

Board of Health
Meeting Minutes
January 9, 2018 – 7:00 P.M.
Ashland Town Hall, 101 Main Street, Ashland, MA
Meeting Room A

Mary Mortensen, Chairwoman
Ronald Etskovitz, Vice Chairman
Koduvayur Narayana, Clerk

Jon A. Fetherston, Member
Judith Margulies, Member
Mark Oram, Agent/Director

Members Present:

Ronald Etskovitz, Koduvayur Narayana, Jon Fetherston and Judith Margulies

Members Absent:

Mary Mortensen

Finance Committee Members:

Adam Elbirt, Scott Warnetski, Jonathan Moore, Jennifer Cooney and John (Jack) Walsh

Others Present:

Laura Clifford, Administrative Secretary
Michael Herbert, Town Manager
Jennifer Ball, Assistant Town Manager
Brittany Iacopone, Finance Director
Ed Hart, Resident
Mark Dassoni, Resident

Call to Order

Mr. Etskovitz called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

The Board of Health met jointly with the Finance Committee to discuss their proposed FY19 budget.

Mr. Fetherston read from portions of a report created by Mark Oram outlining the Board of Health's wide range of roles and responsibilities. Mr. Fetherston discussed many of the issues facing the Town which the Board of Health is involved with, including hoarding, opioid addiction, emergency preparedness and camp, beach, pool, septic and well inspections and more. The Board of Health is also charged with overseeing food and tobacco compliance and regulations.

Michael Herbert spoke about the landfill monitoring requirements, which the Health Agent also oversees. Mr. Herbert spoke about the agreement with Ameresco and the funding for the solar project, noting that the Town is responsible for the ongoing testing.

Mr. Fetherston spoke regarding other specific budget requests in the report, including the Public Health Nurse. Mr. Fetherston noted that pharmacies have taken over the flu vaccine program, adding that a proactive step we could take would be to make public service announcements. Ms. Margulies suggested we obtain the number of flu vaccines administered to Ashland residents from MIIS.

Mr. Fetherston said that as the Town continues to grow, there becomes a greater need for an Assistant Health Agent. This should be a 40-hour position as it is difficult to find someone willing to work less than 40 hours. This position which would be dedicated to food inspections and other field work conducted under normal health agent duties. On-call coverage is also an issue when the Health Agent is not available.

Mr. Herbert reviewed the budget process. Ms. Iacaponi distributed a report she created based on the memo from Mark Oram; she reviewed the numbers with the Finance Committee Members but noted there was no amount for Assistant Health Agent. Mr. Herbert explained the process regarding the revolving accounts. Mr. Herbert said in terms of additional personnel, he would like to see it on the food inspection side, possibly an increase to the hours of the current food inspector or add an additional food inspector utilizing revolving funds, or possibly look at regionalization. Mr. Herbert noted that regionalization can be difficult in finding communities willing to participate. Mr. Herbert would definitely would like to see a line item for on-call coverage.

Finance Committee Members inquired as to what the Assistant Health Agent position would entail. Mr. Fetherston responded that this position would be a proactive health agent in the community, focusing on education, mental health, hoarding, and other issues. Mr. Herbert discussed the social services currently in place through Police and Fire, adding that the Town currently has a regional grant for jail diversion, as well as Decisions at Every Turn. The Town has recently added positions, Jennifer Wuelfing, Social Worker, and Kristin French, Director of Prevention Outreach, who both look at all elements of emotional and social wellness. The Town also has Veterans Services, and a Hoarding Task Force, which Mark Oram is involved. Mr. Herbert noted that we have connections, where we need to do better, and will get better, is in strengthening connections so no one falls through the cracks.

Mr. Dassoni inquired regarding the Finance Committee's process. Mr. Elbirt explained that a budget is presented to the Finance Committee, they will ask questions and make a final recommendation to either approve or not approve. The warrant article is presented at Town Meeting either with our support or without. The Town will vote in support or not, they can have discussions on an entire budget, or parts of a budget.

The Committee inquired if the Board is meeting statutory minimums when it comes to food inspections. Mr. Fetherston noted we are hitting the minimum now; certain restaurants could be inspected more often, adding that it is important to stay proactive with problem restaurants by getting back in to those restaurants and working with their staff. Ms. Margulies expressed her opinion that she does not receive sufficient data as a Board Member.

Mr. Elbirt noted that the Board should come back with the appropriate information if they believe these positions are important. Mr. Fetherston believes regionalization is a good idea and there should be an increase in inspection services.

Mr. Herbert suggested the food permit fees should be looked at to be sure they are in line with other communities, and look at utilizing a hybrid health assistant/food inspector, who is primarily a food inspector and potentially offset this position through the revolving account. Mr. Herbert discussed how this may also be accomplished through regionalization. Mr. Fetherston said he would reach out to Metrowest Regional Collaborative to get that conversation started.

Mr. Elbirt discussed having the Board come back in late February – early March with a potential proposal from a short-term perspective to address some of these key issues, and that the Board look at chartering for next year and determining what it will take to be a proactive Board long term.

Mr. Narayana suggested the Board consider charging fees when granting external grease trap waivers. Mr. Narayana expressed his opinion that an additional part-time food inspector would be more cost effective than a full-time position, and inspectors would be able to cover each other during time off.

Mr. Elbirt asked Mr. Etskovitz to communicate back to the Committee as to when they will be ready to update the Committee for their 2018-19 budget, and noted that it should be by the end of February to ensure they are able to fit the Board in.

Adjournment

Mr. Fetherston made a motion to adjourn, Mr. Etskovitz seconded the motion. The motion was approved 4-0.

The meeting adjourned at 8:25 P.M.

ASHLAND BOARD OF HEALTH

DOCUMENTS REVIEWED AT THE 1/9/2018 MEETING

(All items stored in the Board of Health files unless otherwise noted)

1. FY19 Budget Preparation and FY18 Summary Document
2. Budget document created by Brittany Iacaponi
3. Audio Recording of the meeting is available