



Board of Health Meeting Minutes

Date: January 24, 2025

Location: via Zoom

Members: Tejal K. Gandhi, MD, MPH Chair, Stephen Epstein, MD, MPP, Member; Robert A. Partridge, MD, MPH, Member, Edward Cosgrove, PhD, Member; Aarti Sawant-Basak, PhD, Member

Staff Present: Timothy Muir McDonald, Director of Health, and Human Services; Tara Gurge, Assistant Director of Public Health; Tiffany (Zike) Benoit, Assistant Director of Public Health; Carol Read; Kerry Dunnell; Sai Palani; Samantha Menard

Welcome & Public Comment Period

Dr. Epstein called the meeting to order at 8:00AM.

According to Chapter 107 of the Acts of 2022, as an act relative to extending certain states of emergency accommodations, as passed by the General Court, and signed into law by Acting Governor Karyn Polito, on July 16, 2022, revised Section 20 of Chapter 20, the Acts of 2021. In so doing, provided modifications to the Massachusetts Open Meeting Law, which allow for flexibility to hold remote only, and hybrid meetings, while preserving public access and, where appropriate, public participation. Currently, that additional flexibility will expire on March 31, 2025, unless additional legislative action occurs.

No public comment at this time.

Review of Minutes: December 13, 2024

Upon motion duly made by Dr. Cosgrove, and seconded by Dr. Sawant-Basak, it was voted to approve the meeting minutes December 13, 2024, as presented. Motion passed unanimously.

Proposed Citizen's Petition to Ban Gas-Powered Leaf Blowers

David Rudolph, Green Needham, made a presentation on his citizen's petition regarding a ban on gas-powered leaf blowers.

Dr. Gandhi asked about enforcement for this proposal. Mr. McDonald explained that complaints may not be able to be responded to in the moment. He will need to review enforcement for a violation not seen by staff with Town Counsel. Enforcement would likely be complaint driven with follow-up at a future date. Dr. Epstein noted that enforcement would require additional funding, and staff may not be available to answer complaints at certain hours of the day.

Ms. Gandhi asked about the fines imposed by other towns. Mr. Rudolph stated that fees usually start at \$50-\$100 and are on escalating levels.

Dr. Sawant-Basak asked about public outreach on this item in terms of incentives to switch to electric blowers. Mr. Rudolph stated that there will need to be information sessions on this proposal and alternatives.

Dr. Epstein stated that, if this is primarily about noise pollution, there should be decibel levels included in the petition language. Mr. Rudolph stated that this could make enforcement more difficult, as decibel readings would have to be taken at each complaint. Dr. Epstein stated that a seasonal ban is proposed as part of this petition that does not include the times of year when most cleanups occur. Mr. Rudolph explained that this is due to the fact that electric blowers are not yet able to handle large cleanups, and a full ban would place too high a burden on landscapers. The intention is to phase in a complete ban as technology improves. Dr. Epstein explained that gas powered blowers could be used during these seasons, as long as they are quiet.

Community Crisis Intervention Team (CCIT) Presentation

Carol Read reviewed the historical context of the CCIT program. Jess Moss, Assistant Director of Counseling and Volunteers at Needham Aging Services Division, explained that the intention of the program is to discuss high-risk situations in the Town, allowing for interventions with residents before a larger crisis occurs.

The team presented some information and data from the program.

Environmental Testing of Synthetic Turf Fields

Ms. Gurge reviewed the testing reports. She noted that semi-volatile organic compound (SVOC) and volatile organic compound (VOC) concentrations were either consistent or lower than in 2023. Metal concentrations were either consistent or higher than in 2023. Zinc concentrations at Memorial Field were above the MassDEP risk-based level. Arsenic was non-detect but was above the MassDEP risk-based level. After initial testing results were received, the contact asked the lab to re-issue a revised report to the method detection limit, which is the lowest concentration a compound can be measured, without compromising confidence. NPHD received an updated report for the Method Detection Limits (MDL). MDL values are lower and still non-detect, however some values, specifically arsenic and zinc, are still above the MassDEP risk-based levels.

Dr. Cosgrove suggested that the same testing equipment which was used last time should be used for extra testing on the arsenic, to make sure the reporting is consistent. Dr. Epstein agreed that the correct test needs to be carried out. He noted that the zinc test may need to be redone next year, due to the results obtained.

Dr. Partridge suggested collecting samples from other locations on the field.

North Central MetroWest Training Hub

Ms. Menard and Ms. Dunnell presented on the Training Hub. Needham is the host for the NorthCentral MetroWest Local Public Health Training Hub, which is one of ten Training Hubs in MA. The Training Hubs each are assigned a set number of communities. Each local inspector in the local public health workforce will be trained using the same training standards and curriculum.

Dr. Cosgrove stated that he believes this will equalize delivery of public health services across the State.

Staff Reports

Unless otherwise specified, the Board did not directly address the staff reports.

- Public Health Preparedness – Taleb Abdelrahim
- Epidemiology – Julie McCarthy
- Nursing – Ginnie Chacon-Lopez, Hanna Burnett & Tiffany Benoit
- Environmental Health – Sai Palani & Tara Gurge

Mr. Palani stated that a lot of progress has been made at the property on St. Mary's Street. He requested to be allowed discretion to take over the case at this time. He would like to allow another month to continue to make progress on the property. There was agreement on the Board to allow this to occur.

- Accreditation – Lynn Schoeff & Alison Bodenheimer
- Traveling Meals – Rebecca Hall
- Substance Use Prevention: Regional – Carol Read & Lydia Cunningham
- Substance Use Prevention: Needham – Karen Shannon, Karen Mullen, Monica DeWinter, Angi MacDonnell, Vanessa Wronski
- Shared Public Health Services – Kerry Dunnell & Samantha Menard

Other Items

- Needham Public Health Staff Introductions - Updated

The Board reviewed the updated staff introductions. It was noted that Ms. Benoit will be leaving the Town for a position at the State.

- Next Meeting Date and Time

Friday February 21, 2025, at 9:00 a.m.

Adjournment

Upon motion duly made by Dr. Cosgrove, and seconded by Dr. Gandhi, it was voted to adjourn the meeting. Motion passed unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:30AM.

Attachment:

January 24, 2025, meeting packet