

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

Date:	Wednesday, August 16, 2023
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ATTENDANCE:

BOARD MEMBERS	PRESENT
Sheryl Knutsen RN Chair	Yes
Mark Rizza	Yes
William Hunt Esq.	Yes
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 6:30 pm on August 16, 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. 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.

- The Recording Secretary is taking Meeting Minutes. This meeting was also recorded by Topsfield Cable Television.

MOMENT OF SILENCE

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

APPOINTMENTS

There were no appointments at this meeting.

MEETING MINUTES

Chair Knutsen asked the Board Members if there were any corrections/comments/questions regarding the Meeting Minutes of July 19, 2023. There were none.

VOTE: Mr. Rizza made a motion to accept the Meeting Minutes of July 19, 2023 as written. Seconded by Ms. Eaton. After determining that there was no further discussion, Chair Knutsen called for a roll-call vote.

Eaton – yes

Hunt - yes

Lischko - yes

Rizza - yes

Knutsen – yes

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

HEALTH AGENT REPORT

Health Agent McDonald reported the following:

- The office remains busy and things are going well – no requests for bedroom reclassification.
- Mr. McDonald attended the School Readiness Meeting on August 16, 2023.
- Soulfest! John Coulon RS and Lauren Roche assisted with food inspections and found no issues.
- The Camping Permit was not issued to Soulfest! because neither the Essex Agricultural Society nor Soulfest! organizers obtained a special permit from the Town for the event. Mr. McDonald thanked Board Members for the work they put into assisting with the preparation of the Camping Permit application.
- John Coulon RS followed up on a housing complaint regarding a possible mouse issue at Amberwood Farm on July 29, 2023 and reported that there was no mouse infestation. This complaint is now considered closed.
- Soil Testing was performed at 68 River Road.
- Title 5 Inspections, Septic Installation and Repair Inspections, Plan Reviews continue.
- Mr. McDonald is applying for the Certified Health Officer certification and will follow with the process to obtain Registered Sanitarian certification as well.

TRI-TOWN PUBLIC NURSE REPORT

Tri-Town Public Health Nurse Julia Lobel RN reported the following:

Topsfield BOH Meeting August 16, 2023

COVID Update:

Currently seeing a late summer wave. EG.5, variant / offshoot of XBB strain currently circulating. No evidence EG.5 causes more severe illness. COVID is still a threat for vulnerable populations, long COVID is a risk with every COVID infection someone gets. Trending upward on wastewater data, increased testing, & hospitalizations in recent weeks. Still lower hospitalizations than previous summers despite uptick. CDC has no plans to change any recommendations or precautions. Need to keep watch on severity of illness.

TTU School readiness meeting earlier today - DESE/DPH Meeting this week- May see changes for 23-24 school year - as of now everything is the same as last year but stay tuned* - Reviewed DPH/CDC updates with all that attended (TTU admins ,police, fire, dpw, transportation, facilities depts)

Vaccinations:

COVID: Last discussion was there would be an updated monovalent vaccine for seniors this fall. No discussion of the need for boosters for children or adults at this time. But the CDC will announce recommendations soon. Stay tuned. Unvaccinated babies/children may need a bivalent series.

Rachel Lee Hamilton Essex / Regional PHN resigned. Vaccines are no longer provided to GCACC for free from the federal government. Still no copay but now moving toward commercialization and towns and pharmacies must pay to order vaccines (same as flu).

Influenza: Annual vaccination recommended for everyone 6 months and up preferably in the fall. IE September/October before the U.S. flu season begins. Early data in the southern hemisphere indicates an early flu season and a good match for vaccine/circulating virus.

RSV: New vaccine out for common respiratory virus to reduce severe disease in seniors at risk age 60 and older.

Tripledemic: Flu/COVID/RSV - expected to occur again, but possibly not as bad, as some built back immunity.

Fall Vaccination Clinics:

Topsfield

VNA booked flu clinic at Town Hall - October 12th, 12-4pm

COVID vaccine - Working out details of how to obtain COVID vaccine now that GCACC now longer exists. Have spoken with DPH/Vaccine unit about obtaining Tri-Town MIIS Pin to order vaccines if needed. They approved plan so is possible, working on application & details.

Other possible options for Topsfield residents would be to go to Boxford COA, or use outside agency, if funding is not secured for vaccine purchase. Current estimate for vaccines is approx \$130/dose (100 doses /\$13000)

Boxford COA/Community Center - Conleys Flu/COVID/RSV (Offering Pneumo & Shingles too)

Thursday - October 19th, 2pm-4pm (open to all)

Thursday - November 16th, 2pm-4pm (open to all)

Masco HS (kids) - Possibility to coordinate flu clinic(s) there this fall - if need arises?

Mosquito borne illness:

Tri-Towns all in Low Risk level for both West Nile Virus and Eastern Equine Encephalitis

Positive mosquito samples found on area surveillance WNV + mosquito sample in Haverhill 7/24

WNV & EEE are usually transmitted to humans through the bite of an infected mosquito, start with flu-like symptoms.

WNV - There were 10 human cases in 2022.

EEE - There were 0 human or mosquito cases in 2022.

Topsfield Barrier Spraying - August 7th at schools

Tick borne diseases in MA:

More active tick season this year due to weather.

Tick activity and tick-borne diseases like Lyme disease, anaplasmosis, babesiosis, and *Borrelia miyamotoi* (causes red meat allergy/alpha-gal syndrome), occur year-round in Massachusetts.

CDC warning of emerging public health threat affecting 1 / 2 million people - Alpha Gal Syndrome AGS- causing red meat allergy or dairy allergy. Caused by tick bites by primarily lone star tick (mostly found on cape, but traveling further). Transmits sugar into the system. Can be life threatening, can cause allergy/anaphylaxis symptoms 2-6 hours after eating meat or dairy.

Between 2010-2022 there were 110,000 suspected cases in the US, but estimated to be more like 450,000 cases, because of underreported and underdiagnosed cases.

Tick bite prevention is key - No treatment or cure for AGS.

Although tick activity is weather-dependent, there are two peaks during the year; the first begins in March/April and lasts through August, and the second occurs in October-November.

The majority of cases of tick-borne disease occur in June through August.

Tick-borne diseases are most frequently diagnosed in children and older adults.

Keep brush cut back away from fields, tick applications?

Tick checks when coming inside - Deer ticks are the size of poppy/sesame seeds!

Educational material available to LBOH/schools from MDPH clearinghouse.

Prevention and early detection is key for all tick-borne diseases.

Wear DEET bug spray if go in the woods or grassy areas

Check yourself when you come indoors.

Avian Influenza:

Keep on your radar - Continues to be a threat to the wild bird population (not humans at this time). To date over 58 million birds have died from avian influenza in the US since 2021. Surveillance for the virus is ongoing in both wild and domestic birds in MA. Avian flu / Bird Flu is not a new virus, the virus has come and gone for many years, typically carried by migratory birds and spreads to domestic birds, two types HPAI and LPAI, "high path" and "low path".

Report any unexpected deaths or other signs (IE large groups, unusually sick looking flocks) to Dept of Ag or Fish & Wildlife. IE birds found on sports fields/playgrounds.

Religious Immunization Act:

There is an act relative to vaccines and preventing future disease outbreaks (Bill S.1391) currently in discussion in the joint committee. Bill would remove the religious immunization exemption option in an attempt to prevent disease outbreaks in the classroom and provide more protections for students who are immunocompromised and unable to get vaccinated. The legislation would apply to public, charter and private schools. There is no clear timeline for vote to go to the full legislature for approval.

Proponents claim the current process allows loopholes for unfair practice easily making illegitimate claims.

Opponents believe there should be a fair process to allow for religious exemptions and not a blanket process of removing all rights.

There were 813 religious exemptions issued to kindergarteners in 2022 according to state data. There are 351 towns in MA, some towns/areas have disproportionate amounts of exemptions.

Need herd immunity to protect against outbreaks. For a disease like measles, according to the CDC, herd immunity is only achieved when at least 93% to 95% of the population is vaccinated.

CDC currently estimates 30% children are behind in routine childhood vaccinations from pandemic already!

New England States / religious vaccine exemptions currently allowed:

ME - no

NH - yes

VT - yes

NY - no

CT - no

RI - yes

(only 6 or 7 states have banned religious exemptions)

According to research from Vanderbilt University Most religions and religious groups today do not object to medical vaccinations.

Narcan/Naloxone:

Topsfield health dept completed CNP application and is now an approved program from DPH to distribute Narcan to community members. 3 ways to distribute in community.

1. Leave behind kits - bags with narcan box and educational materials, gloves, barrier mask, fentanyl test strip - provided to fire and police dept for responding to known overdoses or known substances
2. Community distribution kits - narcan box with education material
3. SAM Box - fill these public access boxes in community (need opioid funds allocated to purchases theses boxes from MHOA)

CNP program requires tracking of distributed narcan supply, training provided and overdoses responded to. I am responsible for submitting info to state.

Opioid overdoses continue to be a major public health issue - according to the CDC, there were more than 105,000 fatal overdoses in the US in 2022.

There were 2,357 confirmed and estimated opioid-related overdose deaths in MA 2022, surpassing the previous peak in 2021 by an estimated 57 deaths according to MDPH.

All Tri-Town health departments have now applied for CNP and can now distribute Narcan to community members (Boxford pending, but I can distribute anywhere) and should consider being put out SAM boxes in the near future (\$275 from MHOA, good use of opioid fund). Consider having narcan readily available in your home or first aid kit. Think of same as learning how to use an epi-pen, AED, fire extinguisher, CPR...



SAM Box for Public Places

Leave Behind Kit /

Community Distribution

Have alerted schools/public safety can order Narcan through Bulk purchasing program through the State Office of Pharmacy services at no cost to them (some are currently paying). Currently, all naloxone obtained by these entities through SOPS is fully subsidized by the Bureau of Substance Addiction Services.

No need for schools or public safety to order from a distributor or retail outlet and pay for Narcan.

Contact:

Scott Brody % State Office for Pharmacy Services

E: scott.brody@mass.gov

P: (978) 858-2138

Narcan was approved for OTC sale but still not available. FDA also approved a second OTC Naloxone spray for opioid overdose - ReVive agent for over-the-counter (OTC) nonprescription use. ReVive is a 3-mg naloxone hydrochloric nasal spray manufactured by Harm Reduction Therapeutics Inc, the first nonprofit pharmaceutical company to receive FDA approval of a naloxone nasal spray.

Senior at Risk Meetings:

Quiet right now.

Recreational Camps:

Very busy season for camps, most wrapping up. Have had to follow up on 1 complaint after injury, answer many questions, provide lots of guidance on regs.

Looking to improve the process for next year's recreation camp season. Have been looking at how other BOH with recreational camps do their process. Have spoken with other PHN with camps and some have good ideas and would like to improve their towns, may collaborate.

Bee stings at Church - 20 out of 22 children at rec program (not a licensed camp program) were stung by bees while playing on a play structure. EMS called, all evaluated, 1 child was given epi and taken out by EMS and transported to hospital.

Currently, MA public places do not have access to epinephrine outside school settings. So camps, drop in programs, athletics, and restaurants do not have access to stock or undesignated epi-pens as is available in other New England States (ME, NH, NY, CT, RI, PA)

<https://www.foodallergy.org/our-initiatives/advocacy/know-your-rights/public-access-epinephrine#:~:text=Multiple%20states%20have%20passed%20legislation,in%20case%20of%20an%20emergency.>

References:

Information discussed today is from combined sources, MDPH, DESE, CDC, and Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, American Medical Association, Boston Globe. Vanderbilt University.

OLD BUSINESS

Public Health Excellence (PHE) Grant Update

Health Director McDonald reported the following:

- The FY24 Work Plan and Budget have been finalized well before the deadline of August 31, 2023.
- Funding for FY23 was \$200,000. Funding for FY24 will be \$336,000.
- The office has received the list of Allowable Expenses for FY24.
- The State is recommending a stipend to Health Directors as part of the administrative support fee limited to \$10,000 a year and no more than \$2,500 per quarter.
- Chair Knutsen has spoken with two members of the Select Board to inform them about the Town Administrator's denial of the FY23 payments for Grant Administration. It is hoped that this issue will be resolved.
- The Administration line item for FY24 is 15% of the grant allocation or approximately \$50,000 for FY24.
- Chair Knutsen informed the Board that Jessica Ferland at MDPH will be contacted for guidance, and there is the opportunity to enlist legal counsel from MHOA if required.
- Mr. McDonald reported that a Shared Services Coordinator position is mandatory unless a waiver is granted. This position is also funded by the PHE Grant, and a job description will be forthcoming from MDPH.
- The Tri-Town Public Health Inspector position, hosted by Middleton, was posted on August 11, 2023 for the 30-hour position and the first candidate interview is scheduled for Monday, August 21, 2023.

American Rescue Plan Act Grant (ARPA)

Chair Knutsen reported that the ARPA grant consisted of \$1.9 million. Expenditures thus far are listed on the Town Website at www.topsfield-ma.gov

- The Board of Health was allocated \$100,000 in ARPA funds.
- Funds must be earmarked by December 30, 2023 and spent by 2025.
- There is approximately \$50,000 left for the Board of Health to earmark.
- The Board of Health has worked with the Fire Department to use BOH allocated funds to purchase items for the Topsfield Fire Department.
- Other uses for the Board of Health allocation may include seed money for a potential Board of Health vaccine revolving account in the amount of \$10,000 - \$15,000 and \$9,000 to purchase and install security cameras to monitor the Board of Health office vaccine refrigerator. Mr. McDonald spoke with Tri-Town Schools Facilities Director Steve Clifford about security cameras. It is hoped that Mr. Clifford might attend the September ARPA Meeting to offer some guidance, as he has purchased security camera systems for school buildings.
- Ms. Lischko suggested that ARPA funds might be enlisted to address the issue of mattress recycling in Topsfield.

NEW BUSINESS

FY24 North Coastal Environmental Management Contract

Board Members reviewed the proposed contract, received at the Board of Health on August 3, 2023. Mr. Rostkowski P.G. was asked to attend this meeting to explain the increase in the cost of the contract, but he did not appear.

After extensive discussion, Board members determined to table a vote on the contract for the following reasons:

- Multiple requests were made to Mr. Rostkowski to submit his FY24 contract before the close of FY23 so the Board could review it before the start of FY24. Mr. Rostkowski did not respond to those requests and submitted the FY24 contract in August 2023, one month into FY24.
- The cost of the FY24 contract is higher than FY23.
- Mr. Hunt suggested that Health Director McDonald might consider obtaining professional services from an expert in the field of DEP regulations to review contract options from three vendors to ensure that the proposed contract meets DEP requirements for post-closure landfill monitoring.
- Mr. Hunt offered to produce a draft letter to the Finance Committee regarding the increase in Mr. Rostkowski's FY24 contract and requested that he receive a copy of the contract and a link to DEP Regulations pertaining to landfill post-closure monitoring.
- The Board determined that Mr. Rostkowski will be requested to attend the September 20, 2023 meeting to explain the increase in the contract for FY24.

Health Director Annual Evaluation

Chair Knutsen informed the Board that she will be conducting the annual performance review for Health Director Gerry McDonald. Ms. Knutsen asked Board Members to send her any comments they wish to include in the performance review. Ms. Knutsen informed Board Members that the current Town Administrator has done away with the step system that included merit-based raises, but the annual performance review is still required.

Topsfield Fair Preparation

Mr. McDonald informed Board Members that he will be working with John Coulon RS and Lauren Roche to conduct food inspections at the 2023 Topsfield Fair. Mr. Coulon will be handling the pre-opening mandatory meeting for all food vendors that includes the food safety PowerPoint presentation developed by the Topsfield Health Department.

Ethics Training Reminder

Minutes August 16, 2023

Chair Knutsen reminded Board Members that an email was sent to them on July 17, 2023 with a link to the Town Clerk's page on the required Ethics Training and Exam. The State requires that all employees and Board Members complete this training.

Revenue and Bills

The Board reviewed revenue in the amount of \$2,840.00 for the time period between July 19, 2023 and August 16, 2023.

The Board reviewed bills paid for the same time period.

CORRESPONDENCE

There was no correspondence for 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

Lischko - yes

Hunt - yes

Knutsen – yes

The motion was accepted in a vote of 5-0 and the meeting adjourned at 8:35 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:

- August 16, 2023 Agenda
- July 19, 2023 Meeting Minutes
- FY24 North Coastal Environmental Contract
- Annual Evaluation Form for Health Director
- Bill Lists
- Revenue Sheet

These Meeting Minutes were approved at the September 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.