



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

October 21, 2020

6:30 PM

Board Members present: Chairperson Sheryl Knutsen RN and Board Members, Anthony Alley RN, Larry Fixler RPh, Mark Rizza and William Hunt Esq. Also in attendance: Senior Administrative Assistant Susan Winslow and Boxford/Topsfield Cable Television. Health Agent Wendy Hansbury was not in attendance.

**COMMONLY USED ABBREVIATIONS:**

ADA: Americans with Disabilities Act

BOH: Board of Health

BOS: Board of Selectmen

MAVEN: Massachusetts Virtual Epidemiology Network

MDEP: Massachusetts Department of Environmental  
Protection

CDC: Center for Disease Control

MEMA: Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency

CEU: Continuing Education Unit

MRC: Medical Reserve Corps

CEMP: Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan

COIN: Community Outreach Information Network

DPH: Department of Public Health

NEMMC: Northeast Massachusetts Mosquito Control

EEE: Eastern Equine Encephalitis

EDS: Emergency Dispensing Site

PHEP: Public Health Emergency Preparedness

ESHW: Estimated Seasonal High Water Table

POD: Point Of Dispensing

EP: Emergency Preparedness

RN: Registered Nurse

FDA: Food & Drug Administration

RS: Registered Sanitarian

HHS: Health and Human Services

SAS: Soil Absorption System

HMCC: Health & Medical Coordinating Coalition

TBOH: Topsfield Board of Health

LSAC: Local State Advisory Committee

TRMRC: Topsfield Regional Medical Reserve Corps

MDPH Mass. Dept. of Public Health

VNA: Visiting Nurse Association

WNV: West Nile Virus

**CALL TO ORDER**

Chairperson Sheryl Knutsen called the meeting to order at 6:32 pm.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Chair Sheryl Knutsen made the following announcements:

Pursuant to Governor Baker's March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §18, and the Governor's March 15, 2020 Order imposing strict limitation on the number of people that

may gather in one place, this meeting of the Topsfield Board of Health will be conducted via remote participation to the greatest extent possible. 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). For this meeting, members of the public who wish to listen to the meeting, may do so in the following manner: join the ZOOM audio-video conference call (see information below). No in-person attendance of members of the public will be permitted, but every effort will be made to ensure that the public can adequately access the proceedings in real time, via technological means. In the event that we are unable to do so, despite best efforts, we will post on the Topsfield Board of Health website an audio or video recording, transcript, or other comprehensive record of proceedings as soon as possible after the meeting.

Topsfield Town is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Topic: Board of Health

Time: Oct 21, 2020 06:30 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87835710852?pwd=MUIBQ3g3M001dTBMG05WkRmVjFxdz09>

Meeting ID: 878 3571 0852

Passcode: 097130

Dial by your location

+1 929 205 6099 US (New York)

Susan Winslow is taking notes for Minutes of this Meeting.

This Meeting is being recorded by Boxford Cable Television for later broadcast on Topsfield Cable Television. Is there anyone else here who wishes to record this meeting?

(There were no others who wished to record the meeting.)

PUBLIC HEARING TO BE CONTINUED The Public Hearing on R: 1-2 Supplemental Regulations to 310 CMR 15.00 The State Environmental Code duly advertised in the January 16, 2020 and January 23, 2020 and opened at the February 19, 2020 Board of Health Meeting will be continued per Section 17 of Ch.53 of the Acts of 2020 to the first hearing date following the termination of the state of emergency or to a date otherwise prescribed by law.

## **APPOINTMENTS**

There were no appointments at this meeting.

## **MEETING MINUTES**

### September 26, 2020

*VOTE: Mr. Hunt made a motion to approve the September 26, 2020 Meeting Minutes as written. Seconded by Mr. Rizza. Chair Knutsen called for a roll-call vote:*

*Knutsen – yes*

*Fixler – yes*

*Rizza– yes*

*Hunt – yes*

*Alley – abstain (was not in attendance at 9/26/2020 Meeting)*

*The motion passed in a vote of 4-0-1*

*The Meeting was briefly interrupted by hackers.*

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### COVID-19

Chairperson Sheryl Knutsen informed the Board that the September 30, 2020 Flu Vaccine Clinic was successful, administering over 220 Flu Vaccines to recipients ages 5 and older. Ms. Knutsen noted the effort put forth by Health Agent Wendy Hansbury, Senior Administrative Assistant Susan Winslow and Board Member Mark Rizza in the planning and execution of this clinic. Ms Knutsen also noted the MRC volunteers who were very helpful. The Governor has issued an order that all school age children must be vaccinated for the Flu this year so the response from the community was very positive for this Flu Vaccine Clinic

Discussion ensued regarding the Flu Vaccine Clinic and lessons that can be learned in preparation for a future Flu Vaccine Clinic next month and a COVID-19 Vaccine clinic once a vaccine has been approved.

### Topsfield Halloween 2020

Chair Knutsen informed the Board that Health Agent Wendy Hansbury has been working closely with the Fire Chief, Police Chief and Town Administrator to determine how Topsfield will handle Halloween relative to the COVID-19 pandemic. Topsfield will allow Trick or Treating on October 21, 2020 between the hours of 4-6 pm. Guidance for safe trick-or-treat protocol has been posted on the Board of Health web page and the Board of Health has produced a poster with the information.

### COVID Command Center Conference Calls

Chair Knutsen gave the Board an update on multiple COVID Command Center Conference Calls she has participated in since the September 26, 2020 Board of Health Meeting. Chair Knutsen read the following information into the record:

*For 10/21/20 TBOH meeting: Weekly COVID Conference calls between MDPH and Local Public Health (LPH):*

*There have been 10 conference calls since our last Topsfield BOH meeting. Approximately 600 people join these calls every Tuesday and Thursday. The following is a summary of my notes from these calls.*

*9/18 As schools re-open, the CTC (Contact Tracing Collaborative) reports an uptick in cases from schools. Some school-related questions from callers were: protocol for cleaning medical waiting rooms in schools (a local decision); cumulative exposure for teachers (might be several short periods over several hours); do library books need to be quarantined between users (yes, 24 hours); accommodations for students with special needs with regard to face masks (face shields, Plexiglas); minimum distance between students (3 feet); gaiters for students who cannot wear a mask (a local decision); parochial/private schools encouraged but not required to follow DESE guidance; and ensuring confidentiality within contact tracing while keeping school staff informed (communication between schools and LHD contact tracers). As LBOHs and schools begin to hold flu vaccination clinics, MDPH has developed supportive informational materials for school nurses, and there are some reports of difficulty obtaining needles. A new MA Pharmacology Board ruling allows pharmacists to administer flu vaccinations to children 3 and older. There is some concern about the risk of contracting EEE (Eastern Equine Encephalitis) from mosquitos in light of outdoor dining. Closed tents are allowed for the latter, but that is considered indoor dining.*

*9/22 LBOHs are working with schools to provide and interpret COVID-19 metrics in order to help determine if there is a need to suspend in-person learning. The state epidemiologist discussed droplet and aerosolized transmission of the virus, in light of confusing guidance on [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov). There were questions about outdoor dining in enclosed tents, including 'igloos' and greenhouses, relative to ventilation, capacity and alcohol. Questions about masks included the rights of individuals who claim an exemption, and specifics about masks in schools.*

*9/25 Updated sector-specific workplace safety standards for restaurants, retail, and indoor and outdoor events will take effect 9/28. PrepMod, an electronic vaccination software product which will help with sign-up and billing for flu (and the anticipated COVID) vaccination clinics, is setting up accounts for towns and working on an interface for MIIS (Massachusetts Immunization Information System), but it is not yet ready for use at our upcoming Topsfield Flu Clinic to be held on 9/30. Callers had questions about isolation and quarantine in schools including students who travel, and choirs. Concerns were raised about close contacts and spectators in youth sports, particularly ice hockey. MDPH released preliminary guidance about Halloween in response to LBOHs that are trying to make decisions on trick-or-treating and haunted houses.*

*9/29 The Governor issued a revised gatherings order and announced that effective Monday, October 5th, lower risk communities (which includes Topsfield) will be permitted to move into Step II of Phase III of the Commonwealth's reopening plan. Industry specific guidance and protocols for a range of Phase I, II, and III businesses will also be updated. The MDPH Immunization Division encourages LBOHs to work with shelters in their communities to provide flu vaccinations to individuals and families who live in shelters and are at higher risk for influenza. Local health officials were invited to a webinar briefing about the CARES Act Coronavirus Relief Fund - Municipal Program Round*

2. School-related concerns included: who notifies schools about students who are close contacts and therefore quarantined; molecular vs. antigen tests for symptomatic students; an influx of religious exemptions to mandatory flu shots; and if a runny nose by itself enough to send a child home.

10/02 The MA Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) updated its policies, guidelines and processes for municipal approval authorities. As a component of MDPH support for LBOHs, staff and board members can attend upcoming webinars on 'Anxiety in Uncertain Times' and 'Defusing Tense Situations.' Callers submitted questions about the details of isolation and quarantine in schools and travelers, and about how to share information between LBOHs and schools so as not to breach confidentiality. A LBOH expressed frustration that local COVID statistics include high numbers of cases in a specific local institution, and therefore these numbers do not accurately reflect community transmission of the virus.

10/06 Effective yesterday, Lower Risk Communities (defined as cities/towns that have not been designated in the 'red' category in any of the last three weekly DPH reports), are permitted to move into Step II of Phase III of the Commonwealth's reopening plan. Topsfield is designated as a Lower Risk Community. DESE will begin releasing weekly data on the number of positive cases in schools. Callers reported concerns with the policy that school children who develop COVID symptoms should receive a negative COVID test before returning to school; health care providers have clinical discretion to use clinical judgment to defer testing when an alternative cause is firmly established. MDPH stressed the importance of being thorough in collecting data when investigating COVID cases, especially as it relates to identifying clusters, in order to better understand how transmission is occurring. MDPH explained why the data on the weekly dashboard may not exactly match the data in MAVEN (Massachusetts Virtual Epidemiological Network). Yesterday, the CDC updated its guidance to say that COVID-19 can sometimes be spread by airborne transmission, although it is most commonly spread during close contact via respiratory droplets.

10/09 MDPH released safety tips for Halloween. Trick-or-treating will be a local decision. In response to many questions about how to enter and interpret disease investigation data in MAVEN, LBOHs were reminded of how to access MAVEN COVID-19 documents, resources (including a help desk) and trainings (including weekly webinars which are archived for later viewing). Information about polling places, which was originally sent to Town Clerks by the Elections Division, Office of the Secretary of the Commonwealth, was re-sent, to ensure that polling places are 'not only fully accessible, but during this pandemic, they are safe for all, voters and election workers, on Election Day.' Polling places are exempt from the gathering order, but people still need to be socially distanced & wear masks. MDPH has launched a new awareness campaign to promote flu vaccinations which contains lots of resources for flu clinics. The Topsfield Board of Health held a public flu clinic on September 30th and is planning at least one more.

10/13 MDPH announced the extension of the eighteen "Stop the Spread" testing sites through the end of December. The Governor announced a 'comprehensive set of resources to support tenants and landlords during the financial challenges caused by the pandemic. The goal is to keep tenants safely in their homes and to support the ongoing expenses of landlords...' LHDs are often involved in housing court issues. In response to some loosening of standards around events being held in hotels, the Alcoholic Beverages Control Commission (ABCC) will send out reminder documents. Callers raised concerns about clusters of cases connected to team sports, particularly hockey and basketball, citing the possibility of inter-town and inter-state disease transmission. MDPH has started to do an

*internal evaluation of clusters to try to determine the most frequent causes of community spread; preliminary data indicates that household transmission is huge. MDPH is also grappling with the complex issue of people who test positive a second time a month or two after initial diagnoses; we need to heed new scientific data which is continuously emerging. Callers sought guidance on how to advise schools on data that would indicate when they should change between learning models. SPED students are prioritized for in person learning, and DESE has sent a letter to families of students with disabilities sharing information and resources related to supporting these students as school reopens.*

*10/16 The Governor has formed a COVID-19 Vaccine Advisory Group to in preparation for the distribution of a COVID-19 vaccine once it becomes available. This group of seventeen medical professionals, public health experts, elected officials, community leaders and infectious disease specialists, will advise MDPH and the COVID Command Center on communication, distribution, and equity issues relating to a COVID-19 vaccine. Callers sought clarification about the number of people who can gather at a worship service, whether hockey players need to wear a mask at all times, guidance for school bands and choruses, and how to enforce quarantine orders for members of a family.*

*10/20 In response to concerns about high numbers of COVID cases in specific institutions within towns, the COVID data that is released weekly will now add an asterisk to communities that have more than 10 cases in the last 14 days, and also more than 30 percent of those cases are associated with a particular institution. In response to a question about whether LBOHs should enforce mask-wearing at political rallies, the Massachusetts Chiefs of Police Association (MCOPA) is advising law enforcement not to enforce masking at all for the time being at any demonstration. Callers continue to express concern with how to share COVID information in schools without breaching confidentiality. Many cities/towns have received a request for COVID information from the media. Callers were reminded to send these requests to the city/town Records Access Officer per the Massachusetts Public Records Law: <https://www.topsfield-ma.gov/home/pages/public-records-requests> . Callers report that people who test positive at walk-in clinics that use rapid antigen tests are not following up with PCR tests as advised by MDPH, and are therefore designated as 'probable' cases. The next MAVEN update will enable LBOHs to refer these 'probables' to the CTC (Contact Tracing Collaborative) for follow-up. New shareable social media messages have been created to promote carpool safety during COVID-19.*

Board Members thanked Chair Knutsen for the time and effort she has put into attending and reporting on these meetings.

Mr. Alley shared his concern regarding the hybrid model of teaching at Masconomet Regional High School. Mr. Alley informed the Board that educators are teaching remote lessons at the same time they are teaching in-person, so students are following the lesson via their laptop whether they are physically present in the classroom or participating remotely. Mr. Alley voiced concern that this may negate the value of having students in the classroom if the situation does not allow for individual attention from the teacher, and it poses an increased risk of COVID-19 exposure.

## CORRESPONDENCE

- VNA Illness Report dated 9/19/2020
- Memo dated 10/21/2020 re: relating steps that New Meadows Golf Club has taken to comply with COVID-19 guidelines for safe operation.
- Letter dated 10/15/2020 from Veterans Agent Richard Cullinan in support of the state's Septic Management Program (Health Agent Hansbury will attempt to place this on the 2021 Town Meeting Warrant again this year).

## HEALTH AGENT REPORT

Chair Knutsen reported the following:

- The Town has obtained a grant from the MAPC to assist with the cost of conducting Flu Vaccine Clinics.
- The Health Agent met with the Town Administrator regarding the FY22 Board of Health Budget.
- The Health Agent will be asking for funding for the Minutes Secretary position.
- The workload remains brisk including but not limited to:
  - soil testing
  - septic plan reviews,
  - Title 5 Inspection Report reviews
  - building permit reviews
  - general assistance to public
  - Public Safety meetings
  - Department Head meetings
  - Public Health conference calls
- Town Hall is open by appointment only, but the Board of Health office has been fully functional and staffed throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

## ADJOURN

*VOTE: Mr. Fixler made a motion to adjourn at 8:10 PM. Seconded by Mr. Hunt. Chair Knutsen called for a roll-call vote:*

*Knutsen – yes*

*Alley - yes*

*Fixler – yes*

*Rizza – yes*

*Hunt – yes*

*The motion carried in a vote of 5-0.*

Respectfully Submitted,

Susan Winslow

Recording Secretary

Items distributed:

1. Agenda
2. Board of Health Meeting Minutes of September 26, 2020
3. Synopsis of LPH COVID Command Center Conference Calls
4. VNA Illness Report dated 9/19/2020
5. Letter from Veterans Agent Richard Cullinan dated 10/15/2020
6. Memo Regarding New Meadows Golf Club Compliance with COVID-19 Guidelines dated 10/21/2020

*These Meeting Minutes were APPROVED at the November 18, 2020 Board of Health Meeting.*