

2021 ANNUAL REPORT

BOARD OF HEALTH:

Chair: Donna S. David, R.N., M.N.

Vice - Chair: Julie C. Lemay, M.P.H.

Board Member: Adrienne S. Allen, M.D., M.P.H.

Health Department Staff:

Director: Wesley Chin, M.P.H.

Assistant Director: Diana Ekman, M.S., REHS

COVID-19 Public Health Agent / Data Analyst: Lindsey Sharp, M.P.H.

Animal Control Officer: Suzanne Trasavage

Public Health Program Assistant & Clerk of the Board: Maria Reddington

Youth & Family Services Coordinator: Janet Amdur, LICSW, EdM

Public Health Nurse: David Neylon, R.N., CIC, REHS

Veterans' Service Officer: Robert Upton

Youth Commission Coordinator: Michael Patti

Local COVID-19 Contact Tracers: Suzanne Johannet, Heather Nahas

Purpose and Duties:

The mission of the Belmont Board of Health (BOH) is to protect and promote the health and wellbeing of Belmont residents and visitors to the town. This mission is accomplished by a BOH that consists of three elected members who meet on a regular basis to establish and review local public health policies, regulations, and programs; these programs are designed to minimize the risk of disease, injury, and environmental health hazards to residents and visitors. The day-to-day operations of the BOH are carried out by Health Department staff. Staff provide the public with education to promote health and prevent spread of disease, oversee enforcement of local, state, and federal environmental and public health regulations, monitor health status indicators to determine the needs of the community, and oversee emergency preparedness efforts in response to communicable pandemic diseases.

The Health Department is responsible for providing oversight for many of the state mandated responsibilities listed in the report below. However, in 2021, the department was again required to devote most of its staffing resources to help oversee the town's local response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Throughout the year the department worked closely with town officials in other departments (i.e. Town Administration, Schools, Fire, Police, Recreation, Human Resources, Council on Aging, Town Clerk, Public Works, etc.) and various community members (i.e. local business owners, Parent Teacher Organizations, youth sports leagues, civic organizations, etc.) to provide guidance on how to implement the state's COVID-19 Orders and standards in order to keep residents, businesses, and employees safe.

The department was also involved with helping residents and businesses interpret the Governor's emergency COVID-19 Orders (i.e. requirements for social distancing, capacity limits, etc.). The department also provided health education in response to complaints about social

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distancing violations that were related primarily to non-compliance of mask wearing and capacity limits at businesses.

With the increased workload associated with the pandemic, the Town Administrator, in coordination with the Select Board, authorized emergency funding from the MA Department of Public Health to expand the department's efforts in local contact tracing through temporary surge staffing. Emergency funding allowed the department to hire two part-time contact tracers, along with a Public Health Agent/Data Analyst, all on a temporary basis. The contact tracers and the Public Health Agent worked closely with staff from Belmont Public Schools to quickly identify close contacts throughout the year which also helped to keep Belmont Public Schools open for in-person student learning throughout the Delta and Omicron surges. The Public Health Agent also regularly worked with school staff and parents to review COVID-19 safety plans for various school related events and afterschool activities and sports and maintained the COVID-19 data dashboards for the town and the schools.

Additionally, the department engaged in planning with the health departments from Arlington and Lexington to form a regional vaccination collaborative to administer COVID-19 shots to first responders and senior residents at the beginning of 2021. As vaccine supply increased the department created and managed an online survey through which it was able to contact and register Belmont residents to receive vaccinations as doses were supplied by the state. Election workers from the Town Clerk's Office played a critical role in helping to contact and register Belmont residents for local vaccine appointments. Additionally, throughout 2021 the Belmont Health Department also partnered with the Belmont Fire Department to hold vaccine clinics for senior residents at the Belmont Housing Authority. Later in the year, the health department teamed up again with the Fire Department and Vaccinate RX, a Massachusetts based pharmacy, and members of the regional Medical Reserve Corp (MRC) to hold booster clinics for adults and first and second dose clinics open to all residents above the age of 5.

The collective efforts described above resulted in the administration of 2448 vaccine doses of vaccine provided to Belmont residents in 2021. This number does not include doses that were administered to first responders, home health workers, and other individuals who work in Belmont, but who are not residents.

Other COVID-19 efforts led by the health department in 2021 included local case investigation of over 1,000 residents with confirmed positive test results, as well as contact tracing and providing notification and guidance to their close contacts, and two PCR testing clinics open to the community following Halloween and Thanksgiving.

The department also engaged in other COVID-19 related work that included the sharing of information with the community through: weekly updates posted to the town's COVID-19 webpage, recording weekly video updates with Belmont Media Center, regular updates at Selectboard meetings, and maintenance of COVID-19 dashboards for case statistics for the Town and Belmont Public Schools.

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In terms of regular non-COVID-19 related work, the health department continued to collaborate regionally with other municipalities to maximize services to the community in areas such as public health nursing, tobacco control and prevention of youth access to tobacco, mosquito control, and emergency preparedness. Belmont and Lexington shared a public health nurse. Belmont shares a regional Tobacco Control Coordinator with Arlington, Brookline, Norwood, Randolph, Stoughton, and Watertown. Belmont contracts with Brookline for the services of a Sealer of Weights and Measures. Belmont, Brookline, Waltham, and Watertown are members of a Substance Abuse Prevention Collaborative. The Collaborative shares a grant from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health; this grant is managed and administered entirely by staff from the Wayside Multi-Service Center in Watertown to raise awareness and change social norms around underage drinking through the work of the Belmont Wellness Coalition.

In a typical year the Health Department is responsible for conducting routine inspections of permitted food service establishments to ensure safe and sanitary conditions are being maintained and to minimize the risk of a foodborne illness outbreak. There are 115 permitted food service establishments in Belmont. These establishments include retail food stores, restaurants, catering establishments, bakeries, schools, mobile canteen trucks, farmers' market stands, etc. Between one to three routine inspections are conducted at each of these establishments throughout the year, depending on the relative risk of the operation and their history of compliance. Plan reviews are conducted for new food establishments and for renovations to existing ones. Pre-operational inspections are performed to ensure that new construction is consistent with the plans that were submitted and approved. In 2021, 6 food establishment closed, 6 new establishment opened, and 3 plan reviews were conducted. The Department also conducts regular inspections at the seasonal Farmers' Market because products available for purchase now include many prepared foods, meats, dairy products and seafood. Volunteers and non-profit organizations, as well as for-profit organizations, are also subject to food safety regulations when they are serving food to the public at temporary food events. Event organizers regularly contact the Department for advice to determine if a temporary food permit is required for their event.



The Department enforces the State Sanitary Code, 105 CMR 410.000 Minimum Standards of Fitness for Human Habitation, and responds to residents' complaints concerning possible health and safety violations in their homes or dwelling units. If a housing violation is observed during an inspection, an Order Letter for Correction(s) is issued to the property owner and sometimes

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to the occupant/tenant. The Health Department is often required to facilitate corrective actions between occupants and landlords, so that violations can be remedied in a timely manner. However, cases may occasionally require court intervention to achieve desired compliance. Health Department staff received 27 housing complaints in 2021.

In addition to housing concerns, the Department responded to and took action on 299 complaints that included inappropriate garbage/rubbish storage and disposal, air quality, electric sanding, overgrown lawns, rodent problems, food and general safety issues, and numerous questions and concerns related to COVID-19. Department staff received 45 calls for possible rat sightings on private property.

The Department also inspects 10 recreational day camps, 12 swimming pools, and one biotech facility/laboratory annually.

The Board of Health is responsible for subsurface sewage systems in the town, under the Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP) regulations known as "Title 5." Soil testing, plan reviews, and oversight of construction are responsibilities of Health Department staff.

In 2021, the Department was allotted 30 doses of flu vaccine from the State, to provide flu vaccines to residents that are underinsured or uninsured.

In 2021 the Health Departments in Arlington, Belmont, Brookline, Norwood, Randolph, Stoughton, and Watertown continued to share a grant from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health to fund a full-time regional Tobacco Control Program Coordinator. The Tobacco Control Program Coordinator conducts inspections at tobacco retailers and performs tobacco compliance checks in the seven towns. There are currently 14 tobacco sales establishments in Belmont.

The Animal Control Officer (ACO) patrols the town's parks, streets, and conservation areas. The ACO is responsible for the quarantine of domestic animals for possible exposures to rabies and responds to numerous animal related service requests. Examples of service requests include: wild animal rescues, wild animal euthanasia due to severe injuries, home visits, Police and Health Department dispatches, and reports of found and missing dogs and cats. Additional responsibilities of the ACO include submission of bats for rabies testing, annual inspections of backyard chicken coops, and working with Department staff to coordinate a community rabies clinic for dogs and cats. The spring rabies clinic was again postponed in 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but was scheduled to resume again in 2022.

In an effort to maximize services to Town residents, the Youth and Family Services Coordinator is shared with the Council on Aging (COA). Under this arrangement, the Coordinator works 20 hours per week for the Health Department providing social services for families and children in need and 20 hours for COA providing services for senior citizens. The Coordinator offers referrals to individual and family mental health counseling, case management, and crisis intervention services. The Coordinator can also connect residents to resources for basic needs

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such as food, housing, and fuel assistance. Additionally, the Coordinator develops and oversees a number of community programs such as the Giving Tree, Golden Shoes, Peeps Diorama Contest, clutter support groups, a 50+ job seekers networking meetup and substance abuse education.

Belmont is one of approximately 28 cities and towns that comprise the East Middlesex Mosquito Control Project. Each participating municipality contributes funds toward the overall maintenance and administration of the District and then additional funds cover specific services provided to each community. Mosquito control specific to Belmont includes adult mosquito surveillance by trapping, helicopter Bti (*Bacillus thuringiensis* var. *israelensis*) application in a small area of Beaverbrook Reservation, and catch basin larval control.



Belmont is a member of Public Health Emergency Preparedness Region 4A/B, which encompasses 60 communities. Through this collaboration local municipalities are encouraged to work together to coordinate for emergency response planning. A prime example of this effort is the regional COVID-19 vaccine clinics that were held with Arlington and Lexington.



In accordance with Chapter 115 of the Massachusetts General Laws, the Veterans' Service Officer (VSO) provides comprehensive services to the Town's veterans and their dependents. The VSO is typically the first individual that a Veteran or dependent contacts for advice and assistance. The VSO works to determine a Veterans' eligibility to receive entitlements from the Department of Veterans' Services and Veterans' Affairs through extensive vetting in accordance with State and Federal rules and regulations. The VSO also coordinates and oversees many events to raise awareness and honor Veterans including the annual Memorial Day Parade, Purple Heart Ceremony, Flag Disposal Ceremony, Veterans' coffee hour at the COA, and Veterans' Day exercises with the schools, COA, and local VFW.

The Director and Assistant Director manage all of the programs that are housed in the divisions of Environmental Health, Disease Control, Animal Control, and Social Services with a great deal of support from the Public Health Program Assistant. The day-to-day administrative tasks of the Health Department rest on the shoulders of the Public Health Program Assistant. Administration

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is considered a division in itself due to the abundance of permits processed, accounts managed, and grants monitored by the Program Assistant. On a regular basis there are also burial permits that must be reviewed and processed, dozens of phone calls to answer, Board meeting minutes to write, meetings and program planning, social media and web page maintenance and a variety of bookkeeping duties involved. The Program Assistant manages free sharps disposal collection and safe disposal, mercury and button cell battery disposal, temporary dumpster permits and edits documents for all staff members. Animal Control dispatch and response is a crucial task for the Program Assistant that takes coordination and attention to detail due to the potential for exposure to rabies. The Program Assistant assures that department has the most current public health information and updates by maintaining contact with several organizations such as the Massachusetts Health Officers' Association (MHOA), the Massachusetts Environmental Health Association (MEHA), and the Massachusetts Association of Health Boards.

In 2018 the Select Board reinstated the Youth Commission and a Youth Commission Coordinator was hired to develop programming to encourage healthy behaviors. The Health Department was charged with providing administrative oversight to the Youth Commission Coordinator in FY 2019. The Youth Coordinator oversees work on initiatives with the Youth Commission. The Youth Coordinator position has been vacant since August 2021 and will be transferred to the Recreation Department in FY23.

Summary of Activities and Accomplishments:

- The Department once again received a \$5,000 Community Benefit Grant from Mt. Auburn Hospital to help provide funding for Youth Commission initiatives.
- The Youth & Family Services Program Coordinator was awarded a \$2,500 grant from MassHousing to run a Decluttering Program for residents of all ages.
- At the beginning of 2021, the Health Departments from Belmont, Arlington and Lexington partnered together to hold 20 regional vaccine clinics to provide initial COVID-19 vaccines to first responders, seniors, healthcare workers, and teachers. Over 26,000 doses of vaccine were administer to individuals from these three communities.
- Locally the Belmont Health Department partnered with Belmont Fire Department to organize and hold COVID-19 three vaccine clinics for senior residents at the Belmont Housing Authority initially in the spring and then to administer booster doses later in the fall.
- The Belmont Health Department partnered with Belmont Fire Department to administer over 50 does of COVD-19 vaccine to homebound residents throughout the course of the year.
- In the fall and winter the Belmont Health Department partnered again with Belmont Fire Department, members of the regional Medical Reserve Corp (MRC), and staff from VaxinateRX – a Massachusetts based pharmacy, to offer COVID-19 booster doses to eligible residents and initial doses to kids in the 5-11 age group. 1,408 doses of COVID-19 of vaccine were administered at seven vaccine clinics that were held at Temple Beth El in November and December 2021.

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- The Health Department worked with the Town Administrator and Superintendent of Schools to offer free PCR testing clinics to residents following Halloween and Thanksgiving. 306 PCR tests were administered through this joint effort.

Goals for 2022:

- To hold community clinics for the administration of COVID-19 vaccines to Belmont residents, employees, and other members of the community.
- To provide local contact tracing services.
- To identify and apply for public health grant opportunities for needs determined through regional and local health assessments.
- To work in collaboration with the Office of Community Development to develop an online method for home owners and building contractors to apply for and submit payment for temporary dumpster permits when applying for a building permit on the People Forms platform.
- To continue to contract out food service inspections in order to increase our capacity to respond to COVID-19 and other local concerns.
- To restart the seasonal environmental health internship program to raise awareness and educate residents on nuisance conditions that may contribute to rodent problems such as trash, debris, and unkempt properties.
- To continue to expand assistance and linkages of resources to residents and veterans who require counseling and/or other services in order to maintain a safe and healthy lifestyle.
- To develop and implement intergenerational social programs and community involvement projects to promote charitable contributions, healthy lifestyles, and improved mental health.
- To restart the annual Rabies vaccination clinic, to give Belmont residents a low-cost opportunity to vaccinate and microchip their pets.

Thanks and gratitude to the Belmont Board of Health Members, Ms. Donna David, Ms. Julie Lemay, and Ms. Adrienne Allen for their continued service and devotion to the Town of Belmont and support to the staff of the Health Department.

A special thank you to my dedicated colleagues in the Health Department, who all continued to work many endless weeks, and took on additional roles and responsibilities to tirelessly research, interpret, and respond to the many different COVID-19 related questions and scenarios that the town and schools faced throughout the year.

I would also like to thank the other town Departments, Boards, Commissions and Residents for their continued support and resilience throughout another challenging year for everyone.

Respectfully Submitted,

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Wesley Chin, MPH
Director Belmont Health Department

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Cases of Reportable Diseases by Year

Confirmed Disease	2018	2019	2020	2021
Amebiasis	1	0	0	0
Babesiosis	0	0	0	0
Calicivirus/Norovirus	0	0	2	0
Campylobacteriosis	2	11	4	0
COVID-19			697	1402
Cryptococcus neoformans	0	0	0	0
Cryptosporidiosis	0	0	0	0
Cyclosporiasis	0	2	1	0
Dengue Fever	0	0	0	0
Enterovirus	0	0	0	0

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Giardiasis	0	0	0	0
Group A streptococcus	2	0	0	0
Group B streptococcus	1	0	0	0
Haemophilus influenza	2	0	0	0
Hepatitis A	0	1	0	0
Hepatitis B (acute)	0	0	0	0
Hepatitis B (chronic)	0	0	3	0
Hepatitis C (acute)	1	0	1	0
Hepatitis C (chronic)	0	5	1	0
Human Granulocytic Anaplasmosis	0	0	0	0
Influenza	118	46	35	0
Invasive bacterial infection (other)	0	0	0	0

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Legionellosis	0	0	0	3
Listeriosis	0	0	0	1
Lyme Disease	0	0	0	0
Measles	0	0	0	0
Meningitis – Unknown Type	0	0	0	0
Mumps	0	0	1	0
Pertussis (and other Bordetella species)	2	3	0	0
Salmonellosis	4	3	0	4
Shiga toxin producing organism	0	0	0	0
Shigellosis	0	1	2	0
Streptococcus pneumoniae	0	0	1	1

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Tuberculosis, Active	0	0	0	1
Tuberculosis, Latent (LTBI)	27	0	0	0
Tuberculosis, Class A/B	0	0	0	0
Varicella	0	1	0	0
Vibrio sp.	1	0	1	1

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<u>Cancer Deaths 2021</u>	
<u>Breast</u>	2
<u>Lung</u>	6
<u>Stomach</u>	1
<u>Ovary</u>	2
<u>Prostate</u>	0
<u>Colon</u>	2
<u>Pancreas</u>	5
<u>Remaining Sites</u>	23

Breakdown by age and gender available in the Health Department. This total will not correspond to the total under “All Cancers” in the death statistics below because this total includes more than the primary cause of death.

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<u>DEATHS OF BELMONT RESIDENTS -2021</u>			
<u>Heart Disease</u>	35	<u>All Cancers</u>	35
<u>Cerebrovascular Disease</u>	11	<u>Pneumonia & Influenza</u>	11
<u>Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease</u>	3	<u>Diabetes Mellitus</u>	1
<u>Liver Diseases/Cirrhosis</u>	3	<u>Atherosclerosis</u>	0
<u>Accidents/Suicides</u>	13	<u>Alzheimers/Dementia</u>	76
<u>Birth Injuries, Newborn</u>	1	<u>Infections, Congenital</u>	0
<u>Malformations</u>	0	<u>All Other Causes</u>	38
<p align="center"><u>TOTAL DEATHS = 229</u></p> <p>*7 Death Certificates mentioned COVID-19 as cause, or contributing factor.</p>			

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2021 Permits and Licenses Issued			
Animal Permits	8	Food Permits (All Types)*	185
Biotech Licenses	1	Rubbish Hauler Permit	54
Burial Permits	151	Septage Hauler Permits	4
Day Camp Licenses	9	Swimming Pool Licenses	9
Dumpsters, Annual	22	Tanning Facilities	0
Dumpsters, Temporary	293	Tobacco Permits	14

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2021 RECEIPTS	
Abrasive Blasting Permits	50.
Animal Permits	280.
BioTechnology Permits	100.
Body Work/Establishments	0
Burial Permits	940.
Citations, Animal	500.
Citations, Tobacco	0.
Citations, Other	0.
Day Camp	1875.
Dumpster Permits	17030.
Food Establishment Permits	16215.
Food Service Plan Review	375.

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Mobile Food Trucks	900.
Rabies Clinic	0.
Rubbish Haulers	5500.
Swimming Pools	700.
Septage Haulers Permits	600.
Sealer of Weights & Measures Fees	3270.
Tobacco Sales Permits	2800.
Misc. (late fees, re-inspections, variance requests, etc.)	0.
Total	\$51,135.