

**Information Meeting About
Special Town Meeting Warrant Article
to Join the Pioneer Valley Mosquito Control District**

Tuesday, February 18, 2020

7:00 PM

16 Jacobs Road

Speaker: Carolyn Shores Ness

Mosquito Control District Commissioner and

Deerfield Select Board member and Chairman, Deerfield Board of Health

At the Special Town Meeting (STM) on March 24, Heath Town voters will have the opportunity to vote for Heath to join the Pioneer Valley Mosquito Control District (PVMCD). The Heath Board of Health members recommended to the Select Board to put this Article on the Warrant.

What is the PVMCD?

The Pioneer Valley Mosquito Control District (PVMCD) was established by the State Reclamation and Mosquito Control Board (SRB) on October 18, 2017, in accordance with M.G.L. c. 252. The purpose of the District is “to serve our membership communities by suppressing both nuisance and disease-carrying mosquito populations.” As with the other 12 regional mosquito control districts/projects in the Commonwealth that cover 214 (61%) of the state’s 351 municipalities, the PVMCD provides mosquito control services, disease surveillance, and public education to its member towns. Membership in the PVMCD includes municipalities in Franklin, Hampshire, and Hampden counties and sits within the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources. It is managed by a five-member Board of Commissioners, appointed by the SRB.

- As of January, 2020, 11 neighboring towns including: Bernardston, Deerfield, East Longmeadow, Hadley, Holyoke, Northampton, Palmer, Rowe, Southampton, South Hadley, West Springfield are members of the PVMCD. Others are considering joining including Colrain, Charlemont, Buckland.

Background: Last August, 2019, Heath was designated at Critical Risk for EEE by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health because of a direct link of an infected individual to the Town of Heath.

Because of this past risk level, according to Carolyn Ness, PVMCD Commissioner, it is highly likely that Heath will be designated at risk in the coming season.

What are benefits of membership in the District? Members of the Mosquito Control District get regular and consistent mosquito surveillance (trapping and testing) to monitor and gather data over time for the presence of EEE and other mosquito-borne viruses such as West Nile disease, which has been increasingly prevalent in neighboring communities in recent years. By conducting these surveys, member towns get an early warning so they can take appropriate actions if mosquitos test positively. Membership in the PVMCD allows member towns to get emergency mosquito control such as larvicides (at reduced rates) to prevent the mosquitos from hatching and spreading infectious diseases. Early use of larvicides, if necessary, would also likely prevent the possible need for aerial spraying later in the season. Additionally, if there were evidence of infected mosquitos, member towns would likely get State assistance in managing the mosquitos.

Towns which monitor mosquitos have a far higher likelihood of local control over how mosquitos are managed. Armed with the data, towns can be proactive and preclude the possibility of the State MDPH dictating actions.

Come to the meeting where you will learn more details such as the benefits and risks of larvicides and sprays and costs. Come to ask your questions and learn more about membership in the PVMCD.

Please come to the meeting so you can learn about the Pioneer Valley Mosquito Control District and make an informed vote at the STM on March 24.