

November 15, 2023

BOARD OF HEALTH

**Topsfield Town Hall**  
**MINUTES**  
**8 West Common Street, Topsfield, MA 01983**  
**\*\*\*VIDEO/TELE CONFERENCE\*\*\***

<b>Date:</b>	Wednesday, November 15, 2023
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**ATTENDANCE:**

<b>BOARD MEMBERS</b>	<b>PRESENT</b>
Sheryl Knutsen RN Chair	Yes
Mark Rizza	Yes
William Hunt Esq.	Yes
Ellen Eaton RN	Yes
Amy Lischko MSPH, DSc	Yes

<b>STAFF MEMBERS</b>	<b>PRESENT</b>
Gerard McDonald, Health Director	Yes
Julia Lobel RN, Tri-Town Public Health Nurse	Yes
Susan Winslow, Minutes Secretary	No

**VISITORS PRESENT:** Topsfield Cable Television, Daniel Johnson RS, Domestic Septic Design, Inc.; Alex Qirjazi, Foti Qirjazi

**OPENING**

The meeting of the Topsfield Board of Health was called to order at 6:31 pm on November 15, 2023 by Chair Sheryl Knutsen.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Chair Sheryl Knutsen made the following announcements:

*Pursuant to Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2023, this meeting/public hearing will be conducted via remote means. Members of the public who wish to access the meeting may do so in the following manner: Zoom Meeting – see connection information below to join the meeting by Zoom videoconference or calling in by phone. Specific information and the general guidelines for remote participation by members of the public and/or parties with a right and/or requirement to attend this meeting can be found on the Topsfield Town Website, at [www.topsfield-ma.gov](http://www.topsfield-ma.gov). You may also reach out to the Topsfield Board of Health at [health@topsfield-ma.gov](mailto:health@topsfield-ma.gov) or 978-887-1520 for information/assistance. No in-person attendance of members of the public will be permitted, and public participation in any public hearing conducted during this meeting shall be by remote means only.*

- This meeting was recorded by Topsfield Cable Television.

**MOMENT OF SILENCE**

Chair Knutsen led the Board and Visitors in a moment of silence.

**APPOINTMENTS**

53 and 53 R Main Street Local Upgrade Approval Requests

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Daniel Johnson RS of Domestic Septic Design Inc. addressed the Board regarding a Local Upgrade Approval request for a septic system repair at this address. The Board is being asked to approve the same Local Upgrade Approval requests that were approved in 1999 when the current system was installed.

Mr. Johnson presented the following information:

- The leaching system is overloaded and failed and must be replaced. The existing pressure distribution leaching area is 46 feet long by 15 feet wide.
- The other septic components for this system are functioning correctly and do not require replacement.
- The leaching system is covered by asphalt. Preliminary soil testing was conducted on October 31, 2023 and confirmed that the groundwater table is below the estimated seasonal high groundwater level that was found during soil testing in 1999.
- Mr. Johnson has designed a new pressure distribution leaching system that will be located in the same space as the existing failed leaching system. This will comply with location and previous variances granted in 1999.
- This will also keep the repair 150 feet away from School Brook.
- The two existing MicroFast tanks and the pump chamber will be pumped at the time of repair, and have been pumped since the failure. The Pump chamber will be cleaned.
- The existing leaching area will be excavated and the new leaching system will be installed one foot below the existing leaching system to avoid any leached soil. The excavation will include replacing the leaching area with C-33 sand below the proposed leaching area. Prior to this, Mr. Johnson and Health Director McDonald will inspect the soils to ensure that they meet Title 5 requirements.
- There will be two vent pipes to serve four leaching lines.

Mr. McDonald added that in 1999, the Board of Health granted a 2 foot reduction in the separation between the bottom of the leach field and estimated seasonal high groundwater which is allowable with the MicroFast system. The system is also less than 10 feet from the lot line (7 feet from the existing lot line). Mr. Qirjazi also owns the abutting property, and the file contains a letter from Mr. Qirjazi acknowledging this, so there is no additional notification necessary to abutters.

Mr. McDonald confirmed that restoring the leaching field to the original condition is the only option in this situation due to the existing conditions including water lines and School Brook.

The Board determined that they are in favor of granting the Local Upgrade Approval requests due to the fact that the Local Upgrade Approvals were approved in 1999 and nothing in the system design has changed.

Alex Qirjazi addressed the Board to indicate that he and his father, Foti, were following the meeting on ZOOM and agree with all the facts as presented.

***VOTE:*** Mr. Rizza made a motion to approve the Local Upgrade Approval Requests for 53 and 53R Main Street and the plan put forth by Daniel Johnson RS. Seconded by Ms. Eaton. After determining that there was no further discussion, Chair Knutsen called for a roll call vote:

*Rizza – yes*

*Eaton – yes*

*Lischko – yes*

*Hunt – yes*

*Knutsen – yes*

*The motion was approved in a vote of 5-0.*

## **MEETING MINUTES**

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There were no Meeting Minutes to review at this meeting.

## HEALTH AGENT REPORT

Health Director Gerry McDonald reported the following:

- Septic installations are underway on Ross Road, Deer Run and Washington Street. Another on Main Street is scheduled to begin.
- Food Inspections are underway for Common Victualler licenses.
- The new Tri-Town Public Health Inspector, Connor Galvin, will be shadowing Middleton Health Inspector Frank Giacalone.
- Castleberry Fair included 25 food vendors who were inspected by Health Director McDonald at the Topsfield Fair Grounds the weekend of November 10 – 12, 2023.
- Health Director McDonald facilitated a meeting with Tri-Town Health Directors and Town Administrators that was held at Topsfield Town Hall to discuss the future of the Public Health Excellence (PHE) Grant and the issue regarding the Town Administrator's refusal to honor the Board of Health vote to compensate Ms. Winslow for work on the PHE Grant during the four month time period when there was no Health Director. The Board of Health has requested an appointment at a Select Board meeting on two occasions to inform them about Board of Health and PHE activities, but the Town Administrator has removed the item from the Agenda.

## TRI-TOWN PUBLIC HEALTH NURSE REPORT

### Topsfield BOH Meeting November 15, 2023

#### **Vaccine clinics:**

Topsfield 10/12 - 115 people vaccinated (VNA - Flu only 19+)

Middleton 10/14 - 55 people vaccinated (Flu only 5+)

Boxford 10/19 - 90 people vaccinated (Conley's Pharmacy, Flu, COVID, RSV, Pneumo, Shingles)

Boxford/Masco 11/3 - 130 people vaccinated (Conley's Pharmacy Flu, COVID, RSV, Pneumo, Shingles))

HOG - 12/2 - Have set up in Color and sent out flier to HOG coordinator (VNA - Flu only 12+)

Standing Clinic at Town Hall for Pediatrics COVID/FLU - 7 flu, 7 COVID administered to date.

Waiting on the order of Moderna COVID Vaccines - still processing - 11/8 ordered 20 doses with ARPA funds (\$2590)

The elevator is still down at town hall - no timeline for when it will be fixed.

Homebound residents in the process of being vaccinated, have had to be accommodated through Conleys in some instances due to delays from Moderna.

#### **Test Kits:**

Free COVID test kits available in the Health Dept. Have ordered max amount for all 3 towns and distribute where needed at health dept, COA's, Police dept, etc.

#### **Language Equity:**

The Massachusetts Health Policy Commission's 2021 Blueprint for Health Equity discusses the need to address vulnerable populations and create access and inclusion for all residents. Part of cultural competence is to make no assumptions about demographics in towns, and not forget about new residents, business owners, workers, farm workers, seasonal workers, college students, and tourists.

Currently, the only translation service we have access to is for communicable diseases that come through MAVEN. Otherwise, no formal services exist for language translation through health dept or other depts in

towns. Gap exists largely for inspectional services, but also needed for other areas in the health department assisting new residents with immunization services, access to care, and services.

Lionbridge provides telephone translation of 380 languages typically within 10-15 seconds.

In-person translations are via speaker phone.

Phone calls are via a call into Lionbridge, then selecting language, then interpreter calls party.

Town is an eligible buyer under OSC, PHE has a line item grant for “communications” provided by the health director with cost estimates.

The overall goal of enrolling in this service would be:

1. Meet national standards from U.S. Department of Health & Human Services(HHS) for Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services in Health Care (CLAS Standards).
2. Promote intentional and consistent use of language translation services in Tri-Town to promote equity for residents.
3. Provide health services to residents meeting minimum standards for statutory requirements.

Tri-Town Data According to 2022 Census Data

**Boxford**

White 94%

Black 0%

Asian 2%

Hispanic 2.5%

Two or more races 2.5%

<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/boxfordtownessexcountymassachusetts/PST045221>

**Middleton**

White 91%

Black 2%

Asian 0.1%

Hispanic 5.6%

Two or more races 4.4%

<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/middletontownessexcountymassachusetts>

**Topsfield**

White 90.9%

Black 1.6%

Asian 3.7%

Hispanic 1.8%

Two or more races 3.7%

<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/topsfieldtownessexcountymassachusetts>

Limited English Proficiency in Population >5 years old

Boxford 1% / 65

Middleton 5% / 467

Topsfield 1% / 84

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Massachusetts Population 6,633,909  
Limited English Proficiency in Population >5 years old  
10% / 631,900  
<https://communityhealthdata.mass.gov/>

### **SAM Boxes in TTU/Masco:**

School nurses received a letter during an MSNO meeting from the Secretary of Education and Office of National Drug Control Policy regarding the fentanyl epidemic & having Narcan readily accessible in schools. President Biden recently addressed this during the SOTU address at the end of October. Topsfield (and Boxford) opioid funds have not been allocated yet (will be at the spring town meeting), but Middleton's funds have been allocated. Middleton has offered to purchase additional SAM Boxes for Topsfield & Boxford if BOH/schools agree. Met with Masco & TTU supt today, they are not opposed at all to SAMboxes being installed if BOH would like to put up near AED's. Will send communications to families/staff on Narcan PSA from health depts.

Currently, all 3 towns are enrolled in CNP (community naloxone program) and can distribute Narcan for free.

*"Fentanyl is a synthetic opioid that is so potent even a tiny amount can be fatal. As you have seen in your schools and communities, the rise of illicit fentanyl and its trafficking via social media is having a disproportionate impact on our children. Overdose deaths among adolescents doubled from 2019 to 2020 and continue to rise, even though youth rates of drug use have remained stagnant. That's because a teenager today can log onto social media with a smartphone and buy what they think is an opioid pain medicine or a prescription stimulant to help them study—and instead die from one pill that actually has fentanyl in it. Just one pill. And data show that two-thirds of adolescent drug poisoning deaths occurred with a potential bystander nearby, but naloxone was often not administered."*

Added messaging from Ad Council on Narcan PSA to talk to youth about the dangers of illicit fentanyl hitting our streets. No street drugs are safe drugs.

[The Real Deal on Fentanyl](#)  
[Fake Pills Fact Sheet](#)

PSA on Narcan posted on the town website: [PSA Narcan](#)

### **Narcan Review:**

Narcan: [Resources for Using NARCAN® \(naloxone HCl\) Nasal Spray](#)

Johns Hopkins Narcan Training Video: [This small spray can save a life. #shorts - YouTube](#)

Topsfield has distributed 101 doses of Narcan since receiving shipment in August

### **Opioid Fund/Meetings:**

Next Opioid Meeting: November 28th at 10:30

Det. Dani Shapiro from Essex County Outreach will be guest speaker

<https://essexcountyoutreach.com/>  
<https://essexcountyoutreach.com/resources/>

Working on an Opioid landing page for the town website for information with Stephanie Bilotti that will include a link for survey for people to take online or pick up paper copy of survey.

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScZHkn72J8vErASTJsjCABt4QmrE0fyb63jKSjbs1nokUnhw/viewform>

[Learn about the AG's Statewide Opioid Settlements with Opioid Industry Defendants | Mass.gov](#)

**Tri-Town Council/YRBS:**

Tri-Town Council is currently undertaking the Youth Risk Behavior Survey at Masco.

Executive Director Meredith Shaw spoke at Middleton's last opioid meeting about youth prevention strategies that work highlighting:

**YOUTH PREVENTION:**

What WORKS in Prevention Programs?

- Best to teach positive, healthy behavior, rather than through trying to stop risk behavior using strategies that contradict research
- OVERALL strategies should:
  - Build SEL skills, communication, and study skills
  - Enhance connections / bonding to prosocial adults, peers and organizations
  - Focus on healthy alternatives to drug use (healthy coping)
  - Use structured, interactive approaches that include skill practice (drug refusal, resistance strategies)
  - Focus on promoting norms and correcting misperceptions

What DOES NOT work?

- One time assemblies/events/gruesome displays
- Personal testimony from people in recovery
- Mock Car Crashes

**New Mass.gov Dashboards:**

[Respiratory Illness Reporting | Mass.gov](#) Flu/COVID/RSV

<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/respiratory-illness-reporting>

[Capacity Assessment Interactive Data Dashboard | Mass.gov](#)

<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/capacity-assessment-interactive-data-dashboard#dashboard->

[Population Health Information Tool | Mass.gov](#)

<https://www.mass.gov/orgs/population-health-information-tool>

**OLD BUSINESS**

Public Health Excellence (PHE) Grant

Chair Knutsen presented the PowerPoint Presentation she developed outlining the history of the PHE Grant that she presented to the meeting of Town Administrators and Health Directors from Topsfield, Boxford and Middleton at a meeting on November 9, 2023.

Chair Knutsen also presented an article titled, "Accelerated Public Health Modernization" by Shannon Gonick.

Discussion ensued regarding the logistics entailed with a Shared Services Coordinator, Grant Administration, and which Town would house the new employees, even if they were hired by the Town of Middleton. The Towns of Topsfield and Boxford have indicated that they will not hire new employees for this Grant even though the employees will be paid by the Grant and will cost the Towns nothing.

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The Board reviewed a letter from Mike Hugo, Strategic Director and Director of Government Relations for the Massachusetts Association of Health Boards (MAHB), titled, "Massachusetts Association of Health Boards Summary of the Public Health Excellence Grant Program for Shared Services".

Discussion ensued regarding the new PHE directive to establish a governing board. It is expected that further Guidance from the Department of Public Health (DPH) will be forthcoming regarding this directive.

Mr. McDonald informed the Board that, while the Town Administrator will not countenance hiring a PHE Shared Services Coordinator, the Town Administrator will support hiring a Social Worker and establishing a 4-hour a week position for Grant Administration.

#### American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Grant

Mr. McDonald informed the Board that Moderna COVID vaccines are available. The Board of Health has been allowed ARPA funds to purchase COVID vaccine. The vaccine costs \$30.00 per dose. At one point ARPA funds were considered to be used by the Board of Health to establish a revolving fund to purchase vaccine, but that would mean the loss of the Board of Health line item of \$8,000 for vaccine purchase, so the Revolving Fund proposal was dropped at the request of the Board of Health.

#### Holiday On The Green

VNA Care will be hosting a Flu Vaccine Clinic in the Council on Aging Program Area during the Holiday On the Green event from 4-7 pm on Saturday, December 2, 2023. There is concern that the elevator remains out of service, with the event a few weeks away.

Mr. Hunt expressed concern that the elevator is still broken and ADA requirements are not being met.

Ms. Lobel informed the Board that there was an event for Seniors today in the Public Hall, but Senior Citizens were forced to use stairs to access the event. Mr. Hunt expressed concern that this is in violation of ADA compliance and opens to the Town to possible litigation.

At present, there are three mobile food vendors who have obtained permits for the Holiday on the Green event. It is hoped that the elevator will be fixed before the event.

#### **CORRESPONDENCE**

There was no correspondence at this meeting.

#### **ADJOURN**

Chair Knutsen asked if there was any further business. Determining that there was none, Ms. Knutsen called for a motion to adjourn.

*VOTE: Mr. Rizza made a motion to adjourn. Seconded by Mr. Hunt. After determining that there was no further discussion, Chair Knutsen called for a roll-call vote:*

*Eaton – yes*

*Rizza – yes*

*Hunt - yes*

*Lischko – not present*

*Knutsen – yes*

*The motion was approved in a vote of 4-0 and the meeting adjourned at 8:50 PM.*

Minutes respectfully submitted by Susan Winslow.

Per the Open Meeting Law, the documents that were either distributed to the Board of Health before the meeting or introduced at the meeting were:

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- November 15, 2023 Meeting Agenda
- 53 Main Street Local Upgrade Approval Request Form 9A
- 53 Main Street Septic Design Plan
- Tri-Town Public Health Nurse Report
- PowerPoint Presentation on the Public Health Excellence (PHE) Grant developed by Sheryl Knutsen RN, Chair of the Board of Health
- Article: *Accelerated Public Health Modernization in Massachusetts* by Shannon Gonick

*These Meeting Minutes were approved at the December 20, 2023 Board of Health Meeting.*

*Pursuant to the 'Open Meeting Law,' G.L. 39, § 23B, the approval of these minutes by the Committee constitutes a certification of the date, time and place of the meeting, the members present and absent, and the actions taken at the meeting. Any other description of statements made by any person, or the summary of the discussion of any matter, is included for the purpose of context only, and no certification, express or implied, is made by the Committee as to the completeness or accuracy of such statements.*