

Town of Concord
Board of Health

Minutes of the Meeting
Wednesday, February 15, 2023

PRESENT: Jill Block, MPH, Chair
Mark Haddad, Esq.
Kurt Herman, PG
James Whalen, CRNA (via Zoom)

Melanie T. Dineen, Public Health Director
Karen M. Byrne, Senior Administrative Assistant
Mike Funaiole, Environmental Health Inspector

OTHERS: Hon Yee, 45 Summit Street
Cheryl Sbarra, Esq., MHOA

1. OPEN MEETING

Chair Jill Block opened the meeting at approximately 8:00 a.m.

2. DISCUSSION - Proposed Tobacco Regulations

In January, the Board reviewed the State Tobacco Sales Regulations that went into effect December 2020 adopted by former Governor Charles Baker. Prior to that the Health Division and Board of Health had drafted a new local regulation, holding many well attended public meetings but decided to defer adoption for six months once Governor Baker enacted the State Regulation that addressed many of the same issues that the Board at that time was trying to address on a local level. This all occurred during the height of the Covid-19 Pandemic and although both regulations (State and Local) have been enforced the entire time, staff felt it was time to move forward with either the regulation that was proposed or to request that Cheryl Sbarra, Esq., Massachusetts Association of Health Boards assist in reviewing both and incorporating the updated state provisions into the local regulation and adopting that merged document as the Town of Concord Board of Health Local Regulation. The consensus in January was the latter and Ms. Sbarra provided a copy of the merged document for the Board to review.

After a lengthy discussion and review, members had questions on the fine structure in the State Regulation being so much higher than the current local regulation and whether it wanted to consider adopting another structure. Ms. Sbarra interjected that a local code could not be less stringent than the state regulation. The consensus was to stay consistent and incorporate that structure into the local regulations. Kurt Herman and Jim Whalen both noted that they liked clarity for the retailers and the inspectors; Mark Haddad concurred.

At the next meeting, Ms. Sbarra will provide a copy of a merged code for the Board of Health to review and consider, giving staff time to notify the retailers with a goal of a Public Hearing to adopt it in April.

3. BOARD MEMBER REPORTS

There were none; Chair Jill Block will comment on PHD Dineen's report on the Concord at Risk Stakeholders Meeting Update (now referred to as Concord Behavior Health Collaborative).

4. PHD & STAFF MEMBER REPORTS

Concord Behavior Health Collaborative (CBHC)

In the next couple of weeks, the CBHC, led by Public Health Director Dineen and Chair Jill Block will continue to meet with Town Staff, Divisions, Police and Fire, Council on Aging, the Schools to continue to focus "At Risk" individuals by incorporating specific skill sets that each of the parties that would help to address at risk behaviors, addiction, suicide, food insecurity, mental health, etc., to name a few. At this time, the group will meet to determine what issues should be addressed first and/or whether a starting point may be to develop a town-wide survey to send out to residents. The Town has funds via the Opioid Settlement Funds to implement certain programs aimed at harm reduction, substance prevention, local youth risk, mental health services, behavioral health - but needs to hone specific goals.

Public Health Excellence Grant

A Public Health Excellence Grant was awarded to the Towns of Concord, Lincoln, Carlisle and Weston, Wayland and Sudbury (known as the Great Meadows Public Health Collaborative) to fund 2-part time nurses to address issues such as impact melanoma (via hospital data), programs to assist parents with tools to determine "hidden" substance abuse and vaping (steady increase since Covid-19 pandemic) as well as prevention/promotion of such programs for youth, elders and all residents.

White Pond

Two consultants worked on the White Pond cyanobacteria issue over the 2022 season, John Higgins (APOD Technologies) whose equipment was installed to contain the spread of any cyanobacteria blooms and Nancy Leland, Limnologist who studied the aspects of the biological, chemical, physical and geological characteristics of the pond. Cyanobacteria in the past, have been found to be toxic to various plant life, wild life and humans. Both consultants have prepared reports that they will present at the next Natural Resources meeting.

Diversity Equity Inclusion

At the request of the Town Manager, PHD Dineen participated in a forum on Diversity Equity Inclusion to discuss how issues other than racism per se could be documented and addressed other than through the Police Department. This will be an ongoing discussion.

Housing

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts has acquired the Best Western to be utilized as a “Temporary Housing” (30 days) facility for undocumented immigrants, homeless and others dealing with housing crisis. Kurt Herman thought that there were already families or individuals residing at the Best Western and asked whether they would no longer be able to stay there and in essence creating a homelessness situation? Both Chair Jill Block and PHD Dineen noted that there were some people currently residing there and that the State indeed created an unintended homeless crisis without having all of the complete details of the facility. PHD Dineen and other town staff were working diligently to ensure that all applicable public safety codes were adhered to by the State and that the building could handle this type of endeavor.

5. CALENDAR AND MINUTES

Board Members in attendance realized that they had conflicts with the rescheduled March meeting date and asked Karen Byrne to provide several alternate dates.

The Minutes for January 17, 2023, meeting were reviewed and discussed. Mark Haddad moved to APPROVE the minutes with minor edits. Kurt Herman seconded it. All VOTED in favor to approve.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 9:45 a.m.