

**HEATH BOARD OF HEALTH
MEETING MINUTES
Dec 10, 2025**

Board Members Present: Sheila Litchfield, Susan Gruen, Tucker Jenkins, Gene Garland -Chair, Elissa Viarengo – Select Board Representative and Cindie Garland – Boards Clerk
Absent: Jason Erali and Randy Crochier – CPHS Representative

0900 Meeting Called to Order by Gene Garland

REVIEW AGENDA/ADD ITEMS

- The board reviewed the agenda. Gene requested the Health Services Van incentive to be added to the agenda.

REVIEW/APPROVE MINUTES

- Nov 12, 2025, Meeting Minutes: Sheila moved to approve the minutes. Tucker seconded the motion. Ayes: Susan, Sheila, Tucker and Gene. The board approved the minutes unanimously.

REGIONAL HEALTH AGENT UPDATE

- Randy Crochier was unable to attend. No update provided.
- The Board expressed concern regarding the lack of communication and updates on ongoing property investigations.
- The current process relies on verbal updates during meetings when FRCOG /CPHS representatives are present.
- Board members discussed the need for a more reliable tracking system for property complaints and investigations. A suggestion was made to request written email updates from FRCOG on a bi-monthly basis. Privacy and confidentiality concerns were noted regarding any publicly accessible complaint logs.

NEW BUSINESS:

NURSE UPDATE (Claire Rabbitt, RN)

- Claire did not provide a nurse's report.
- Claire submitted her retirement letter after 16 years of service. She will remain in her position until a replacement is hired, or her nursing license expires in November 2026.
- The board discussed the next steps: Review and update the Town Nurse job description (last updated in 2024). Draft a job announcement for review by the Select Board (Gene will send the announcement to the Town Coordinator.) Meet with the Select Board to discuss continuation of the position.
- FRCOG/CPHS services were noted as complementary to, but not duplicative of, the Town Nurse role. The Town Nurse provides local presence, home visits, and rapid response. FRCOG/CPHS faces staffing and prioritization limitations.

- Heath has maintained a Town Nurse position for over 18 years. The role has always required RN certification. Services include health monitoring, medication support, and referrals to social services.

BOARD OF HEALTH CLERK UPDATE

- Cindie stated no updated expense report has been provide by the Town Accountant. The last one submitted was in September. Elissa stated she will follow up with the Town Coordinator.

PROPERTY SIGNAGE CONCERN – East Main Street

- Tucker reported the presence of a sign reading “toxic waste dump” on the property line between the Churchill property and a neighboring lot.
- The Board expressed concern about potential liability if residents interpret the sign as indicating an actual dumping site.
- Documentation was emphasized as essential to protect the Board from future claims.
- A prior FRCOG investigation found no toxic waste on the property. Gene will request an updated site inspection from FRCOG. Ensure proper documentation of findings.
- The board agreed to address the issue through appropriate channels as a neighbor dispute rather than a public health hazard unless new evidence emerges.

MOBILE HEALTH SERVICES VAN INCENTIVE

- Caitlin Krieger of CHCFC contacted the town regarding the possibility of bringing a mobile health services van to Heath to provide preventive care and minor health services.
- The board proposed scheduling be coordinated with the Council on Aging.
- A suggestion was made to use the Jacobs Road facility as the service location.
- Promote availability through signage and community outreach.
- Gene will reach out to Caitlin.

ONGOING BUSINESS:

CPHS (COMMUNITY PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES) UPDATE

- Susan reported the meeting focused primarily on budget concerns. Health insurance costs increased by 36%, with an additional 20% increase anticipated.
- Three budget options (A, B, and C) were presented. Discussion centered on adjusting town assessments, increasing service fees and using the rainy-day fund. Option B received majority support and would result in a \$619 increase for Heath. Erving then proposed introducing a new Option D, which had not been previously considered. This option would significantly increase fees, rely more heavily on operating funds, and set aside the rainy-day fund. After additional discussion, members agreed that a budget decision needed to be finalized, and no vote was taken on Option D at that time.
- An additional meeting is scheduled in January to discuss a potential Option D. Susan stated she will distribute the CPHS budget option materials to Board members, when available.
- Randy reported that PERC testing volume exceeded projections (50 tests conducted vs. 30 budgeted). Future testing demand is expected to decline due to economic conditions.

- A survey will be distributed in January (possibly within the next few weeks). All towns are required to complete it, regardless of the level of services received from FRCOG or the local Board of Health. One of the key questions will be whether required training has been completed (all 30 classes).

PIONEER VALLEY MOSQUITO CONTROL DISTRICT (PVMCD) UPDATE

- Susan stated the committee discussed funding related to participation in the PVMCD, including efforts to support smaller or financially constrained towns seeking to continue or join the district. A question was raised regarding the original population threshold of 2,000 residents used to determine eligibility for funding support. Leyden noted its population of 2,123, which would exclude the town under the original threshold. An amendment was proposed to raise the eligibility population threshold to 2,500 residents. Although no towns currently have an exact population of 2,500, the amendment was discussed as a more equitable standard.
- A proposal to earmark \$30,000 to support towns that wish to continue or join the PVMCD was presented. It was noted that, depending on participation levels, this funding could reduce municipal membership costs by approximately 50%. Phoebe/FRCOG was asked to draft and send letters in support of earmarking \$30,000 for eligible towns. Colrain and Charlemont expressed agreement and support. Hawley has not had representation at meetings for the past three to four months.
- Prior discussions with Senator Mark were referenced, including the possibility of the legislature covering PVMCD membership fees for two to three years to allow towns time to evaluate long-term participation. It was clarified that Senator Mark prefers in-person meetings with town representatives (typically through his aide during office hours in Buckland) rather than a general letter-writing campaign.
- Feedback indicated that many towns are reluctant to assume ongoing costs without financial assistance. The importance of identifying specific towns requesting assistance and presenting clear, actionable requests was emphasized. It was clarified that funding advocacy for mosquito control is the responsibility of PVMCD, not the CPHS. The PVMCD Commission and Chair were identified as the appropriate leaders for advancing funding strategies and legislative engagement. Town input remains important, but district-level leadership is necessary to move the effort forward.
- There is no PVMCD meeting scheduled for December, next one in January 2026.

MOHAWK AREA PUBLIC HEALTH COALITION (MAPHCO)

- Gene stated MAPHCO meeting was cancelled.
- Next meeting: January 13th, 2026

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT TEAM

- Sheila reported that her assigned task was to organize shelter-related forms, paperwork, and guidance materials into a more usable format. The existing shelter folder was described as a collection of handouts without a clear process or instructions.
- A comprehensive Shelter Operations Manual is being developed for use when opening: A warming center, cooling center, and an overnight shelter. The manual will: Identify essential roles for each shelter type, provide role-specific guidance and responsibilities,

and consolidate all required forms and handouts, clearly labeled by role. Multiple copies will be printed so that volunteers responding to Jacob's Road can: Be assigned a role and receive the full manual for reference. The basic structure of the manual is complete. Remaining work involves populating the manual with additional forms and role-specific materials. The manual is designed to be usable by individuals with **no prior training**, while recognizing that certain key roles will require designated, knowledgeable individuals.

- A process will be established to identify residents who may serve in key shelter roles. The plan includes just-in-time volunteer training during shelter activation. Discussed included: Food Services Manager requiring ServSafe certification, Logistics Manager coordinating staffing needs and registration staff identifying appropriate volunteers
- The manual will cover all required Incident Command System roles, including Operations, Logistics, Food services, Pet management/support and demobilization.
- The original goal to submit the manual to Nathan (MIMA) by the end of December has been revised to mid-January. This allows time for: An additional meeting with the Board of Health and Consultation with local emergency management officials
- Once finalized and reviewed by MIMA, community-wide training will be scheduled.

BOH ACTION ITEMS

- The Finance Committee was contacted to review Board stipends using the established formula. Elissa will follow up with the Finance Committee.

HEATH HERALD ARTICLES

- A proposal was made to focus the article on emergency sheltering. It was noted that the town's sheltering guide will be completed soon and that upcoming training opportunities will be announced.
- The topic was identified as timely, particularly given the winter season, and would provide residents with information on: The availability of sheltering in Heath, where to go for assistance, and how residents can become involved.
- Deadline for article to be submitted for the Feb/Mar newsletter is Jan 5, 2026.

Next Meeting: Jan 14, 2026 @ 0900 via Zoom.

Gene made a motion to adjourn at 10:09 a.m. Susan seconded the motion. Ayes: Sheila, Susan, Tucker and Gene. Meeting Adjourned at 10:09 a.m.