



**Town of West Boylston**  
140 Worcester Street, West Boylston, Massachusetts 01583

## **The Board of Health Meeting Minutes**

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| <b>Date / Time / Location of Meeting</b> | <b>02-08-2023 / 6:00pm / Room 120, Town Offices</b>  |
| <b>Members Present</b>                   | <b>John Sullivan, Robert Barrell, Thomas Mullins, Christopher Whelan</b>   |
| <b>Members Not Present</b>               | <b>Tracy Gagnon</b>  |
| <b>Guests</b>                            | <b>Micah Blondeau, CMRPHA Regional Environmental Health Specialist; Soloe Dennis, Director of Public Health CMRPHA; Jennifer Warren-Dyment, West Boylston Town Administrator</b> |
| <b>Welcome – Call to Order</b>           | <b>Time: 6:00 pm by Chair Dr. Sullivan</b>   |

### **Approval & Signing of Previous Minutes**

**Motion to Approve**

**Motion Seconded**

**Result**

Minutes for 11-30-2022 and 01-11-2023, were approved and signed by those present after being reviewed online.

Mr. Barrell

Mr. Whelan

Approved unanimously

### **• COVID-19 updates**

Dr. Sullivan reported that UMass Memorial Hospital currently has 68 COVID patients at all their sites; the lowest number since July 2022. The most recent Info from Biobot reports from sewerage shows RNA counts of 500,000 to 800,000 copies per ml, also the lowest levels since July. The counts indicate that 80 percent of the cases are the variant XBB 1.5, with 10 percent variant BQ1, and 10 percent variant BA5. He believes we are now in a steady state, and while there will continue to be sporadic cases, we are less likely to have any further outbreaks of severe disease and hospitalization in the near future. Members of the scientific community believe we are at a level now where this will be treated as any other respiratory illness; and those who are fully immunized will be able to respond like any other virus we've been dealing with for the last 50-100 years. However, time will tell as this virus has continued to throw curve balls, and we will continue to have to follow the science as it advances.

### **• CMRPHA**

Dr. Sullivan welcomed Soloe Dennis, Worcester's new Director of Public Health, CMRPHA. Mr. Dennis noted that the COVID vaccination rate is high in Worcester, they continue to have vaccination clinics and residents are still being encouraged to obtain the latest vaccination available, as well as to wear masks in crowded situations. He agreed that the rates of infection have been going down. Dr. Sullivan noted that the Board needs to follow the rates of serious disease and hospitalizations, the majority of which are over 65 and/or

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have serious medical conditions, indicating the virus is less pathogenic for those under 65 and those without serious medical conditions.

Micah Blondeau reported that since the last meeting, he did 13 routine Food Service inspections, responded to two complaints, and one emergency at the Pinecroft Dairy on Sunday when a sprinkler pipe burst (due to the below zero temperatures) in an area they are not currently using.

Ms. Lee asked about CMRPHA reports. Mr. Dennis said that the Annual report is being worked on and will go out to in the next week or two, and the newsletter is also being worked on. They are forming a steering committee with a goal of the participating municipalities meeting monthly to support the Alliance going forward.

Ms. Warren-Dyment spoke about the Intermunicipal Agreement (IMA), noting the long-standing relationship with Worcester and economies of scale provided through the agreement, including services that we would not be able to provide within our own municipality. She noted two things needing to be addressed. The first is that we are looking into entering into a five-year IMA. The Alliance has provided several different funding options. One being that five years as opposed to the usual three years will provide more certainty going forward. The options range from a steady increase over the five years, to a yearly \$42,000.00, both totaling \$210,000.00 for the five-year period. She recommends we go with the flat \$42,000.00 per year. The second portion of this is that we are looking to incorporate the Nursing services into this contract. We have had a long-standing contract with the Town of Sutton for these services, which have worked for smaller outbreaks, however we have learned through the COVID pandemic that situations of this magnitude have been too great for small town services to handle. She believes Nursing Services with Worcester will be better able to manage those situations should they occur.

She is asking for the Board to consider and approve the funding scheme, as well as incorporating the Nursing Services into that contract. She recommends the \$42,000.00 flat fee per year for the five years.

Ms. Lee asked for confirmation that the Inspectional Services for Title 5 will also be included in the new contract, as they are now billed separately per diem. Ms. Warren-Dyment confirmed that they will be included.

Dr. Sullivan asked for a motion to approve the recommendation for this IMA contract, at \$42,000.00 per year for five years, totaling \$210,000.00 to include the previous IMA services, Nursing services and Title 5 inspectional services. Prior to the vote, Mr. Barrell initiated discussion with the question: as it presently stands, what are we paying for the services which are to be included in the IMA? Ms. Lee asked if Leslie Guertin, the Town Accountant reviewed this information with Ms. Warren-Dyment when they conferred about the proposed IMA. Ms. Warren-Dyment indicated she consulted

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Ms. Guertin regarding the choice of \$42,000.00 per year but did not review current/recent costs. Dr. Sullivan noted that in signing off on invoices, he believes the costs may exceed that amount. Ms. Lee noted that a significant amount of COVID Nursing cost was covered by grants. Ms. Warren-Dymont believes this plan will provide a significant economy of scale. Mr. Dennis pointed out that Worcester would be providing comprehensive services in any public health event as a part of this agreement.

Dr. Sullivan asked the Board to move forward to vote on previously specified motion.

Motion to Approve  
Motion Seconded  
Result

Dr. Mullins

Mr. Whelan

Approved unanimously

Dr. Sullivan asked Mr. Dennis if he had anything further. Mr. Dennis thanked the Board for welcoming him and indicated he looks forward to working together for the Public Health of West Boylston.

- PHEP report

Dr. Mullins reported he attended a recent PHEP meeting via Zoom. He noted that ongoing COVID testing clinics in Shrewsbury and Worcester were discussed, as mentioned by Mr. Dennis. He also reported on EDS funding – \$80,000.00 that has been approved for iPads and mobile hotspots for regional use. There is an upcoming national NACCHO conference that has three PHEP members signed up to attend. He and Mr. Dennis spoke about a position that has opened up at DPH with Shane Keville-Wagner leaving. Also, funding is being explored for health equity programs, and new alert systems for emergencies. The town of Clinton recently received an AED (defibrillator). The next issue that arose is the content of the regional PHEP trailer that is kept in West Boylston. Mr. Barrell noted he completed an inventory about two years ago and we have a list, which Ms. Lee agreed to email to the Board. He noted a problem that the trailer is “so packed” that when he did the inventory, he took it to the fire station garage and pulled everything out. He noticed that there are expiration dates on some items, such as instruments and equipment. Dr. Sullivan recalled that there was discussion at the last meeting around storing some items in a storage unit. Dr. Mullins stated that would be something to bring up at the regional meeting, as they mentioned there may be a need for some adjacent storage areas. Dr. Sullivan said another possibility is to let one of our adjacent towns take it over. Mr. Barrell stated that when the regional inspection and repairs were done about a year ago, he made them aware that the trailer needs new tires as at least one of them deflates over a period of a couple months, but the tires were not replaced. The issue is that the tires are getting old, and though the trailer has not been used, the tires begin to degrade, and have flat spots on them. He contacted someone in Worcester about it and they suggested the Town replace them but Mr. Barrell stated that is not the responsibility of the

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Town, as it is a regional trailer. Mr. Dennis agreed and said he will bring it back to the Director of Emergency Preparedness and advised Dr. Mullins to bring it up at the PHEP meeting. Mr. Barrell also noted there is no room in the trailer to move around and it needs to be attended to more often; he and other Board members do not have the time to inventory and update contents on a regular basis. He noted that he and Dr. Mullins recently responded to the Monkey survey and he noted some items the trailer might need. Approximately six months ago, we did receive some traffic cones with a holder and some other items, which DPW agreed to store in their garage, then the Fire Chief claimed some of it for use. Ms. Lee noted we also received a cover for the trailer. Dr. Sullivan questioned why the trailer is stored here in West Boylston, instead of Worcester. Mr. Dennis indicated that the decision to locate the trailer in West Boylston predates him, so he will look into it. Dr. Sullivan noted that since he's been on the Board, the trailer has been an ongoing issue and since it is a regional trailer, issues may be better addressed if the trailer was located and managed in Worcester including a storage space for extra equipment. Mr. Dennis said he will send an email out to address the questions raised. Dr. Sullivan thanked him. Mr. Barrell noted that the trailer should be garaged so it's not exposed to elements that lead to deterioration. His understanding for the trailer being located in town was to make it more readily available in the event of a weather emergency that would limit access from Worcester. He noted that the trailer has not been used in an emergency in the entire time it has been here. Dr. Mullins noted that the location so near the reservoir may not be the best choice.

Ms. Lee stated she was contacted by Alissa Errede, Chief, Office of Health & Emergency Preparedness from Worcester regarding the PHEP representatives. She suggested Amelia Houghton, Chief of Public Health Nursing, to serve as either primary or secondary representative. Dr. Mullins agreed to continue as secondary representative for West Boylston. Ms. Lee requested the Board vote on the recommendations of Amelia Houghton as our primary and Dr. Mullins as our secondary representatives for PHEP. She has completed a letter to that effect. Mr. Whelan motioned to approve those recommendations.

Motion to Approve  
Motion Seconded  
Result

Mr. Whelan  
Mr. Barrell  
Approved unanimously  
Dr. Mullins reported the remote Emergency Dispensing Site (EDS) drill was yesterday and 100 percent of West Boylston EDS personnel cooperated. Any new PHEP business will be addressed in the upcoming March PHEP Zoom meeting. Ms. Warren-Dyment asked, regarding the EDS drill, what is the protocol if this is an actual emergency. She noted that the persons on the list, such as herself, the Fire Chief, Police Chief, the DPW Director, etc., are not contacted via their personal

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phone numbers, so may not respond. In other words, if this was an actual emergency and not a drill, the response wouldn't have been 100 percent or timely. Dr. Mullins stated that they do have the correct phone numbers for all staff. Mr. Dennis explained that the numbers are tested to ensure all parties can be contacted when there is a public health emergency. He noted that the tests are needed to assure that those being contacted will be aware and prepared to respond at an EDS site, and are required for ongoing state and federal funding for the program. Mr. Barrell noted that the Board has participated in drills at the EDS, along with other members and those drills have gone quite well.

- **Office report**

Ms. Lee provided some explanation on the financial reports provided by the Town Accountant, including how the ARPA grant funds have been applied and will apply going forward, allowing a buffer for Board of Health expenses. She noted one invoice for COVID Nursing Services from Sutton Board of Health, and the reported number of COVID cases for January. She reported on the status of Title 5 projects, as well as a couple of problem situations she is attempting to re-address. Currently, 120 permits for 2023 have been issued. She also noted she has been working on weeding outdated paperwork, which she has submitted for Dr. Sullivan's signature.

- **Next BOH meeting date**

Proposed for 03-15-2023 by Dr. Sullivan. Ms. Lee will email Board members for confirmation.

**MOTION TO ADJOURN**

|                            |                      |
|----------------------------|----------------------|
| <b>Motion Originator</b>   | Mr. Whelan           |
| <b>Motion Seconded</b>     | Mr. Barrell          |
| <b>Result</b>              | Approved unanimously |
| <b>Time of Adjournment</b> | 6:40 pm              |

**Signatures**

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John Sullivan, MD , Chair

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Christopher Whelan, MEd

*Not in attendance*

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Tracy Gagnon, MEd, Vice Chair

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Thomas F. Mullins, MD

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Robert J. Barrell, MPA

**Submitted by:** Margaret Lee  
**Date Submitted:** 03-15-2023

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