
John Glenn MS	0	9	9
Bedford HS	3	43	46
Total District Wide	3	82	85

Data as reported on the Bedford COVID-19 Dashboard found on the homepage of the Town Website - BedfordMA.gov website and acquired from the Massachusetts Virtual Epidemiologic Network (MAVEN).

# February 2021

## Where are we now? - BOH

### Positive Test Count by Date - Bedford Residents



The chart above shows the number of Bedford residents who have newly tested positive for COVID-19. It does not portray the total number of COVID-19 cases among Bedford residents. This chart design comes from the Johns Hopkins Center for Government Excellence COVID-19 Data Visualization Center.

Data as reported on the Bedford COVID-19 Dashboard found on the homepage of the Town Website - BedfordMA.gov website and acquired from the Massachusetts Virtual Epidemiologic Network (MAVEN).

# February 2021

## Where are we now? - BOH

### Bedford's Incidence and Positivity Rates - Pre-Holiday Lower Rates, Post-Holiday Surge & Today

Date	Average daily Incidence Rate per 100,000 Bedford residents (last 14 days)	Positivity Rate %
11/5/20	8.6	1.34
11/19/20	7.1	1.16
12/3/20	16.2	2.26
12/17/20	24.3	2.49
12/31/20	25.2	2.54
1/7/21	33.3	3.71
1/14/21	55.7	4.21
1/21/21	60	4.23
1/28/21	39.5	3.34
2/4/21	23.8	2.15



# Current challenges -BOH

- ▶ Social gatherings and household contact seem to be driving the spread of the virus
- ▶ Challenges in contact tracing
- ▶ Incomplete information on asymptomatic spread
- ▶ Vaccine acceptance and availability of vaccine supply
- ▶ Unknown if transmission occurs once vaccinated
- ▶ New variants
- ▶ Unknown length of immunity once vaccinated
- ▶ Unknown when masking and maximum social distancing can be relaxed

# Spring 2021

## Will more students return to school?

- ▶ Space assessment completed 12/22/20
- ▶ Teacher survey shared with School Committee 1/19/21
- ▶ Parent survey completed 1/28/21 and shared with School Committee on 2/9/21
  - ▶ School Committee votes for full Davis return on 2/9/21
  - ▶ Lane School update to be provided 2/23/21
- ▶ Midyear budget review soon to be completed
- ▶ How does the BEA feel about more in-person learning and what role do they play in decision-making?

# Summer 2021

## What to expect - BOH/SC

- ▶ Summer programs are planning to be open
- ▶ Masking and physical distancing requirements will continue
- ▶ Ongoing public vaccinations
- ▶ Guidance from state and federal public health authorities on required level of herd immunity to inform decision making
- ▶ School Committee will meet during the summer to finalize plans for FY22 opening of school
  - ▶ All options will be for 5-day, full-day return for at least K-5, preferably K-12
  - ▶ Worst-case scenario *may* continue to have older children in hybrid
  - ▶ Commonwealth will provide guidance on requirement for remote option

## Community Question- BOH

How will the vaccine be distributed to seniors and teachers given the limited supply the Town is currently receiving?

## Community Question- SC

How many cases have there been in the BPS since September? Has there been any evidence of in-school transmission?

## Community Question- SB

What role does the Select Board have in setting COVID policies for the Town and schools?

## Community Question- BOH

Does the BOH support the current safety protocols in place in the schools? What authority does the BOH have to change them?

## Community Question- BOH/SC

Please describe the process that takes place when a COVID-positive test result is received. Who does the contact tracing? Who notifies families that their children need to quarantine?

Who decides to have a class temporarily go remote? Who decided to close BHS in the fall for two weeks?



## Community Question- SB

How much more money is available this year to support getting more kids in schools this year and how are you planning for next year to support additional needs across the Town?

## Community Question- SC

When will the SC vote on the operational model for the 2021-22 school year? What do you think is likely? Will you be required to offer a remote option?

## Community Question- BOH

Why did the Board make an emergency declaration including giving emergency authority to the Director of Health and Human Services?

What are some examples of the exercise of that authority?

## Community Question- SC

Does the BEA have a say in school re-opening and if so, what is their position? What is in the current MOU regarding COVID-19 and in-person learning?

## Community Question- BOH

Will the sign-up process for vaccines be similar to those for flu shots and COVID-19 testing? Outside drive-thru or inside? Will there be a “holding area” after the vaccine to watch for allergic reactions?

## Community Question- SC

For 1-2 days after the vaccine some people often feel sore and not 100%.  
How will teachers be supported so they have the time needed to rest after receiving the vaccine?

## Community Question- BOH

If we have such a limited amount of vaccines available to the town, how can you guarantee you will be able to offer second shots as well as first?

## Community Question- BOH

What are the Bedford nurses who are giving the vaccine shots doing to save every drop of vaccine? In West Virginia they pull the last tiny bits of vaccine that's left over, using the leftovers of several vaccine bottles, to create additional shots. They also established a "waiting list" for people interested in getting the shot, if there are extra doses left, after all who have appointments are vaccinated. Please tell us if Bedford has established a similar system.