

DATE: June 27, 2023
TIME: 2:25 PM

Board of Health Meeting Minutes
May 15, 2023

The Board of Health Meeting was called to order at 5:04 pm by Adrienne Allen.

Those present were Adrienne Allen, M.D., M.P.H., Chair; Stephen M. Fiore, Esq., Vice Chair; Julie C. Lemay, M.P.H, Member; Wesley Chin, Health Director; Diana Ekman, Assistant Health Director; Lindsey Sharp, Health Agent; Doug Koplow, Town Meeting Member Precinct 6 resident; Angus Abercrombie, Town Meeting Member Precinct 8 resident; Dante Muzzioli, resident, contractor.

There was no public participation.

FOG variance request

- For Jack Sy's new food establishment in progress at 89 Trapelo Rd.
- Noted that the location does not have the ability to dig up the sidewalk or the street due to prohibitions after recent construction/repair.
- Adrienne Allen requested further information on those street/sidewalk prohibitions and the reasoning behind them.
- Resident Doug Koplow raised a question about looking into the sewer pipes since there had been some backups in the past. Additionally suggested getting more information regarding the size that the interior grease trap would be, to make sure it will have enough capacity and frequent enough cleanings and maintenance as compared to an exterior installment.
- Decided that further investigation is needed, so a vote was deferred until the Health Department staff is able to gather more information from DPW and Jack Sy on the logistics and plans for this interior grease trap system.

Discussion of possible HD staff enforcement of leaf blower bylaw

- Town Administration has asked the Health Department Staff to take on enforcement of the new leaf blower bylaw in Belmont, as one of the few agencies with ticketing abilities in town. The other able departments declined, citing an inability due to staffing or scope.
- Adrienne Allen, Roy Epstein, Patrice Garvin and Wes Chin met to discuss enforcement options earlier today, and discussed creating an online reporting form for complaints. The thought is that the Health Department will trial enforcement for a year, and follow up on complaints with educational letters to those in violation. No fine at this point in time, emphasis on education. Selectboard is open to adjustment after the trial period to see what works and what needs improvement.
- It was noted that there will be no way of knowing in advance how many complaints will come in, and therefore what the scope of enforcement will look like.
- Resident and contractor Dante Muzzioli voiced his perspective that the Health Department should not get involved in enforcing this bylaw, and it is almost unenforceable as it is written. He is in favor of enforcement between contractors for the first year, with educational materials. He indicated that the electric leaf blowers are not as efficient as the gas-powered machines, which is why contractors use them more. He also stated that when he was helping to draft this bylaw, it wouldn't go into effect until June, which he believes would be better.

- Town Meeting Member Angus Abercrombie indicated that he understands it will be a difficult first year of trying to enforce the program, but that someone needs to try it and fail, so that progress can be made toward a better enforcement solution. He supports the Health Department enforcing this bylaw, understanding that the other Departments declined enforcement at this time, and that no town departments are really equipped to enforce this. He recommends sending out additional educational information, with the letters that will be sent out following complaints.
- Adrienne would like this added bylaw enforcement to secure future funding for the department, but that cannot be guaranteed.
- Julie noted that if violations need to be investigated in person, it will be another task to take the department staff away from state mandated roles including food inspections, which are already difficult to complete with the staff level of the department.
- Steve suggested perhaps a shorter trial period, less than a year to see how enforcement goes.
- Adrienne wanted to clarify that it was not recommended that Health Department staff go out and investigate these complaints in person.
- The concern was raised that fining second offenders and beyond would be difficult if the department is not verifying the validity of the complaints.
- Diana Ekman noted that this would really be more about education, and if there was a continued repeat violation the department could investigate in those circumstances. Diana also noted in that scenario, it would be important to determine where those investigations fall in the hierarchy of other Health Department priorities.
- Vote:
 - Adrienne Allen made a motion for the Health Department to help co-develop a leaf blower hotline and web reporting system, and defer enforcement until such time that it is developed.
 - The vote passed 3-0.

The motion to approve the Meeting Minutes of April 24, 2023 passed by a vote of 3-0.

The Receipts and Financial report were reviewed.

- Julie wanted to know why some line items are highlighted yellow, seemingly randomly.
- Adrienne asked if folks are utilizing the sharps disposal program, and Wes indicated that lots of residents are utilizing the program.
- Adrienne asked if there needed to be discussion of a fee increase, which Diana indicated was on the list to update soon in addition to hopefully updating the online system to accept online payment. Currently the department only accepts cash or check.

The Director/Assistant Director/Health Agent report was reviewed:

- Housing -Case 1: Wes gave an update on the ongoing case with the Attorney General's office. At the last hearing, the judge was pleased there had been further de-cluttering, but stated that if there was not significant progress by the June hearing the house would go into receivership.
 - Case 2: With assistance from the Belmont Police Department, Health Department staff were able to make contact with the property owners, who are actively working on the violations.

- Case 3: Diana gave an update on this de-leading case, where the property owner is continuing to make progress as required by the lead laws. The next deadline is at the end of May.
 - Case 4: This is a previous case from 2015-16, that came back on Health Department radar recently. This resident called Animal Control, at which time the ACO and Health Department staff gained entry into the home. The Health Department is now working with the occupant to address the issues in the home, as well as hopefully some of the elder self-care issues that were noted with the help of social worker Janet Amdur.
- Rats - 11 rats have been caught in the Smart Boxes since January. Julie noted that this is an expensive solution for the small number of rats that have been caught in this time period. 2 new rat complaints were recorded since last meeting
- FOG Variance Request Policy
 - Diana asked to clarify whether the Board members still want every FOG variance request reported to them at meetings for a vote.
 - Julie suggested that only difficult cases come before the Board.
 - Adrienne asked if a procedure could be developed so that only complicated or difficult FOG variance requests come before the Board, with clear guidelines, and then the Health Department can internally approve the designated straightforward requests.
 - Julie added that it would be important to note a timeframe for other relevant parties and departments to weigh in, so the policy is clear and accessible for those involved.
- Leaf Blowers
 - Steve asked if neighboring towns are using similar bylaws and enforcement regarding leaf blowers.
 - Adrienne responded that several towns neighboring/nearby have similar bylaws, and the enforcement just differs by town.
- Social Media
 - New posts over the past month included info about 3 vaccine clinics, and the upcoming Memorial Day Parade and Ceremony.
 - Wes noted that the Health Department will be posting information about the upcoming NHANES survey, which has selected Middlesex County to participate. This means some Belmont residents may receive cold calls for participation, which the Health Department wants to push out info about, so it's not assumed to be spam.
- COVID Data Update
 - 23 cases were reported in April, and there have been 8 cases so far in May. Middlesex county in the low community level. As of May 11, the CDC has stopped their weekly data tracker review, and will no longer be publishing community levels coinciding with the end of the public health emergency, hospitalization rates will be published instead.
 - Board members agreed that the hospitalization rates did not need to be called out in this part of the report.
 - Board members also requested that department staff look to see if there are any leftover COVID policies that need to be looked at or repealed.
- Booster clinics - The last several clinics have been well attended, now that there is new eligibility for some folks to receive a second bivalent booster dose.
- End of Public Health Emergency

- There is still currently vaccine availability, and in the fall there will still be vaccine availability as usual for the underinsured.
- COVID tests will still be available for towns to order, for \$5 per test. The Health Department still has a supply of tests that do not expire until September, which will be distributed to residents until that expiration.
- Public Health Excellence Grant - The group has determined that more time as a group is really needed to get the work going in a meaningful way. It has been more of a challenge than expected to coordinate work between the three towns, and Arlington will be added as a fourth town soon.
- Local Health Internship - The Department's intern has been identified, and Ms. Gulmeena Khan will begin her work in the Health Department on Tuesday May 30th.
- BCA Data - Metro Public Health Collaborative data was reviewed

The Public Health Nurse report was reviewed.

The Youth and Family Services report was reviewed. One of the school social workers approached Janet recently to request that she provide some ongoing support for high school students when they're out for the summer and can't access the school social workers. The Department and the Board support this endeavor.

Animal Care and Control Officer report was reviewed. Adrienne noted that posting the picture or some info about the birds stuck on the glue trap would be an effective educational tool to help residents understand the harmful repercussions.

Veterans Services Officer report was reviewed. The Board requested that a map with the new parade route be generated and shared so that residents can have a visual aid when preparing for the event.

Email Rotation:

Julie Lemay will review the emails sent to the Board of Health email address through the next Board meeting.

The next Board of Health Meeting is scheduled June 26th, 2023 at 5:00 pm.

The Meeting adjourned at 6:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Adrienne Allen, M.D., M.P.H., Chair