

**HEATH BOARD OF HEALTH
MEETING MINUTES
April 09, 2025**

Board Members Present: Sheila Litchfield, Susan Gruen, Jason Erali, Gene Garland -Chair
Others: Randy Crochier - CPHS/Franklin Regional Council of Governments Representative,
Cindie Garland – Boards Clerk.

0900 Meeting Called to Order by Gene Garland

REVIEW AGENDA/ADD ITEMS

- The board reviewed the agenda.

MOHAWK AREA PUBLIC HEALTH COALITION (MAPHCO)

- Randy Cardonell briefed provided an overview of MAPHCO's role and limitations. MAPHCO is user-friendly for planning and coordination but does not provide direct physical support or personnel during emergencies. Its primary focus is emergency preparedness planning, regional coordination, and resource sharing among Boards of Health.
- MAPHCO's current major project is The Framework, a checklist-style review tool to align local emergency plans with public health emergency responsibilities. Emphasis placed on reviewing SIM plans and identifying gaps. A training needs assessment was also distributed, designed to inform future training priorities. Heath indicated uncertainty about whether their emergency response plan had been submitted and if it exists in a digital format. Randy will follow up on the receipt of Heath's plan.
- The assessment revealed extensive and valuable training options. Discussion emphasized that these trainings should be open to all emergency response personnel, not just public health. MAPHCO plans to coordinate with emergency management partners (FRCOG and others) to ensure cross-discipline training opportunities. Recognition of the long-standing gap in coordination between public health and emergency management agencies (e.g., MDPH and MEMA). Heath recently completed an AAR and will host a MEMA shelter training, open to neighboring towns. Highlighted need for better top-down alignment and collaboration.
- Randy Cardonell stated Boards of Health may serve as subject matter experts or be part of a unified command during events, not necessarily as incident commanders. Training should be tailored to these likely roles. There was discussion of the extensive time commitment for many courses (e.g., ICS 300/400), particularly burdensome for part-time or volunteer officials.
- Randy Cardonell discussed the coordination challenges with the other towns. Only 11 of 25 towns responded to a recent WebEOC drill. He stated reasons may include lack of time and competing responsibilities, not lack of interest or recognition of importance. MAPHCO intends to increase involvement in emergency management meetings to bridge silos and improve collaboration. Board members recognized historical challenges (e.g., CPHS tabletop drill showed gaps in understanding among Boards of Health).

- In addressing lack of participation, MAPHCO will explore recording meetings to make them more accessible for those who cannot attend. Additionally, Randy will consider ways to gather input from towns about barriers to participation.
- Randy Cardonell stated MAPHCO may offer frameworks for local planning but will avoid generic, fill-in-the-blank templates to ensure plans remain functional.
- MAPHCO future is unknown due to uncertainty of federal funding. MAPHCO is supported through the Office of Preparedness and Emergency Management, which is part of the MA Department of Public Health, which receives the grant money from Administration for Strategic Preparedness and Response (ASPR), a federal agency that leads national medical and public health preparedness efforts who receives the money and the direction from US Health and Human Services/CDC.

REGIONAL HEALTH AGENT UPDATE

- Randy Crochier updated the board regarding the inspection he conducted at Sawyer Hall. When the power went out during the most recent storm, the generator failed resulting in loss of heat.. Pipes burst, causing water damage. He added repairs were underway, including valve replacements (older two-wire to newer three-wire valves), space heaters, and water removal. As of April 1, heat was restored, and plans were in place for drywall repairs, new carpet, and cleanup. Randy recommended a temporary barrier or signage to restrict public access past the post office area due to active construction not public health concerns. No visible mold observed; Massachusetts does not regulate mold directly—evaluations are based on dampness and conditions conducive to mold.
- 69 Shawnee: Location is in a remote area and inaccessible in winter; no electrical service found there. Smoke observed—possibly wood stove use.
- 39 Shawnee: More activity and suspected use of outbuildings for habitation. Both properties owned by the same person.
- A follow-up inspection and possible administrative action due to lack of electricity and potential occupancy.
- 594-8A: Previously declared unfit for human habitation. Currently occupants reportedly still there, despite a notice to vacate by March 30. Property may have been foreclosed. Post-snow debris accumulation in the yard may pose rodent/insect harborage risks.
- Randy Crochier stated he will set up a site visit with the Franklin County Animal Control Officer (who has arrest authority) due to possible animal issues.
- Short-Term Rentals (STRs): State Law Update: STRs require annual inspections, treats short-term rentals as a lodging type and regional health agents conduct annual inspections for all lodging facilities and coordinates with the building inspectors.
- Other towns (e.g., Buckland, Shelburne) are enacting zoning bylaws to regulate STRs, often requiring owner occupancy. Planning board should lead, but Board of Health may want involvement, particularly regarding safety and nuisance issues.

NEW BUSINESS

NURSE UPDATE

- In March 2025, Claire Rabbitt, RN provided clinical services to five homebound individuals and performed four INR checks in the office.
- Noted one participant in the HBB class absent due to a flu-like illness (not formally diagnosed).
- Hand sanitizer is available and used on the equipment cart to maintain hygiene protocols.
- Received \$350.12 from Medicare for flu vaccine reimbursement and received \$100.16 in February (not previously reported).
- Community Collaboration: Claire met with Tamara Sloan, LCSW, Co-Response Clinician from the Hilltown Regional Response Team. She assists police in domestic violence and abuse cases. Moreover, supports home services coordination for elders and veterans.

BOARD OF HEALTH CLERK UPDATE

- Cindie responded to the WEB EOC drill during the month of March.
- She reviewed the BOH expenses.

BOH ACCOUNTS	BUDGET	INCOME	EXPENSED	BALANCE
BOH Expenses	1,500.00		764.19	735.81
Personnel Expenses	7,488.00		4,133.20	3,354.80
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			43,862.18
Vaccine Revolving Fund	1,488.77			1,488.77

INCREASE IN BOH STIPEND DISCUSSION

- Cindie stated the stipend request was addressed at a recent Board of Select meeting. Selectboard members discussed that stipends aren't based on a rigid grading system but on a formula that considers meetings per year, workload, and involvement. Any change to one group's stipend affects the whole system and risks fairness concerns at ATM. To avoid that, the Selectboard decided a full review is needed—not a one-off adjustment. The smart approach is to flag it for next year, begin collecting documentation over the summer/fall, and conduct a comprehensive stipend review alongside the planned job classification and pay scale update. The current system has history and precedent, including a public presentation when it was first adopted.

ONGOING BUSINESS:

CPHS OVERSIGHT BOARD MEETING REPORT

- Susan stated many neighboring towns—Colrain, Hawley, Monroe, Shelburne, and Bernardston—missed the last two CPHS meetings. FRCOG members including Lisa White, Maureen O'Reilly, Kurt, and Jasmine were also absent. This affected awareness and response to key discussions, particularly regarding the letter on mosquito control.
- Rowe was severely impacted by a snowstorm; stories included people sleeping in cars and homes without adequate heat. Lack of preparation for residents who refuse to evacuate due to pets or other concerns.
- Doug Telling, Charlemont BOH member raised concerns about the spread of avian flu.
- Nursing Funding: Lisa White, Meg Ryan, and Maureen O'Reilly's positions are 20% federally funded; Randy Crochier is working to secure continued funding.
- Cases of measles are rising in nearby states; concern due to Amtrak travel. Massachusetts has a strong 95% immunization rate.
- In Connecticut, Vermont, Rhode Island, and New York 11% of February ER visits were flu related. Ongoing research into neurological effects on hospitalized children.
- Moderna urges boosters (COVID 19) for anyone 6+ months out.
- Nurse Training: Coming to Greenfield via Meg Birch and DPH—critical since training has been too centralized in cities.
- Battery Storage Safety: Huge water demand (50,000 gallons) to extinguish fires—environmental risks to Deerfield River raised by Colrain and Buckland.
- Tobacco-Free Generation Vote: Conway moving forward with this initiative.
- Body Art Regulations: Still under development in Charlemont and Gill.
- Camp Regulations: New DPH-mandated training session for camp operators; no more individual chasing—centralized education instead.
- Positive trend of professionals joining BOHs: mental health lawyer in Conway, retired physicians, and a nephrologist in Leyden—diversifying experience and perspectives.
- The PVMCD letter was edited and sent to FRCOG, but got lost in hand-offs between Liz, Kurt, and Randy. Many towns missed the meeting and had not seen the letter—some BOH members hadn't even checked their emails. Randy and Phoebe gave a compelling pitch at the meeting emphasizing the letter's importance and urging towns to support participation in the Pioneer Valley Mosquito Control District.

PIONEER VALLEY MOSQUITO CONTROL DISTRICT (PVMCD)

- Agawam has officially joined the district. Their biggest concern: what happens if positive tested mosquitoes are found at Six Flags. Buckland is not withdrawing and will remain "outstanding". Sunderland, Shutesbury, and Holyoke have submitted payments; Hadley has a payment in progress.
- John Briggs presented to the Beekeepers Association, addressing concerns about spraying. Emphasized that the district's priority is prevention, not widespread spraying.
- John is considering participating in the radio show "The Fabulous 413", which covers arts, culture, and public health efforts across New England.

- A new district website is in development and expected by the next meeting.
- John is available to present emergency response plans related to mosquito-borne illnesses at FRCOG or directly to towns (e.g., Heath). Randy noted scheduling might be delayed due to current workload.
- Ongoing tracking of which towns have received, acknowledged, or responded to the district support letter. Many towns had not seen it yet due to missed meetings or unread emails.
- Next PVMCD meeting is scheduled for Apr 14th.

REGIONAL EMERGENCY PLANNING COMMITTEE (REPC)

- Sheila stated FRCOG has received funding to update regional response plans. All current plans are available on the FRCOG website under the "Emergency Planning" tab. An email from Dan Nietsche is expected to initiate updates to the regional sheltering plan.
- FRCOG has received grant funding aimed at supporting residents over age 50 during emergencies (e.g., cold snaps, power outages). The goal is to help towns develop better systems identify vulnerable residents. Communicate with them ahead of time and deliver assistance effectively. Existing tools like Heath's Board of Health call list are helpful but limited—especially when phone access is lost. More information and support will be coming as the grant activities develop.
- Sheila added the Battery Energy Storage Awareness session is not formal training, but an awareness talks by the Fire Protection Association. Importance of understanding battery energy storage systems for municipalities. Date and location are Tuesday, May 13, at the John Oliver Transit Center. In-person only; registration required. A link is available upon request.
- Tim Lively created a survey for Heath residents to assess emergency and general support needs, particularly for older or homebound residents. The survey will improve the existing call list and emergency response planning. BOH members agreed it's important to promote completion of the survey.

HEATH HERALD ARTICLES

- In conjunction with CPHS, for the June/July newsletter possibly a Mosquitos awareness article. Article is due on May 5.

REVIEW/APPROVE MINUTES

- March 12, 2025, Meeting Minutes: Susan moved to accept the minutes with minor edits. Sheila seconded the motion. Ayes: Susan, Sheila, Jason and Gene.

Next Meeting May 14, 2025 @ 0900 via Zoom.

Gene made a motion to adjourn at 10:35; Sheila seconded the motion. Ayes: Sheila, Susan, Jason and Gene.

Meeting Adjourned at 10:35.