

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

Date:	Wednesday, December 21, 2022
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ATTENDANCE:

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

STAFF MEMBERS	PRESENT
Susan Winslow, Minutes Secretary	Yes

VISITORS PRESENT: Julia Lobel RN, Topsfield Cable Television

OPENING

The meeting of the Topsfield Board of Health was called to order at 6:38 pm on December 21, 2022 by Chair Sheryl Knutsen.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Chair Sheryl Knutsen made the following announcements:

Pursuant to Chapter 20 of the Acts of 2021, 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. Topsfield Cable Television recorded the meeting.

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

November 16, 2022

Chair Knutsen asked the Board Members if there were any corrections/comments/questions regarding the Meeting Minutes of November 16, 2022. There were none.

VOTE: Ms. Lischko made a motion to accept the Meeting Minutes of November 16, 2022 as written. Seconded by Ms. Eaton. After determining that there was no further discussion, Chair Knutsen called for a roll-call vote.

Eaton – yes

Lischko – yes

Knutsen – yes

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

OLD BUSINESS

Update from Tri-Town Public Health Nurse Julia Lobel RN

Ms. Lobel gave the Board an update as follows:

Topsfield BOH Meeting Notes
PHE Update 12/21/22

COVID Update:

- Interagency call last week Dr Brown, state epi, noted December 2019 is the 3-year mark
- from when the first case of atypical pneumonia was first diagnosed in Wuhan China.
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- This week marks 2-year mark since the first COVID vaccine was administered to ICU nurse
- in NYC.
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- Still have almost 400 people in US dying per day from COVID!
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- 21,053 deaths to date in MA from COVID
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- Currently, 255 Patients hospitalized in MA with primary COVID

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- Sublineages of omicron detected in the US, no signs of more severe disease/symptoms.
- BQ1, BQ1.1 & BA5 are predominant strains in cases in the US, XBB detected approx 7% of cases.
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- COVID still has not officially become a “seasonal” virus tho surges have occurred DEC-FEB in the past 2 years.
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- While still no seasonality to COVID, we are at good point in pandemic where we have tools for detecting variants (wastewater surveillance), testing remains readily available, vaccines and antivirals are readily available and help reduce severe disease, and we have the technology to keep these tools up to date.
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- Strategies for preventing respiratory illnesses should remain a high priority.
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COVID Vaccination Clinics:

Tri-town vaccination clinics have been successful, each clinic serves ages 6 months and up

All individuals 6 months and up are now eligible for an updated bivalent booster vaccine.

Currently carrying 11 different vaccines at each vaccine clinic.

Topsfield Town Hall - last Thursday had 49 people

Masco - last Friday had 51 people for COVID and 62 people for walk-in Flu clinic that was added on due to increasing cases. Joint tri-town effort with Middleton vaccine supply, Boxford paid for addl nurse (Joan) and Topsfield covered addl cost for any addl vaccine used through VNA supply for adult doses so we didn't have to limit how many people came to the clinic.

Flint Library - have a clinic this Thurs, 25 ppl registered

GCACC has collectively administered over 19,500 vaccinations in greater Cape Ann area.

Bivalent vaccine uptake not great nationally - Vaccine fatigue, confusion on who needs what, inconsistent messaging, PCP/pediatricians not carrying vaccines due to stability & storage issues. Only 14% of people have received updated booster vaccine. MA is better, higher vaccines rates and this area is better in general with vaccine coverage.

DPH working on vaccine report with bivalent data for MA and GCACC area.

GCACC COVID Vaccine clinics will continue to run through June 2023. As I understand, the Federal Public Health Emergency/Declaration from HHS secretary (which covers vaccines, testing, treatments, EUA's) has not ended, HHS must give 60 days' notice to end, otherwise Fed PHE extends another 90 days at a time.

Influenza:

Current estimated flu severity is VERY HIGH in MA (ranges from LOW, MOD, HIGH, VERY HIGH)

Hospitalizations for flu continue to increase

Influenza-like illnesses continue to increase

The vast majority of cases are influenza A

The influenza vaccination rate in MA is about 39% (sl inc from prev weeks, but still low)

22-23 Influenza vaccine is expected to be a good match for the circulating virus based on data from southern hemisphere!

Most flu clinics in Tri-Town were run in OCT/NOV, (Had an emergency clinic set up last Friday at Masco and targeted to the school population).

I plan to work with health directors for better flu clinic planning next year, so we don't feel like we are working backwards. Need more consistent locations next year on regular basis- Town halls or MASCO weekly OCT-DEC/JAN?!

Have had a lot of flu cases coming through MAVEN and reports from school nurses.

Reports from other towns that there are staffing shortages and students sent home due to Flu illness

Reports from parents that they cannot get into the pediatrician for flu vaccines if they miss the flu clinic because pediatricians are so busy with sick calls.

Reports from parents that it is almost impossible to book a family of 4 or 5 people (Mom, dad & kids) at the same CVS/Walgreens location making it difficult/impossible to get an entire family vaccinated at one time unless they come to a clinic hosted by local public health that is family-friendly.

RSV/Flu/COVID - "Tripledemic":

RSV came early and may be trending down, may have peaked already is thought from PH experts. Schools have been reporting mostly flu cases recently... Hopefully RSV cases continue to trend down in schools also.

Board Members thanked Ms. Lobel for the report and for doing a fine job for the Tri-Town.

OLD BUSINESS

13 Ross Road

Tri-Town Public Health Nurse Julia Lobel RN gave the Board an update on the situation at 13 Ross Road as follows:

- The Wilsons are still in a rehabilitation facility and it does not appear they will be returning home soon.
- The house has not yet been cleaned up.
- The house must be re-inspected and the Condemnation and Order to Vacate lifted before they Wilsons can return safely to live in their home.

68 River Road

- A visit to the property by Tri-Town Health Inspector Mark Carleo scheduled for December 13, 2022 was cancelled.
- The homeowner submitted an application to the Topsfield Building Department on December 13, 2022 to demolish the structure and to the Historical Commission for the same request on December 14, 2022.
- Chair of the Historical Commission, Elizabeth Mulholland, requested copies of photos taken at 68 River Road from the Board of Health. Ms. Winslow sent 44 photos to Ms. Mulholland.
- Mr. Mitchell has requested that Board Members or Inspectors visit the property by appointment only with him, and those who visit the property must have liability insurance. Ms. Knutsen confirmed that Board of Health Members are covered by the Town's liability policy.
- Mr. McLaughlin has stated that he plans to rebuild the mansion with a similar exterior.

Public Health Excellence Grant

- Board Members reviewed the Public Health Excellence Program Grantee Narrative Quarterly Report: FY23 Quarter 1 Report.
- In response to a question from Ms. Eaton regarding the Tri-Town Public Health Inspector position, Chair Knutsen explained that the Town of Middleton was going to establish it as an employee position as requested by the State, but there has been discussion about whether the position will be 30 hours with benefits or 18 hours at a higher rate but without benefits. This is

still to be determined. The Topsfield Board of Health has sent \$85,000 out of Public Health Excellence funds to the Town of Middleton to pay for this position.

- Mark Carleo is currently the Tri-Town Public Health Inspector, serving as a contractor. With the departure of the Topsfield Health Director, it is not clear who has oversight for Mr. Carleo's position, but it may be that the Town holding the funds (Topsfield) has oversight responsibility for the position.
- The Board extended thanks to Mark Rizza for his continued assistance with the finances related to vaccine reimbursement and the FY24 Budget.

Topsfield Health Director Position

There are currently three applicants for the position. Interviews will commence on December 22, 2022.

ARPA Grant

There has been a request from the Town Administrator and Town Accountant that bulk purchases be made with ARPA Funds, and that the Health Department should bundle purchases in order to avoid processing small bill lists.

Ban on Mattresses in Curbside Collection

Ms. Lischko asked if funds could be used to find a drop-off solution for used mattresses that are no longer allowed in curbside collection. The State put forth a mandate without a clear solution regarding mattress disposal. Ms. Winslow has posted some options on the Town website, but will continue to look for solutions.

FY24 Budget

Chair Knutsen thanked Mr. Rizza for his assistance with the FY24 Budget. The Town Administrator has instructed Departments to be level funded for FY24, but there will be an increase in VNA Care services and the Dead Animal Pick Ups line item is subject to change. There may also be an issue with COVID vaccine purchase if the Federal Government ceases funding, but there is still a need for boosters.

FINANCIALS

The Board reviewed bills paid and revenue during the period between the November 16, 2022 and December 21, 2022 meetings.

HEALTH AGENT REPORT

Chair Knutsen read a report submitted by Susan Winslow in the absence of a Health Director as follows:

Office Activities

Despite having no Health Agent, the office continues to move forward.

Mark Carleo has been helping with plan reviews, signing Title 5 Inspection Reports and the food establishment inspections for the Common Victualler License renewals issued by the Select Board. He has also come in twice to assist Sue with Building Permit Application Reviews.

Building Inspector Raymond Chesley has been very helpful working with Sue on Building Permit Application Reviews.

Because the weather has remained temperate, we are able to continue with soil testing into December, ensuring that residents with systems that need repair are not held up.

Reminders have been sent to all annual permit and license holders regarding annual renewals.

The build-out of the Public Health trailer will be starting soon.

COVID and Flu Vaccine clinics continue. Flu vaccine rosters for vaccine reimbursement were done by hand here in the office, as the Holiday on the Green vaccine clinic was conducted as a walk-in event. Commonwealth Medicine has been great about this.

Chair Knutsen and Sue Winslow have been attending Trash/Recycling Ad-Hoc Committee meetings.

The office continues to field calls and drop-in visits from residents with questions ranging from trash issues to flu, COVID and neighbor issues.

Big thanks go out to Chair Sheryl Knutsen for stepping in as a hands-on leader during this time. Also, big thanks go Mark Rizza for his help with vaccine reimbursement finances.

Thanks also go out to former Board Member Tom Mannetta CE who is helping with more technical septic related questions and septic plan reviews, and to John Coulon RS, former Topsfield Health Agent, who graciously stepped in to help when Mark Carleo did not complete the food establishment inspections for the Common Victualler License renewals.

CORRESPONDENCE

- Department of Agricultural Resources and National Grid Notice of 45 Day Yearly Operational Plan Public Notice for right of way 2023 herbicide application under power lines.

ADJOURN

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

VOTE: Ms. Eaton made a motion to adjourn. Seconded by Ms. Lischko. After determining that there was no further discussion, Chair Knutsen called for a roll-call vote:

Eaton – yes

Lischko – yes

Knutsen – yes

The motion was accepted in a vote of 3-0 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:

- December 21, 2022 Agenda
- November 16, 2022 Meeting Minutes
- Public Health Excellence Program Grantee Narrative Quarterly Report: FY23 Quarter 1 Report
- Department of Agricultural Resources List of 2023 Municipalities subject to National Grid Herbicide Treatment Program
- National Grid Notice dated November 28, 2022: 45 Day Yearly Operational Plan Public Notice for Herbicide Treatment Program
- Office Activities List submitted by Ms. Winslow
- Breakdown of ARPA Funds
- Bill Lists
- Revenue Sheet

These Meeting Minutes were approved at the January 18, 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.