

Town of Heath Board of Health

minutes of remote meeting held on 12/13/23.

Heath Board of Health was called to order at 9:03am by chair, Gene Garland with members Susan Gruen and Sheila Litchfield present with Elissa Viarengo representing the Heath Selectboard.

Review of Minutes: Minutes of 9/13/23 were reviewed, amended, and unanimously approved by roll call vote. Minutes of 10/11/23 were reviewed amended, and unanimously approved by roll call vote. Gene volunteered to write up the minutes of 11/8/23; Sheila will forward Gene the recording. Sheila agreed to take minutes for 12/13/23.

Report of Chairperson: Gene did not receive a property update from Health Agent but inquired of Elissa about a Selectboard conversation regarding dilapidated mobile home at roadside at 594 Route 8A; Select Board taking additional steps; Elissa will inform BOH.

Recent movement on properties on Bellor Road marijuana farms will be followed by FRCOG as needed.

New Business:

1. Board Clerk Resignation and next steps; Gene reported BOS desires to revisit job description for "all boards clerk" to clarify responsibilities and hours. Taking meeting minutes is the biggest challenge. Susan inquired about the status of budget for the BOH Clerk position. Elissa agreed to find out. Gene reported he has repeatedly inquired about the BOH budget status, the BOH computer replacement and issues about the database for temporary occupancy permits, ordering of tick tests, which apparently had never been ordered. Sheila reported the Access database has been a problem for years and interfaces with tax collector information. She also reported that other towns are linking the ability to get a permit to having paid taxes and towns are passing bylaws on this subject. Sheila also indicated concerns with day-to-day BOH tasks such as mail, email and how to accomplish this without a clerk. Gene said he might be able to do some of this and will investigate. Elissa reported that she was able to access emails remotely when she was acting BOH chair but did have to go to the office to check phone messages.
2. Sheila volunteered to do minutes in the interim. Gene will post agendas at Jacobs Road. Susan will post at Sawyer Hall. Elissa will post on the town website on the town calendar and BOH page and will post approved minutes. Sheila will send everyone the final edited minutes. Gene will get a key to BOH office from Hilma.
3. Meeting with BOS 12/19/23 to include nurse job description, property issues being followed, clerk position, new MA Public Health credentials in workforce performance standards (aka required BOH training) and how it will impact the BOH. Agreed that 6:30pm is a time members could be present. BOH agreed it is essential that the board has someone to take the minutes and using the recording of the minute's works well. Gene will inform Hilma of the BOH topics of interest. Sheila reported that Selectboard member Sue Lively met with Claire (nurse) and made a few minor edits to the 6/14/23 version of the nurse job description the BOH had approved. Claire forwarded these edits to Sheila who has edited the job description and will send the latest version out with all changes tracked. BOH agreed to possibly vote on revised job description on December 19th at the BOS meeting.

4. Nurses report for Nov 23 – Claire sent it to Susan; Gene will include it with other meeting documents sent out and to be included as an attachment to the minutes. Flu vaccine clinic and home bound vaccines administered.
5. Clerks Report Nov 23 – Gene did not receive a report.

Ongoing Business:

1. COVID 19 update (Gruen/Litchfield) – Susan reported receipt of 180 test kits and is distributing them; increasing cases reported (over 2000 in state currently). Susan offered masks and test kits to Sheila for Good Neighbors Food Pantry and Elissa offered hand sanitizer. Ongoing reminders of increasing case of Covid are warranted.
2. CHPS (Gruen/Litchfield) – both attended recent meeting, primary topic was the 35.5 hours of State required training for BOH members due in March; discussed concerns about data tracking by zip code; discussed concerns about Catalva Ambulance operations of the Hawlemont vaccine clinic where inadequate appointment slots were made available. Required training for BOH may be linked to eligibility for grants. FRCOG level funding fees to towns for BOH services. Sheila reported BOH members can be trained in use of the database tracking permit status. Susan indicated Liz is willing to come to Heath to train us. Gene indicated benefits to having BOH members able to access database and being more informed about the various tasks the health agents and BOH must do. Sheila reported that the Town of Shelburne recently passed a bylaw that permits can be denied if taxes are not up to date. The online permitting system enables town departments to easily implement; Heath may want to explore this as an option to resolve the various coordination issues related to enforcement currently being discussed with the BOS. Planning Board and BOH. Sheila encouraged that a meeting should be held with all parties outside of a Selectboard meeting to enable adequate time to explore options and make recommendations.
3. Herald (Litchfield)- Feb/March issue due Jan 5. Ideas include soliciting for BOH members. Article on what your BOH does/scope of role; series of articles on the various requirements; tick management in the April issue due March 5. Sheila will draft articles.
4. PVMCD (Gruen)- Gene reports receiving John's very thorough annual report; Susan reported limitation of charging stations in the area. Wet weather increases the risk of mosquito-borne illness. Cat-tail swamps and stagnant water areas are problematic, positive mosquitos for equine encephalitis found in late October, yet veterinarians vaccinate animals in June, but the vaccine efficacy is only 3 months. John is still seeking grants to educate about the risk of water accumulation in tires and birdbaths. PVMCD now includes 24 towns. Susan will send the info to Sheila for an article. 26 mosquito traps across 10 sites in Heath. Gene will forward John's report to all including BOS. Perhaps have John attend our March meeting.
5. FRCOG roundtable (Gruen)-none held.
6. MAPHCO (Garland/Gruen)- Gene has not received info about a meeting. DPH WebEOC drill upcoming. Sheila will send out the generic passcode for all BOH members.
7. Training to do Reverse 911 calls (Litchfield) – Sheila reports Hilma said BOS need to discuss; add to list of topics for meeting with BOS on Dec 19.
8. Collaboration with BOS, Planning Board regarding management of bylaws on mobile units (all) – Gene will add the subject to list of topics with BOS; need subject-specific meeting on this topic with all parties involved- specifically collaboration on enforcement.

Other business:

1. Gene raised the question of temporary occupancy permits where no inspections are conducted before or after permit expires; Gene said he finds no requirement for inspections and is curious if other towns do inspections. Inspections are complaint-driven. A permit enables occupancy for 2 weeks, but a permit is only required every 2 yrs.; regulations need to be reviewed and discussed. BOH acknowledged that we no longer have a resource in Mohawk Estates and that it may be good to seek a BOH member from Mohawk Estates. Gene will request this of Jenny Hamilton.
2. Health Equity Project planning survey issued by the new company taking over MAPCHO operations from FRCOG; Susan and Sheila completed and submitted survey on Nov 25. Was specific to covid: testing, clinics, info dissemination, etc.
3. At the Town-wide emergency preparedness meeting Susan reported about the town-wide contact list of at-risk residents that she manages with Claire and others; List was shared with Police, Fire and Emergency Management. Susan keeps the list updated as she learns of any edits that may be needed and requests those receiving the list to inform her of any needed edits.

Next meetings: December 19, 2023, at Selectboard meeting; January 10, 2024, remotely.

The meeting adjourned at 10:32 am by unanimous roll call vote of all members.