



City Council
Health & Human Services Meeting
~Final~

36 Court Street
Springfield, MA 01103
<http://www.springfieldcityhall.com>
Councilor Brian Santaniello
(Chair)

January 13, 2026

3:00 PM

City Hall - Room 200

Call To Order

3:00 PM Meeting called to order on January 13, 2026, in Hybrid Room 200, 36 Court Street, Springfield, MA 01103.

Roll Call

In Person:

Councilor Santaniello (Chair)

Roy Goodman, Director Of Elder Affairs

Jeanette DeForge, Masslive Reporter

Virtual:

Council President Whitfield

Helen Caulton-Harris, Commissioner of Health & Human Services

Shennel Ford, Health & Human Services

Public Portion

1. Discuss the recent measles and mumps outbreak, along with a broader discussion of influenza and concerns for senior citizens who may be at increased risk.

Minutes:

Meeting Summary

Topic: Influenza Season Update and Public Health Considerations

Focus: Massachusetts and Hampton County

Overview

The meeting addressed the current influenza season in Massachusetts, marked by increased severity due to the predominance of the H3N2 strain and low vaccination coverage. Discussion focused on vaccine effectiveness, vaccination rates, co-infections, and current public health conditions. COVID-19 vaccination trends and a recent measles case were also noted.

Key Points

Influenza Strain and Vaccine Effectiveness

The dominant circulating strain is H3N2. The current influenza vaccine shows reduced effectiveness against this strain due to limitations in strain prediction. This season's vaccine targets three influenza viruses, compared to four in the previous season.

Vaccination Rates

Vaccination rates in Hampton County and statewide are lower than in prior years and vary by age and demographic group. Coverage is lowest among younger children and certain demographic populations and remains below statewide averages in most categories.

Impact and Public Health Risk

Low vaccination coverage was identified as a contributing factor to increased illness severity and mortality. Massachusetts is currently classified as high risk for influenza statewide. Four pediatric influenza-related deaths have been reported in the eastern part of the state.

Co-Infections

Co-infections involving influenza and other respiratory viruses, including RSV and COVID-19, were discussed as a complicating factor in diagnosis and treatment.

COVID-19 and Other Respiratory Concerns

COVID-19 vaccination rates remain extremely low, though no recent increase in cases has been observed in Hampton County. Mask mandates have been reinstated in some healthcare settings.

Vaccination Guidance and Access

Influenza vaccination is recommended for individuals aged six months and older, with immunity developing within 10 to 14 days. Vaccines remain available through pharmacies and senior centers. Pneumonia vaccination was noted as relevant for older adults.

Measles Update

A measles case was reported at Logan Airport, with no local spread identified. Ongoing concerns were noted regarding vaccine hesitancy and inconsistent public messaging.

Conclusion

The meeting emphasized a severe influenza season driven by the H3N2 strain, reduced vaccine effectiveness, and low vaccination coverage, particularly in Hampton County. These factors have contributed to increased illness severity and fatalities. Co-infections and low uptake of other vaccines add to public health challenges. Continued monitoring, vaccination efforts, and clear communication remain important for mitigating disease impact.

[MIN_SIGNATURES]