

Board of Health Meeting Minutes  
January 25, 2021

The Board of Health Meeting was called to order at 5:05 pm by Stephen M. Fiore, Chair.

In keeping with Governor Baker's Executive Order of March 12, 2020, "Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law" – The Board of Health Meeting of January 25, 2021 was held by Remote Access through ZOOM.

Those participating were Stephen M. Fiore, Esq., Chair; Julie C. Lemay, MPH, Vice Chair; Donna S. David, R.N., M.N.; Member; Wesley B. Chin, Health Director; Diana Ekman, Assistant Health Director; Suzanne Trasavage, Animal Care and Control Officer; Lindsey Sharp, Environmental Health Intern; Maria Reddington, Clerk.

There was no public participation.

The K9 "Riggins" Rocha Dog Hearing was called to order for an incident involving a dog owned by Kim and Dennis Rocha of 67 Sherman Street. The Hearing was requested by John Gerah of Belmont, victim of the incident. The Hearing was recorded.

- The following participants were present for the Hearing: John Gerah, Nairi Ostayan, Kim Rocha, Dennis Rocha, Brendan Rocha.
- The Hearing Authority and Panel are Stephen Fiore, Julie Lemay, Wesley Chin, Diana Ekman, Suzanne Trasavage. Donna David recused herself from the Hearing due to her knowledge of one of the parties.
- Stephen Fiore reviewed the rules of the Hearing. Diana Ekman swore in the participants.
- John Gerah provided a summary of the incident. Mr. Gerah was walking on December 2, 2020 to aid in his recovery of a back injury. K9 Riggins Rocha ran after Mr. Gerah, which resulted in Mr. Gerah falling. Mr. Gerah tried to kick the dog. The dog ran after Mr. Gerah when he tried to walk away. Mr. Gerah wants the dog restrained.
- Stephen Fiore asked Mr. Gerah if the dog touched him. Mr. Gerah answered no, because Mr. Gerah moved away from the dog. Mr. Gerah said the dog was at his feet, baring his teeth, while he was on the ground.
- Nairi Ostayan provided a summary of the incident. Mr. Gerah fell before the dog got to him. Ms. Ostayan screamed for the dog to get away. The dog backed into the driveway/backyard at 67 Sherman Street. Mr. Gerah yelled and cursed at Ms. Ostayan. Ms. Ostayan has known Riggins for 5 years and the dog has never had an incident with people or dogs.
- Brendan Rocha said he spends the most time with Riggins and he is never hostile or aggressive.
- Dennis Rocha said Riggins is friendly, never in anyone's face.
- Kim Rocha said the police report and testimony of John Gerah do not match. The police report states the dog jumped on Mr. Gerah, but that is not his testimony.
- John Gerah said Nairi Ostayan's testimony is inaccurate. Mr. Gerah fell because the dog launched at him.
- Suzanne Trasavage, Animal Care and Control Officer met Riggins, Riggins' owners, and Nairi Ostayan on January 14, 2021. Riggins was very excited at Suzanne's presence but followed the sit command Suzanne gave. Riggins is a client of Crate Escape, who provided a report to Suzanne after this visit. Suzanne said she was a stranger on this property but had no issue with Riggins.
- Steve Fiore asked Suzanne if there were any prior complaints concerning Riggins. Suzanne said there were none, and his annual pet license and rabies certificate are current.

Board of Health Meeting Minutes  
January 25, 2021

- Julie Lemay asked Suzanne if Riggins jumped on her. Suzanne said no, Riggins was on a leash, but may have jumped on her if he was not leashed.
- Julie Lemay said many people have a hard time determining if a jumping, launching dog is friendly, and it can be a frightening experience for all involved.

The Hearing Authority deemed Riggins Rocha is not a nuisance dog or dangerous dog. The case was dismissed by a vote of 2-0. A written decision will be mailed to the parties.

The Hearing was adjourned.

Donna David rejoined the meeting.

The Board voted 3-0 to approve the December 21, 2020 Meeting Minutes.

The Receipts report was reviewed.

The Director/Assistant Director/Public Health Nurse/Environmental Health Agent report was reviewed with the following discussed:

- Staff at the Attorney General’s Abandoned Housing Initiative continue to work with a housing matter and expect to provide an update by February 1, 2021. Julie Lemay asked if there have been recent neighborhood complaints. Wesley Chin said the complainants typically contact the Town Administrator’s office.
- There were a total of 83 reported rodent complaints filed in 2020. This number is on trend with prior years.
- Michael Patti, Youth Commission Coordinator, will apply for a \$5000 Grant from Mount Auburn Hospital. The funds will be used for youth mental health programs.
- The office continues to receive complaints of people not wearing face coverings in public. A resident shared an idea to encourage young teens to wear face coverings by forming a campaign called the “Masked Marauders.” Julie Lemay and Donna David suggested Mike Patti of the Youth Commission message youth, have a poster contest, involve the youth in the campaign process, offer a prize such as a gift card.
- Lindsey Sharp continues to provide useful and streamlined COVID-19 updates on the Town’s dashboard. She also provides weekly video updates through Belmont Media Center.
- The Health Department continues to provide assistance to the Belmont Public Schools with contact tracing and other tasks. Recent concerns were addressed about sport team participants being quarantined but still attending school.
- Staff provide COVID-19 updates at each Select Board meeting.
- Staff provide guidance to the Human Resources department such as employee COVID cases, and when it will be safe to re-open the buildings to employees/public.
- Staff have been working with the Beech Street Center and Belmont Police Department to most efficiently get vaccine availability messaging to 75 years and older residents. Considerations include best registration process (online, direct call to the resident), in-person communication by knocking on doors, and transportation to the clinic locations for those in need.

Board of Health Meeting Minutes  
January 25, 2021

- The most common COVID-19 concerns being addressed by Health Department staff are the vaccine distribution plan, private gathering rules, adherence to social distancing rules, and USPS face coverings while delivering mail.
- COVID-19 Testing in Belmont – the Town Administrator asked Health Department staff to poll other Massachusetts communities to find out if they are offering testing free of charge to their residents. The results were widely varied, and can be found on the chart in the report.
- Lindsey Sharp provided a brief overview of the questions a contact tracer may ask a person recently diagnosed positive for COVID-19. Lindsey said having additional contact tracers in the department has been very helpful, and allows each contact tracer more time with each case.
- Belmont joined with Arlington and Lexington to administer vaccine, pursuant to DPH’s suggestion to regionalize distribution efforts. 600 first responders were vaccinated in just two weeks. The State decides how much vaccine to distribute locally, but is falling short due to distribution efforts on the federal level.
- Diana Ekman pulled information from the online vaccine survey to contact those people eligible to receive the vaccine.
- Wesley will send the recording of the December meeting to Mr. Bill Trabilicy. Mr. Trabilicy may want to meet with the Board to further discuss Logan airport flight path concerns.
- The Town of Watertown has requested animal care and control mutual aid due to a job vacancy.

The Youth and Family Services report was reviewed. The Giving Tree effort was scaled back, the 50+ Networking group continues to meet virtually, and BelmontHelps role in Belmont has been amazing.

The Animal Care and Control report was reviewed. Suzanne Trasavage said the follow up inspection at Dr. Ayyadurai’s home was fantastic, and the best outcome anyone could have wanted. The Recreation Commission has proposed amendments to language of the Off-Leash permit application/regulations. At this time, Suzanne feels the current wording is appropriate and does not recommend the proposed changes. A dog hearing request will be scheduled for the February meeting.

The Veterans Services report was reviewed. There was a brief discussion about the Memorial Day parade, which may need to be postponed.

The next Board of Health meeting is scheduled for February 22, 2021 at 5:00 pm.

The Meeting adjourned at 6:40 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

  
Stephen M. Fiore, Chair