

January 17, 2024

BOARD OF HEALTH

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

Date:	Wednesday, January 17, 2024
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ATTENDANCE:

BOARD MEMBERS	PRESENT
Sheryl Knutsen RN Chair	Yes
Mark Rizza	Yes
William Hunt Esq.	No
Ellen Eaton RN	Yes
Amy Lischko MSPH, DSc	Yes

STAFF MEMBERS	PRESENT
Gerard McDonald, Health Director	Yes
Julia Lobel RN, Tri-Town Public Health Nurse	Yes
Susan Winslow, Minutes Secretary	Yes

VISITORS PRESENT: Topsfield Cable Television

OPENING

The meeting of the Topsfield Board of Health was called to order at 6:31 pm on January 17, 2024 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. You may also reach out to the Topsfield Board of Health at 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. Recording Secretary Susan Winslow took Minutes.

MOMENT OF SILENCE

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

APPOINTMENTS

There were no appointments scheduled.

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MEETING MINUTES

December 20, 2023

After determining that there were no corrections or comments on the Meeting Minutes of December 20, 2023, Chair Knutsen called for a motion.

VOTE: Ms. Eaton made a motion to approve the December 20, 2023 Meeting Minutes as written. Seconded by Mr. Rizza. Chair Knutsen then called for a roll-call vote:

Eaton - yes

Lischko – yes

Rizza – abstain (not present at December 20, 2023 meeting)

Knutsen – yes

The motion was approved in a vote of 3-0-1.

HEALTH DIRECTOR REPORT

Health Director Gerry McDonald reported the following:

- After a slight lull during the holidays, plan reviews, septic installations, repairs and inspections continue to remain steady.
- Soil Testing for new construction and septic repairs continue.
- The new Tri-Town Public Health Inspector, Connor Galvin, will be shadowing Middleton Health Inspector Frank Giacalone.
- There have been a few minor housing issues but nothing major.

TRI-TOWN PUBLIC HEALTH NURSE REPORT

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Vaccine clinics:

Topsfield Town Hall continues to offer appts & walk-in Flu & COVID for pediatrics (state supplied) on Mondays & Wednesdays, as well as Moderna COVID vaccines for seniors 65+ (limited supply purchased through ARPA funds).

Resp Illnesses:

Respiratory illnesses continue to rise according to MDPH data
Influenza severity rate is HIGH according to MDPH
Hospitalization rates are at medium level

MA Vaccination Rates 23-24 Season

FLU 37.9%

COVID 19%

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

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.

NaloxBox / SAM Boxes in TTU/Masco:

Topsfield & Boxford Elementary Schools have all received their Opioid Overdose Rescue Kits now.

Met with TTU school nurses and reviewed Narcan training.

Powerpoint presentation / slides used & available for future use (Template available from MAPHN and health directors reviewed prior to use, will send PP with notes)

TTU School Nurses will send out PSA to staff along with PP slides for Narcan training.

Supt, principles & facilities directors aware school nurses have now received training and boxes.

Masco MS/HS is in works for training with nurses still. Have 4 boxes to distribute there based on Boxford Police/EMS recommendation.

Opioid Fund/Meetings:

Next Opioid Meeting: January 2024 TBD

Also working on Tri-Town Community Resources Brochure/Booklet with available resources in one place.

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

Senior Task Force:

Still very busy right now with senior outreach.

Some complex cases, making referrals to agencies to secure assistance/resources.

Resources are limited throughout all agencies making wait times long.

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

- Health Director McDonald informed the Board that Middleton will not become the grant host until July, 2024 which represents the start of FY25. Attorney Rich Mucci who works with Massachusetts Association of Health Boards (MAHB) is assisting with updating the Inter-Municipal Agreements (IMA).

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- The FY24 amount currently approved by MDPH is \$336,000 for public health staff and projects. Funds have not yet been received but are expected.
- Middleton is planning to hire a social worker and grant coordinator. Tri-Town Public Health Nurse Julia Lobel RN will become an employee of Middleton, although she will still work primarily out of the Topsfield office.
- Topsfield returned \$69,345.35 to the State in unused FY23 funds. Because Middleton posted the Tri-Town Health Inspector as a 19 hour a week job with no benefits, no-one applied for the position in FY23 and the majority of the funds that were returned to the State would have been used for this position. Middleton has since hired Connor Galvin as a fully benefitted employee serving the Tri-Town as Public Health Inspector funded by the Grant in FY24.
- The Town of Topsfield received \$30,000 for FY23 Grant Administration. Because the Town Administrator refused to pay Ms. Winslow for Grant Administration, the entire amount went into the Town's General Fund.
- Ms. Eaton expressed concern that FY23 PHE Grant funds were available to pay for Grant Administration, yet Ms. Winslow was not compensated for the work she did on the grant. Ms. Eaton asked who will be responsible for Grant Administration if Topsfield remains the grant host until the end of FY24 because Ms. Winslow should not have to fill that role for no compensation again. Mr. McDonald informed the Board that there is an individual in Middleton who will be paid four hours a week for Grant Administration starting in FY25.
- A Shared Governance Board will be created to oversee the Grant including Primary and Alternate Members. Ms. Knutsen and Ms. Eaton expressed interest in serving.
- Mr. McDonald will inquire to determine if this Governance Board will be required to comply with Open Meeting Law.
- Patrick Henry is the new DPH Liaison for the Tri-Towns with the PHE Grant.

American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Grant

- There was no news to report on this Grant.

NEW BUSINESS

COVID Policy

Board Members reviewed the Topsfield Board of Health document dated January 10, 2024 related to updating COVID guidance for Topsfield municipal offices.

- The Board discussed whether this document should be submitted to the Town Administrator as guidance or policy.
- The Town Administrator discovered that the Town's COVID guidance was outdated and asked the Health Director to update it following an employee concern.
- The Board determined that prior COVID guidance followed recommendations from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health and the Board will continue this practice.
- The Board determined that there was a consensus of support for the January 10, 2024 Topsfield Board of Health guidance as written.

Public Health Equity

Chair Knutsen informed the Board that one of the projects highlighted at the January 17, 2024 PHE Grantee meeting was an effort by the town of Ware to determine health equity populations. The PHE Grant offers the use of the Academic Public Health Corps (APHC) to research and collect data. The APHC hires and supervises public health interns who are available to work on projects for local boards of health. APHC workers researched population data and discovered a need for public health equity assistance in Ware, and they are available to other Towns to assist with special projects and research. Ms. Knutsen informed the Board that research may discover the same type of need in Topsfield.

OLD BUSINESS

Request for Letters of Support on Bills H823, S551 and S542

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Chair Knutsen explained that this item, previously on the December 20, 2023 Agenda, was being revisited because Board Member Amy Lischko was not present when it came up for discussion at that meeting.

Board Members reviewed correspondence received at the Board of Health Office from Sharon Kishida requesting local towns to support Bills H823, S551 and S542. These bills support a movement to hold manufacturers responsible for end-of-use recycling programs for Paint, Mattresses and Packing Paper/Materials.

Ms. Lischko offered to draft a letter which will be reviewed at the February meeting.

VNA Quarterly Report

Board Members reviewed the FY24 Quarterly Report and Line List of Reportable Diseases submitted by Beverly Salate RN from VNA Care.

Bills Paid

Board Members reviewed Bills Paid since the December 20, 2023 Meeting.

Revenue

Board Members reviewed Revenue in the amount of \$6,060.50 received since the December 20, 2023 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 Ms. Eaton. After determining that there was no further discussion, Chair Knutsen called for a roll-call vote:

Eaton – yes

Rizza - yes

Lischko – yes

Knutsen – yes

The motion was approved in a vote of 4-0 and the meeting adjourned at 7:45 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:

- January 17, 2024 Meeting Agenda
- December 20, 2023 Meeting Minutes
- Email from Director McDonald dated 1/10/24 and proposed COVID Guidance Document
- Revenue Sheet for January 17, 2024 Meeting
- Bills Paid
- Email from Sharon Kishida dated December 14, 2023 and sample letters related to Bills H823, S551 and S542

These Meeting Minutes were approved at the February 21, 2024 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.