



**BOARD OF HEALTH**  
**Topsfield Town Offices**  
**8 West Common Street, Topsfield, MA 01983**

**Minutes of April 16, 2019**  
**7:30 PM**

Board Members present in addition to Chairman Sheryl Knutsen RN were Vice-Chair Gerry Topping and Member Thomas Mannetta CE. Board Members Vincent Guerra MD and Anthony Alley RN were not in attendance. Recording Secretary Susan Winslow was in attendance. Selectman Richard Gandt and resident Larry Fixler were in attendance.

**COMMONLY USED ABBREVIATIONS:**

ADA: Americans with Disabilities Act  
BOH: Board of Health  
BOS: Board of Selectmen

MAHB: Mass. Association of Health Boards  
MAPC: Metropolitan Area Planning Council  
MAVEN: Massachusetts Virtual Epidemiologic Network  
MDEP: Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection

CDC: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
CEU: Continuing Education Unit  
CEMP: Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan  
COIN: Community Outreach Information Network

MEMA: Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency  
MRC: Medical Reserve Corps

DPH: Department of Public Health  
EDS: Emergency Dispensing Site  
ESHWT: Estimated Seasonal High Water Table  
EP: Emergency Preparedness  
FDA: Food & Drug Administration  
HHS: Health and Human Services  
HMCC: Health & Medical Coordinating Coalition  
LSAC: Local State Advisory Committee  
MDPH: Mass. Dept. of Public Health

NEMMC: Northeast Massachusetts Mosquito Control  
PE: Professional Engineer  
PHEP: Public Health Emergency Preparedness  
POD: Point Of Dispensing (aka EDS)  
RN: Registered Nurse  
RS: Registered Sanitarian  
SAS: Soil Absorption System  
TBOH: Topsfield Board of Health  
TRMRC: Topsfield Regional Medical Reserve Corps  
VNA: Visiting Nurse Association

**CALL TO ORDER AND EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Chairman Knutsen called the meeting to order at 7:30 pm

*At 7:30 PM, Mr. Topping made a motion to enter into closed Executive Session in accordance with M.G.L. c. 30A, sec. 21(A) under Exemption #2 to conduct strategy session in preparation for negotiations with nonunion personnel, specifically, to discuss and negotiate the Board of Health Agent position, since an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the government's bargaining position. The Board to return to Open Session at 8:00 PM. Seconded by Mr. Mannetta. The motion was approved in a roll-call vote:*

*Knutsen – yes*

*Topping – yes*

*Mannetta – yes*

**OPEN SESSION**

At 8:00 pm, The Board returned to Open Session with Town Administrator Kellie Hebert, Selectman A. Richard Gandt and resident Larry Fixler in attendance.

Chair Sheryl Knutsen announced that the meeting was convened to discuss the options of a part-time Health Agent Position versus the job remaining a full-time position following the retirement of Health Agent John Coulon on April 11, 2019. The Board supports the position remaining full-time.

Chair Knutsen read aloud the talking points she will be presenting to the Board of Selectmen at their Working Session on April 17, 2019 to describe the breadth of the responsibilities and mandates of the Board of Health (see attached) and the Health Agent.

Town Administrator Kellie Hebert explained to the Meeting that by Statute, the Board of Health names the Health Agent, who must then be appointed by the Selectmen and paid by the Town. Ms. Hebert presented her reasons for wishing to change the Health Agent position from full-time to part time as follows:

- The Town is looking for ways to save taxpayer funds while promoting regionalization of services through intermunicipal agreements.
- The Town has been chosen as an incubator for a Regional North Shore IT Hub grant and this would be another way the Town could show an effort toward regionalization.
- The Board of Health Administrative Assistant would receive more hours to coordinate outsourcing of septic inspections, soil testing and plan reviews (suggestion 4 hours).
- Professional Services would be used for outsourcing septic related inspections, reviews and approvals (suggestion 4 hours).
- The Town Administrator would be open to starting at 30 or 32 hours.
- If it was determined that the 30 – 32 hour position was not working, there would be an option to return to a 40 hour position

The Board discussed the concerns relative to reducing the Health Agent position to a part-time position as follows:

- The nature of the job is not a 9-5 position. Food inspections and Public Health emergencies often require weekend and evening hours. Would a part-time Health Agent have a feeling of 'ownership' of the position and dedication for this requirement?
- Cost increases and additional time required to outsource plan reviews, Title V Inspection Reports and septic inspections to an outside professional – Septic Design Engineers cost \$100 per hour, and soil testing can take up to 4 hours. This could use up an entire week's Professional Services budget for one item.
- Turn-around time for plan reviews would be doubled using outsourcing – concern when there is a 45 day time clock on plan reviews.

Resident Larry Fixler addressed the Board to share his experience as the past Chairman of the Board of Health in North Andover, MA. Mr. Fixler informed the Board that the Town of North Andover reviewed this same issue. Mr. Fixler shared his opinion that segmentation of Health Agent responsibilities is not feasible because Public Health changes daily and the Health Agent must be committed to the Town in the capacity of a full-time employee.

The Board discussed the use of Alternate Health Agents to assist with Food Inspections at the Topsfield Fair and Chair Knutsen informed Town Administrator Hebert and Selectman Gandt that Mr. Coulon was able to find credentialed Public Health officials who would volunteer their time to conduct food inspections at the Fair, including both State and Federal officials. This may not be the case going forward under a new Health Agent.

Town Administrator Hebert suggested posting a 32-Hour position for two weeks followed by a review of the caliber of applicants. If there was still concern about a viable candidate, the position would be re-advertised as a 40 hour position. Ms. Hebert informed the Board that while she urges them to reconsider voting the change the Health Agent position to part-time she will respect their final decision.

Town Administrator Hebert and Selectman Gandt left the meeting at 9:30 pm.

After lengthy discussion, the Board confirmed their previous decision to ask the Selectmen to keep the position of Health Agent a full-time, 40-hour-per-week position at the Board of Selectmen Working Session on April 17, 2019.

### **MOTION TO ADJOURN**

At 11:15 pm, Mr. Topping made a motion to adjourn. Seconded by Mr. Mannetta. The motion passed in a vote of 3-0.

Respectfully submitted,  
Susan Winslow  
Recording Secretary

### **DOCUMENTS**

1. Agenda
2. Health Agent Job Description
3. Talking Points – Address to the Topsfield Board of Selectmen by BoH Chair Sheryl Knutsen RN
4. Current and Near-Future Working Projects – Topsfield Board of Health

*These Minutes were accepted at the April 25, 2019 Board of Health Meeting.*

Pursuant to the 'Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §18-25, the approval of these minutes by the Board 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 Board as to the completeness or accuracy of such statements.
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