

**Town of Heath - Board of Health
Meeting Minutes
May 18, 2021**

The Board of Health meeting was held during the Select Board meeting. Please see SB minutes for this date for further information.

I. The teleconference meeting was **called to order** at 6:32 p.m.

Roll Call:

PRESENT: Betsy Kovacs (Chair), Armand Clavette, Henry Godek, Susan Gruen, John Palmer

ABSENT: Gene Garland, *ex officio* BoH member, Mary Sumner—BoH Clerk, Randy Crochier

Also PRESENT: Barbara Gordon; Robyn Provost, Brian DeVries, Sue Lively—Members of the Select Board of the Town of Heath; Hilma Sumner—Clerk of the Town of Heath

II. Recommendation to SB regarding mosquito control:

Betsy reviewed the State's options regarding mosquito control/spraying. She noted that the BoH has spent a great deal of time studying the issue. Betsy reviewed background of BoH members and thanked all, including Barbara Gordon, who has been "of counsel" and has brought a great deal of information before the Board. Betsy said that the BoH recommends that Heath opt out of aerial spraying, but not ground spraying. We came to this hybrid decision as compromise position because of opposition of some Town members.

Betsy reviewed the context to the decision, especially regarding high mortality rate of EEE. The mosquitoes could be carrying West Nile, Zika virus as well. Betsy reviewed letter of BoH to SB. BoH had originally recommended that we not opt of State program, but Barbara alerted us to the possibility of partially opting out. Belonging to PVMCD is helpful to us should we trap positive mosquitoes; we could use larvicide.

Should there ever be a problem, we might appreciate help from the State; opting out would require that we deal with any situation on our own at Town's expense. She offered caveat that, though ground spraying is more precise than aerial spraying, some areas in Heath could not be reached by ground spraying.

The final decision belongs to the SB, but by opting out, we cannot rejoin until 2022. If we opt out, we would have to have a plan approved by the State. However, as member of PVMCD, we only need to present a plan for educating Heath townsfolk: e.g., Reverse-911 calls.

Henry said that the information was presented accurately. Susan thanked Barbara and Henry about information regarding chemicals used by the State. Betsy said that we would be collecting data from Control District that would give us advance notice and that the District Commissioners by virtue of being on the Board, would have a seat at the table with the State. As long as a Public Health State of Emergency has not been declared, the Town still has complete control of spraying process. If, however, the State declares a Public Emergency, we lose the ability to refuse spraying. If we opt out, the State cannot spray, but we are then responsible for the entire mitigation process and expense.

Betsy reiterated that we retain a channel to the State decision-making process through the important relationship we have with PVMCD.

Robyn thanked BoH for its time and effort. Brian DeVries asked about ground spraying. Betsy said that she did not believe that PVMCD has sufficient funds for spraying. The State would be the one doing the spraying and paying for the work if a Public Health State of Emergency were declared. Barbara noted that the State has great resources and expertise that we might take advantage of. Brian asked about material data sheets about products being used. Betsy said that larvicide is through PVMCD. Henry said that State guidelines make the spraying very safe. Brian expressed concern over possible allergy and toxic response as well as environmental impact. Betsy said that, short of a Public Emergency, it would be possible for residents to opt out. Barbara noted that we have opportunity to notify residents of spraying, which is done at night. She discussed pesticide—pyrethrin, which is not considered dangerous, and the accelerant, which can aggravate respiratory ailments.

Sue Lively asked how long opt-out lasts. Betsy responded that decision is final until December 31. Sue asked about getting a clearer picture of differentiation of help offered by State versus PVMCD. Betsy offered to get a clarification from Carolyn Ness of the PVMCD.

Robyn suggested that this meeting be considered an information meeting and that there should be a public hearing on the decision, considering the number of letters that came to SB before BoH recommendation. Robyn said she would feel more comfortable and recommended that there be an opportunity for public comment next week. Brian wanted to see a material data sheet. SB meeting will start at 6:00 next week with a public comment period before taking a vote on whether or not to opt out of State program. Betsy said that, in the meantime, BoH can begin to work on application for opting out for use by the Select Board should the Board vote to opt out of either or both ground and aerial spraying.

BoH meeting adjourned at 7:24; seconded by Armand; Betsy, Henry, Armand, Susan, John—aye.

Respectfully submitted,

John Palmer

Board member