

**HEATH BOARD OF HEALTH
MEETING MINUTES
May 14, 2025**

Board Members Present: Sheila Litchfield, Susan Gruen, Jason Erali, Tucker Jenkins, and Gene Garland -Chair

Others: Randy Crochier - CPHS/Franklin Regional Council of Governments Representative, Cindie Garland – Boards Clerk, and Elissa Viarengo – Heath Selectboard Representative

0900 Meeting Called to Order by Gene Garland

REVIEW AGENDA/ADD ITEMS

- The board reviewed the agenda.

REVIEW/APPROVE MINUTES

- April 09, 2025, Meeting Minutes: Susan moved to accept the minutes with minor edits. Sheila seconded the motion. Ayes: Susan, Sheila, Jason, Tucker and Gene. Approved the minutes unanimously.

REGIONAL HEALTH AGENT UPDATE

- Randy Crochier and Susan Gruen attended a program that discussed lithium battery risks. Bob Duvall presented on battery energy storage systems, starting with small-scale devices and expanding to broader implications. The scale of concern remains focused on large-scale battery storage, not every day personal devices.
- Camp Season: Camp application review is underway. Heath's camp has not applied yet.
- Site inspections were conducted at: 591 Number Nine Road / Corner of 8A: Randy stated it is a zoning issue (unregistered vehicles) rather than a Board of Health issue. 177 & 191 Number Nine Road: Both properties have visible issues from the road. Letters of inspection and notice of inspection will be sent to request permission to inspect the properties more formally. There are several boats stored under the power lines between these properties; ownership of that parcel needs clarification through map review, but initial assumption is it may belong to 177 Number Nine.
- Mohawk Beach Estates: Application for bathing beach expected and anticipate opening in the next couple of weeks, as the season begins.
- Two Septic Violations: Two violations reported. One applied for Title V compliance. The other has until May 22 to apply per the notice sent. No further enforcement action will be taken until that deadline passes.
- 594 Number Eight-A Update: Randy visited the property, but it appeared unoccupied at the time. Communication attempts with the owner have been unsuccessful. A neighbor expressed concern: the well at 594 also serves their adjacent trailer. This situation is likely a civil matter regarding shared utilities. Whether the water supply continues will depend on deed language and existing legal arrangements. Example given of informal agreements (like within family properties) that become complicated during changes in ownership.

NEW BUSINESS

NURSE UPDATE

- In April 2025, Claire Rabbitt, RN conducted 5 home visits for the same individual, who remains stable and continues to receive services. Conducted 3 INR checks in the office for one client.
- Influenza Vaccine Planning: Due to low demand last season (13 total doses administered), vaccine orders for the upcoming flu season have been reduced to 10 doses of high-dose vaccine and 1 multi-dose vial of standard-dose vaccine
- Unused vaccine will be eligible for partial reimbursement upon return.
- Reimbursements Received: Medicare: \$350.12 and other Insurance: \$240.00
- Claire registered for online webinars on immunization updates in preparation for the upcoming flu season.

BOARD OF HEALTH CLERK UPDATE

- Cindie reviewed the BOH expenses. Remaining Budget: \$635
- Potential Purchases: Tick coupons (\$300), Bug wipes, and Laminator and laminating sheets
- Cindie mailed out camper/trailer permit applications

BOH ACCOUNTS	BUDGET	INCOME	EXPENSED	BALANCE
BOH Expenses	1,500.00		864.19	635.81
Personnel Expenses	7,488.00		4,709.20	2,778.80
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
Opioid Settlement Stabilization	869.53	49.85		919.38
Vaccine Revolving Fund		1,488.77	6,972.65	(5,483.88)

SHOE-SPRAYING EVENT PLANNING

- Maureen O'Reilly (FRCOG) has offered the use of equipment, including pesticide, containers, posters and spray box.
- Event Details: Setup begins at 9:00 AM
 - Public hours are from 10:00 AM to 1:00 PM
 - Some residents bring multiple pairs of shoes, so lines may form
 - Sprayed shoes must dry for 24 hours, making advance notice important for work crews
 - Date agreed: Saturday, June 7: Susan, Gene and Jason will assist
 - Coordinate publicity using: Sandwich boards, flyers at Sawyer Hall and 18 Jacobs Road

PARKS AND RECREATION REIMBURSEMENT REQUEST – Dog Bag Dispenser at 18 Jacobs Road

- About a year ago, the Parks and Rec Committee requested approval to install a dog waste bag dispenser at 18 Jacobs Road. The BOH approved the placement/location of the dispenser, but not any funding or reimbursement.
- An email was recently received from Pat McGahan (Parks and Rec) requesting that BOH reimburse them for the cost of the dispenser. The new dispenser reportedly cost over \$200. Cindie requested a copy of the receipt.
- BOH previously purchased a dispenser in 2018 for \$59, using leftover funds, due to complaints about dog waste in the town center.
- There was no documented complaint history regarding dog waste at 18 Jacobs Road, unlike the situation in the town center.
- Concerns were raised about setting a precedent for future funding requests of this type.
- Questions remain regarding: Whether this expenditure was officially approved by Parks and Rec. Who will be responsible for installation and maintenance? Whether the Highway Department (as with the town center unit) would be involved.
- The Board agreed to follow up with Parks and Rec to: Confirm if the purchase was approved in one of their meetings. Clarify whether a request for funding was brought to Parks and Rec before being directed to BOH.
- The issue will be revisited at the next meeting after gathering this additional information.

ONGOING BUSINESS:

PIONEER VALLEY MOSQUITO CONTROL DISTRICT (PVMCD) Update

- John Briggs has begun mosquito larva trapping. No larvae found in Rowe, but 50 larvae found in Heath (brought home in a 10-gallon jug). Larvae are being incubated at his home. If they hatch, they will be tested at UMass to determine if they are bridging vectors for West Nile Virus or EEE.
- A new full-color PVMCD newsletter is in editing; plan to laminate copies for display at public locations (e.g., library, Jacobs Road, Sawyer Hall).
- Massachusetts Department of Agriculture Resources (MDAR) newsletter included a note on mosquito spraying and beekeepers' concerns. John has been collaborating with local beekeepers regarding pollinator safety and hive die-offs.
- Several towns have submitted payments: Shutesbury: \$5,000, Northampton: \$8,000, Sunderland: \$3,000. Agawam and Leverett have withdrawn from the district.
- Deerfield Academy has committed \$5,500 for support after a presentation from John.
- Mixed results from letters to legislators seeking state budget support.
- John plans to meet with Tyson Howard about blocked culverts and tire dumping. Tyson reports culvert clearing has begun.
- New field staff began May 5. Staff is mapping permanent vs. temporary wetlands to better understand breeding conditions.
- With recent heavy rain (5 inches + more forecast), John predicts a high-mosquito season.
- Brief discussion with Dr. Lover on rabbit ticks and Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever. Cross-species infection concerns due to wild rabbit population.

CPHS (COMMUNITY PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES) UPDATE

- Only 7 towns were represented; quorum was eventually met.
- Concerns raised about e-bike fires, garage storage, and fire suppression near private wells. Emphasized need for fire departments to be aware of residential battery storage risks.
- Phoebe completed Town of Heath's detailed Foundational Public Health Services (FPHS) Assessment. Results to be presented at the CPHS annual meeting (Oct 23, 2025). Goal is to score C- or less to justify greater state funding. MA public health historically underfunded—recent \$9.2M funding is a positive step. Guest speaker scheduled for the annual meeting is Commissioner of Agriculture, who will speak on avian flu and backyard chickens.

MOHAWK AREA PUBLIC HEALTH COALITION (MAPHCO)

- The MAPHCO initiative is funded by the CDC and administered through FRCOG, with support from emergency response planners. The project is part of a regional public health preparedness grant that includes several key deliverables, all of which must involve collaboration between public health, emergency management, and public safety personnel.
- Gene discussed key MAPHCO grant deliverables and deadlines:
 1. Discussion-Based Exercise: Due Date: October 31, 2025. Participants Required: Public Health, Emergency Management, and Public Safety. Exercise Types Discussed: Community-level, shared services group, and full coalition exercise. Options: Seminar, Workshop, Tabletop Exercise Scenario Options: Infectious disease outbreak Severe weather event (recommended) and Hazardous material spill (recommended). Final decision to be voted on at the next coalition-wide meeting on June 10, 2025.
 2. Public Health Emergency Training: Due Date: May 30, 2026. Training Topics Considered: Public Health Emergency Preparedness (PHEP) Basics + Emergency Dispensing Site (EDS) Operations, PHEP Basics + Mental Health Support in Emergencies, and PHEP Basics + Crisis Communication.
 3. Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication (CERC) Guide: Due Date: May 1, 2026 Planning Options: Adapt existing templates, coalition workgroup, and hybrid approach (preferred).
- BOH members agreed that collaboration is critical. Emergency management teams must be engaged—this is not solely a BOH responsibility. The success of these grant-funded activities depends on joint participation. A suggestion was made to send the after-action report from a recent severe weather event (including door-to-door wellness checks and shelter setup) to Randy Cardonell. This could serve as the foundation for the upcoming exercise scenario and possibly count toward fulfilling the exercise requirement (drill). There is discussion about hiring third parties to assist with elements of the training and exercise delivery.
- Only 11 out of 25 towns are actively engaged with MAPHCO—less than 50% participation. This low involvement is concerning. Lack of participation could jeopardize the continuation of grant funding. Reasons cited for low turnout include time constraints and competing responsibilities, not lack of interest. Efforts are underway to increase engagement ahead of the June 10 meeting where key decisions will be made.

REGIONAL EMERGENCY PLANNING COMMITTEE (REPC)

- Sheila stated there is no update.

MAHB (MA ASSOCIATION OF HEALTH BOARDS)

- On April 26 Gene and Cindie participated in an all-day training chaired by Sheryl Sbarra and Michael Hugo. Training focused on the legal framework for local Boards of Health, including regulatory powers around: Nuisance complaints, Inspections, Waste management, and Enforcement protocols.
- The training included discussion of the State Action for Public Health Excellence (SAPHE) 2.0 law, which supports: Shared services agreements (known locally as health districts), foundational public health services, professional credentialing (e.g., qualifications for public health directors, inspectors, and board members). SAFE 2.0 is based on the Blueprint for Public Health Excellence (2017). Codifies a \$9 million annual funding stream for strengthening public health infrastructure. Currently supports shared services in over 310 municipalities statewide. Aims to reduce disparities in public health access, especially for small or rural towns.
- Discussion included Public Health governance and best practices: How to conduct effective board meetings and understanding the full scope of BOH powers and responsibilities.
- Attendees received the updated Legal Handbook for Massachusetts Boards of Health (\$100 value), now available as a reference copy for the Board. While MAHB do not offer legal representation, they are available to assist with interpretation of laws and best practices.

BOH ACTION ITEMS

- Follow up on BOH stipend review.
- Schedule shelter training: May 19th 9:30, via Zoom. Sheila will send out an invite.
- Remind BOH members to complete MA Public Health online training.

HEATH HERALD ARTICLES

- Sheila will contact Nancy Thane (HH editor) to add information about the Shoe Spraying event in the June/July Newsletter. She will also add information about tick and mosquito awareness in the newsletter.
- Aug/Sep Newsletter: Lithium battery safety.

Next Meeting June 11, 2025 @ 0900 via Zoom.

Gene made a motion to adjourn at 10:19; Sheila seconded the motion. Ayes: Sheila, Susan, Jason Tucker and Gene. Meeting Adjourned at 10:19.