

**HEATH BOARD OF HEALTH
MEETING MINUTES
February 12, 2025**

Board Members Present: Sheila Litchfield, Susan Gruen, Tucker Jenkins, Gene Garland -Chair
Others: Randy Crochier - CPHS/Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCoG) Representative, Cindie Garland – Boards Clerk, Elissa Viarengo – Heath Select Board Representative.

0901 Meeting Called to Order by Gene Garland

REVIEW AGENDA/ADD ITEMS

- The board reviewed the agenda. Gene recommended to add vote on the CPHS contract. Sheila recommends adding scheduling a meeting with Tim Lively.

REVIEW/APPROVE MINUTES

- January 8, 2025, Meeting Minutes: Susan moved to accept the minutes. Sheila seconded the motion. Ayes: Susan, Sheila, Tucker and Gene.

REGIONAL HEALTH AGENT UPDATE

Randy stated:

- Jasmine performed a second inspection at East Main Street, and she was pleased with the progress. Randy will forward the report to Cindie.
- FRCOG has been working with towns about updating their bylaws regarding the Affordable Homes Act 2024 which amends the definition of accessory dwelling unit (ADU) under Section 1A of Chapter 40A of the Massachusetts General Laws to clarify that the maximum size of an ADU is no more than half of the gross floor area of the principal dwelling, or 900 square feet, whichever is smaller to be built by right in single-family zoning districts. The new law prohibits municipalities from mandating that either the main house or the ADU be occupied by the property owner.
- He has not heard if the Gov Healey will extend the Open Meeting Law that expires on March 31, 2025, that allows public bodies to continue holding meetings remotely without a quorum of the public body physically present at a meeting location.

NEW BUSINESS

Pioneer Valley Mosquito Control District (PVMCD) Letter

- The board drafted a letter to Sen. Comerford regarding the Town of Heath risk due to several neighboring towns that are not part of the PVMCD due to lack of funding. Without membership, these towns cannot access critical mosquito testing services to detect disease-carrying species early. As a result, viruses are often identified after a resident becomes infected—a process that can take up to three weeks, delaying essential public health interventions.

- The board voted and approved unanimously the language in the letter to Sen. Comerford with minor adjustments.
- Cindie will speak with Hilma about asking the Select Board to sign the letter.
- Susan will present the letter at the next PVMCD meeting.

NURSE UPDATE

- In January 2025, Claire conducted a total of eight home visits. Four of these visits were to an individual she sees on a weekly basis, while the remaining visits were to two other individuals requiring care.
- Due to concerns regarding the uncontrolled blood sugar levels of one individual, the Board of Health recommended the purchase of an A1c monitor to provide a more accurate assessment of long-term blood sugar control. Hemoglobin A1c is a blood test that measures a person's average blood sugar level over the past 2–3 months. The test performed on the individual indicated poor blood sugar control. The results were shared with both the individual and their responsible party, who stated that the individual's physician was not concerned. Claire stated she will continue to encourage proper dietary habits.
- Claire added that one individual required International Normalized Ratio (INR) blood testing. Upon review, the test kits in stock were found to be expired, therefore she placed an order for new test strips to ensure continued monitoring. Additionally, one individual requested a blood pressure check, and another individual returned a full sharps container and was provided with a replacement.
- Massachusetts Public Health (MPH) Update: According to local and state reports, cases of serious influenza are increasing, while COVID-19 cases remain minimal this winter. MPH recommends staying at home when an individual has symptoms of any respiratory illness, such as influenza, COVID-19, and Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV).
- Claire stated she will continue to monitor the health needs of the community, provide essential services, and offer health education to promote well-being.

BOARD OF HEALTH CLERK UPDATE

- Cindie is drafting the 2024 BOH Annual Report that is due to Hilma on March 14th.
- She will draft 2 opioid settlement fund articles for the Annual Town Meeting.
- Cindie reviewed the BOH monthly budget (see below).

FY25 BUDGET:

BOH ACCOUNTS	BUDGET	INCOME	EXPENSED	BALANCE
BOH Expenses	1,500.00		673.19	826.81
Personnel Expenses	7,488.00		3,269.20	4,218.80
Stipends	1,375.00			1,375.00
CARRYOVER ACCOUNTS				

BOH Revolving Fund	14,091.32	200.00		14,291.32
Septic Grant	43,862.18	0.00		43,862.18

INCREASE IN BOH STIPEND DISCUSSION

The BOH members discussed the proposal of increased stipends. Due to the increase responsibilities, added training (34.5 hours of orientation training), and the stipend disparities highlighted in the 2024 FRCOG Wage and Salary survey, the board members wish to consider a stipend adjustment to align with regional averages. Sheila drafted talking points for the select board:

- Among BOHs that provide stipends, Heath's stipends are the lowest, with the Chair receiving \$375 per year and members \$250 per year. The average BOH Chair stipend in the FRCOG survey is \$995 per year, while members receive an average of \$794.
- Among the 15 BOHs participating in the Cooperative Public Health Service (CPHS), the average stipend is \$1,064 for Chairs and \$848 for members.
- BOH members attend local, regional, and state DPH meetings related to BOH business.
- Represent Heath at Emergency Management Team meetings, the CPHS Oversight Board, the Opioid Task Force, the Pioneer Valley Mosquito Control District (PVMCD), and Hawlemont Emergency Dispensing Site (EDS) drills.
- Provide public information on health concerns such as COVID-19, West Nile Virus (WNV), Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE), and RSV.
- Distribute COVID-19 test kits to Heath residents.
- Organize public health initiatives, including a permethrin shoe-spraying event and tick-bite prevention education.
- Share public health updates through the Heath Herald, community postings, and reverse E-911 messages.
- Maintain and update Heath's emergency contact list for resident welfare checks.
- Manage BOH regulations in coordination with the FRCOG Health Inspection Program.
- Next step: Sheila will reach out to other BOH communities.

CPHS CONTRACT

- The board unanimously voted to accept the Professional Services Agreement between the Town of Heath and the Cooperative Public Health Service (CPHS).
- Pursuant to M.G.L. Ch. 40 Sec. 4A Heath agreed for the sharing of public health services creating a common health service know as CPHS to improve local public health capacity and access to trained and experienced public health professionals and meet community and regional responsibilities.
- Cindie will provide the signed document to Hilma for Select Board signature.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

- Board agreed to meet with Tim Lively at the next BOH meeting to discuss emergency management processes.

ONGOING BUSINESS:

CPHS OVERSIGHT BOARD MEETING REPORT

- No meeting in January.
- Next meeting: Feb 27th, 2025

PIONEER VALLEY MOSQUITO CONTROL DISTRICT (PVMCD)

- Letter to Senator Comerford – There is ongoing discussion about getting all towns on board at FRCOG to strengthen regional efforts.
- FRCOG Meeting on February 27th – John Briggs will be presenting. All are welcome to attend via Zoom.
- Towns Considering Withdrawal – Three towns are considering pulling out: Colrain (which hasn't joined), Buckland, and Sunderland. It is important to stay united, as many towns were unaware that a Town Meeting vote is required for withdrawal.
- Towns Expanding Services – Several towns, including Amherst, Deerfield, Holyoke, Hadley, and East Longmeadow, are adding services through PVMCD.
- Challenges for Small Towns – A major obstacle for smaller towns remains funding, as they often lack a dedicated revenue source. In contrast, larger towns with golf courses are more focused on mosquito vector concerns.
- PVMCD Outreach & Resources – PVMCD is developing a trifold informational brochure and designing a new website to improve outreach and engagement.
- Infrastructure & Mosquito Control – Discussions are underway to have John Briggs speak with road crews and the new supervisor regarding culvert issues, drainage, and mosquito control strategies.
- PVMCD Staffing & Operations – The team has successfully moved into UMass and is now focused on rehiring seasoned staff for the spring season.

MOHAWK AREA PUBLIC HEALTH COALITION (MAPHCO)

- No meeting.
- Next meeting is scheduled for March 11, 2025.

HEATH HERALD ARTICLES

- In conjunction with CPHS, Sheila will submit an article about Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza. While human cases of bird flu are rare, infections can occur through direct, unprotected contact with infected birds or other animals.

Next Meeting March 12, 2025 @ 0900, in person at the BOH office at the JRMC.

Gene motioned to adjourn at 10:06; Sheila seconded the motion. Ayes: Sheila, Susan, and Gene
Meeting Adjourned at 10:06.