

**HEATH BOARD OF HEALTH (BOH) and  
SELECT BOARD MEETING  
MEETING MINUTES  
FEB 17, 2026**

BOH Board Members Present: Sheila Litchfield, Susan Gruen, Tucker Jenkins, and Gene Garland  
630 PM Meeting Called to Order by Gene Garland

**NEW BUSINESS:**

**Subject: BOH – Town Nurse Position and Public Health Services**

- BOH Chair Gene Garland addressed the Select Board and Finance Committee regarding the Town Nurse position and the role it plays in supporting local public health services. He stated that a summary document had been provided outlining the background and duties of the current Town Nurse. He explained that the position is currently budgeted for 8 hours per week, which accounts for the limited number of documented patient contacts.
- Gene noted that the nurse frequently provides additional support and informal consultations to residents that may not always be captured in formal reports. Gene emphasized that Heath is unique in having a Town Nurse who maintains strong relationships with residents and serves as a trusted resource within the community.
- He also outlined a potential future vision for the position once a new nurse is hired following the current nurse's retirement. Possible expanded services could include family-centered consultations, physicals and documentation required for school or sports participation, health screenings, and additional preventive health services.

**Public Health Nursing Overview**

- Sheila Litchfield provided historical context regarding the Town Nurse program and described the broader role of public health nursing. She explained that public health nurses focus on the health of the entire community, using population-level data to identify risks and develop preventive and educational programs. Examples of services provided by a Town Nurse may include:
  - Assessment of seasonal illnesses and injuries
  - Consultation and referral to medical providers
  - Chronic disease management
  - Medication management
  - Health education and nutrition counseling
  - Vaccination support
  - Point-of-care blood testing
  - Follow-up care after hospital discharge
  - Support for residents receiving end-of-life care
- It was also noted that Town Nurses work closely with emergency services and the BOH to maintain awareness of residents who may require additional assistance during emergencies such as extended power outages or severe weather events.

**Regional Public Health Services**

- Phoebe Walker, Director of Community Health for the Franklin Regional Council of Governments, provided an overview of the regional public health district. Ms. Walker explained that Heath is one of fifteen towns participating in the regional health district, which allows municipalities to meet new state public health standards established by the Massachusetts DPH. Through this collaboration, the district provides services such as:
  - Monitoring reportable diseases through the Massachusetts Virtual Epidemiologic Network (MAVEN)
  - Communicable disease investigation and contact tracing
  - Vaccine program management and clinics
  - Public health education
  - Home vaccination visits
  - Camp inspections and other public health oversight
- She emphasized that the regional program and a local Town Nurse are intended to complement one another.

### **Rural Health Challenges**

- Discussion included the broader challenges facing rural healthcare, including the retirement of healthcare providers, reduced access to home health services, and pharmacy closures. BOH members noted that the Town Nurse often serves as a critical point of contact for residents needing assistance navigating healthcare services.

### **Budget Discussion**

- The current Town Nurse position is funded at approximately \$12,647 annually, representing 8 hours per week at an hourly rate of approximately \$29.51. Board members noted that this rate is below the industry standard for nursing positions. Salary survey data from other municipalities was referenced, indicating hourly rates ranging from approximately \$25 to \$46 per hour depending on the community and level of experience.
- Several participants expressed concern that maintaining the position at the current funding level may make recruitment difficult when hiring a replacement nurse. Others noted that individuals seeking part-time community health roles may be motivated by service rather than compensation.

### **Public Health Excellence Grant Requirements**

- Ms. Walker explained that participation in the Public Health Excellence Grant requires municipalities to maintain their current level of public health spending. A reduction in public health funding could negatively affect the Town's compliance with grant requirements.

### **BOH Responsibilities**

- BOH members discussed the increasing responsibilities associated with public health governance. Members are required to complete approximately 36 hours of annual training, attend regional public health meetings, and participate in emergency preparedness planning.
- Additional programs supported by the BOH include public education efforts related to tick and mosquito control and participation in the regional mosquito control district.

## **Conclusion**

- The BOH recommended maintaining the Town Nurse position and emphasized the importance of the role in supporting the health and safety of Heath residents. The Select Board and Finance Committee will continue discussions regarding the position and potential funding levels as part of the upcoming budget process.

## **Emergency Shelter Management**

- Board of Health responsible for shelter operations
- The Board is currently working with the Town's Emergency Management team to develop a comprehensive shelter management plan.
- Document now exceeds 100 pages
- Created largely from scratch with emergency management team

## **Mosquito Control District**

- This year's assessment: \$1,100
- Previous overpayment credits running out (26 credits remaining)
- Actual membership fee is ~1,000/year(not 5,000 as previously thought)
- Services: Mosquito surveillance, larva treatment, testing for West Nile virus and EEE
- Education programs on tick and mosquito safety

## **CodeRed Emergency Notification System**

- Currently listed under Emergency Mgmt Safety budget
- New quote received with unlimited messaging option
- Company changed names: now OnSolve by Crisis 24
- System completely different from previous version
- Board discussed appropriate usage (emergencies vs. routine announcements)

Gene made a motion to adjourn at 7:30 p.m. Moved by Sheila. Susan seconded the motion. Ayes: Sheila, Susan, Tucker and Gene. Meeting Adjourned at 7:30 p.m.