HEATH BOARD OF HEALTH
MEETING MINUTES
May 13, 2026

Board Members Present: Sheila Litchfield, Susan Gruen, Tucker Jenkins, Gene Garland -Chair, Mia Francesconi – Town Coordinator, Tim Lively – Emergency Management/Fire Department, and Cindie Garland – BOH Clerk
Guests: Jonathen Mirin and Dr Kent Chamberlain
Absent: Jason Erali

9:02 Meeting Called to Order by Gene Garland

REVIEW THE AGENDA

- The Board recommended the following updates to the agenda:
  - Deleted Ongoing Business Item #6 (June meeting).
  - Added an update regarding the recent tick spray event under Public Discussion/Communications.

REVIEW/APPROVE MINUTES (May 13, 2026)

- Susan made a motion to approve the May 13th minutes with minor corrections. Sheila seconded the motion. Ayes: Susan, Sheila, Tucker, and Gene. The board approved the minutes unanimously.

REVIEW/APPROVE MINUTES (June 02, 2026)

- Susan made a motion to approve the June 02 minutes. Tucker seconded the motion. Ayes: Susan, Sheila, Tucker, and Gene. The board approved the minutes unanimously.

REVIEW/APPROVE MINUTES (June 09, 2026)

- Susan made a motion to approve the June 09 minutes with minor corrections. Tucker seconded the motion. Ayes: Susan, Sheila, Tucker, and Gene. The board approved the minutes unanimously.

REGIONAL HEALTH AGENT UPDATE

- Randy sent an email stating his office has been busy with permit activity.
- FRCOG/CPHS received a child passenger safety grant and trained three individuals to become a certified child safety seat technician.
- Assisting the Hilltown Youth Recovery Theatre program with their permit application for their summer program.

NEW BUSINESS:

TOWN NURSE UPDATE (CLAIRE RABBITT, RN)

- No update provided.

BOARD OF HEALTH CLERK UPDATE

- Cindie reviewed the budget report. Approximately **$590** remained in the budget.
- An additional **$300** was allocated for tick testing coupons, leaving approximately **$290** remaining. Discussed purchasing Epipen in FY26 instead of tick coupons and purchase bug wipes.

ONGOING BUSINESS:

TOWN NURSE POSITION

- The Board held an extensive discussion regarding the filling of the Town Nurse position.
    - Concern that the Board's hiring recommendation was not accurately represented.
    - Frustration regarding discussion of salary before completion of the position re-grading process.
    - Questions regarding previous approval of the job description and authorization to advertise the position.
    - Concern regarding communication between the Board of Health and the Select Board.
- Members emphasized:
    - Their continued support for maintaining the Town Nurse position.
    - The importance of attracting qualified candidates.
    - The need to improve communication between the BOH and Select Board.
- Sheila stated three candidates are interested in the Town Nurse position.
- The Board agreed to:
    - Request a joint meeting with the Select Board to improve communication.
    - Request initiation of the Town Nurse position re-grading process.
    - Continue recruitment while awaiting additional direction from Town administration. Gene will contact the Town Coordinator regarding the re-grading process and potential interviews.
    - Request to meet with Select Board on June 30th to discuss a way forward.

EPIPEN PROCUREMENT

- Gene contacted Lisa White for assistance obtaining emergency EpiPens through McKesson medical supply. Key considerations:
    - Exploring both injectable and nasal spray options (nasal spray potentially cheaper)
    - Access concerns for after-hours emergencies at nurse's office
    - Coordination with local EMS services (Colrain has EpiPens available?)
    - Storage and management logistics must be reviewed

SMART METER INSTALLATION DISCUSSION

- Jonathan Mirren and Dr. Kent Chamberlain presented concerns about National Grid's smart meter rollout:
    - Health Concerns: Dr. Chamberlain (PhD in Electrical Engineering) cited research showing biological harm from wireless radiation exposure
    - Technical Issues: Mesh network installation creates additional radiation sources beyond individual meters

    - Regulatory Gaps: Federal agencies not adequately addressing health impacts
    - Resident Options: $26/month opt-out fee creates financial burden
- Board Response to Smart Meter Concerns
    - Will conduct deeper review of provided materials
    - Consider Heath Herald article to educate residents about the opt out option
    - Explore coordination with other Hill-Towns for public forums
    - The Board suggested that the presenters consider providing a presentation at an upcoming CPHS meeting to facilitate broader regional discussion.

CPHS (COMMUNITY PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES) UPDATE

Susan provided a report on the recent CPHS Oversight Board meeting.

- Introduction of new board members and an overview of volunteer participation.
- Expansion of the regional child car seat program through grant funding.
- Staffing updates, including the addition of a third Health Inspector.
- Continued regional staffing challenges due to temporary employee absences.
- Recognition of Heath's successful permethrin shoe spraying program, with neighboring communities expressing interest in adapting Heath's educational materials.

PIONEER VALLEY MOSQUITO CONTROL DISTRICT (PVMCD) UPDATE

Susan provided an update of the recent PVMCD meeting.

- Mosquito surveillance has begun for the season.
- Monthly surveillance reports and newsletters will now be distributed to participating towns.
- Leverett has joined the district, increasing available funding.
- Replacement of an aging field vehicle continues to be delayed. Ice cooling vests will be purchased for field staff as an interim safety measure.
- Seasonal staffing is in place, and surveillance activities are progressing well.
- Current weather forecasts indicate the potential for a hot and humid summer despite recent dry conditions.
- The Board will continue sharing mosquito surveillance updates with residents.

TICK PREVENTION PROGRAM

Susan provided an overview of the recent permethrin shoe spraying event (May 30th, 2026)

- Poor weather reduced attendance to approximately 15 participants, 44 pairs of shoes were treated after residents dropped off footwear before the event.
- Several residents requested that a second treatment event be offered approximately 60 days later, consistent with last year's program.
- Board members agreed to pursue a second event.
- Tentative dates discussed included **August 1** or **August 8**, depending on volunteer availability and supply availability from FRCOG.

MOHAWK AREA PUBLIC HEALTH COALITION (MAPHCO)

Tucker provided a review of the most recent MAPHCO meeting. Discussion focused on:

- Emergency preparedness initiatives.
- Crisis and emergency risk communication training.
- Collaboration between municipalities.

- Opportunities for regional cooperation among Boards of Health, Emergency Management, and Public Safety agencies.
- The Board agreed that regional collaboration continues to provide the greatest benefit for rural communities.

BOH ACTION ITEMS

- Gene reviewed the outstanding action items.
- The Board discussed proposed BOH regulations concerning Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS).
- Members agreed the issue should become a future Board priority. Discussion included:
    - Reviewing the draft FRCOG BOH regulations.
    - Consulting legal counsel before considering adoption.
    - Inviting attorney Mike Hugo to provide an educational presentation regarding battery storage facilities and related public health considerations.

HEATH HERALD ARTICLES

The Board discussed preparing a future Heath Herald article regarding National Grid Smart Meters. Information must be balanced and factual.

- Available information from National Grid.
- Customers opt-out information.
- Educational information regarding radio frequency exposure.
- Appropriate terminology to distinguish residential mesh Wi-Fi systems from utility communication networks.
- Gene will provide the article.

COMMUNITY EMERGENCY RESPONSE SURVEY

The Board continued discussed distribution of the Emergency Special Needs Survey.

- Utilizing Adam's Direct Mailing Service.
- Exploring available grant funding.
- Continuing to evaluate electronic submission options to improve response rates.
- Additional cost information will be obtained before proceeding.

FUTURE MEETING

- Next Monthly Meeting: July 8, 2026 @ 0900 via Zoom.
- Potential meeting with the Select Board: June 30th. Time: TBD

ADJOURNMENT

- Gene made a motion to adjourn at 10:45 a.m. Moved by Tucker. Susan seconded the motion. Ayes: Sheila, Susan, Tucker, and Gene. Meeting Adjourned at 10:45 a.m.