

Board of Health
Meeting Minutes
June 23, 2020
Ashland Town Hall
101 Main Street, Ashland, MA

*Diane Mortensen, Chair
Judi Teller, Clerk
Mark Oram, Agent/Director
Member*

*Chris Daniele, Vice Chair
Ronald Etskovitz, Member
Koduvayur Narayana,*

Members Present Via Zoom Meeting:

Diane Mortensen, Chris Daniele, Judi Teller, Ron Etskovitz and Koduvayur Narayana

Others Present:

Mark Oram, Health Agent/Director
Laura Clifford, Administrative Secretary
Sergeant Ed Burman, Ashland Police Department
Jennifer Ball, Assistant Town Manager
Melissa Evans, Tobacco Compliance Officer
Chetak Patel, Che's Liquors
Mahmood Ul Hassan, Marathon Mobil
Piyush Patel, Lucky Farms
Nancy Cleary, Public Health Nurse

Call Meeting to Order - 6:00 PM

Ms. Mortensen called the meeting to order at 6:04.

Citizen's Participation

None

Tobacco Violation Hearings:

Marathon Mobil

Melissa Evans, Tobacco Compliance Officer, explained that during the compliance check at Marathon Mobil, the cashier scanned their own ID for the sale when the minor was not able to produce one. The owner noted that the employee was terminated after this incident, his other two employees are more experienced and have worked for him for a long period of time. This was the first violation under this ownership. Mr. Narayana inquired as to whether the employee had been properly trained; Ms. Mortensen added that the Board encourages retraining over termination. Mr. Daniele suggested this may be used as an opportunity to retrain his entire staff.

Che's Liquors

Chetak Patel explained the circumstances leading to the sale of tobacco; he noted this was a fairly new staff member who completely forgot to ID the minor. Mr. Patel noted that they have implemented a new system which requires data be verified, they have also conducted multiple training exercises within the shop since this incident occurred. Mr. Patel apologized on behalf of his company and noted they will do their best to properly train all employees.

Lucky Farms

Piyush Patel explained that this was a long-time employee who sold to the minor. The employee asked for ID, and still sold it. Mr. Patel noted he has been in business for 22 years and this was his first violation. Mr. Patel noted that he has looked into new software and that all employees are trained on selling tobacco and alcohol. Mr. Daniele noted that it is challenging for owners, and a \$300 fine is a significant impact and is incentive to work hard to make sure it doesn't happen again.

COVID-19 Updates

Sergeant Ed Burman updated the Board on the Town's COVID-19 statistics, he announced there have been no new cases, but we are getting some probable cases. These are people who have been tested for the anti-body/serum testing; unfortunately, they are not being swab tested for COVID so we do not know if they are currently infectious. They then must be COVID tested to show they are not currently positive. Sgt. Burman noted that communication has been excellent with the nursing homes, and many cases have been cleared. DPH reported a 2.5% positive case influx from people who attended rallies. Sgt. Burman noted that he sits is on the Board of Directors of the Metropolitan Boston EMS Council representing law enforcement for Region 4, he will be part of a subcommittee charged with looking at mass inoculations, and will be looking at how that will roll out when a vaccine becomes available; we have begun planning for Ashland. We are going to start looking for companies with an online platform for registering and scheduling residents, and have begun looking at needed equipment in the event of a mass vaccination program. They are anticipating the vaccine will require two doses. Sgt. Burman discussed a situation that arose from being part of the COVID task force; working with Jennifer Wuelfing they were able to find a homeless man housing and services. There are many similar stories like this.

Jennifer Ball discussed Phase 2 which allows for serving indoors and personal services to begin opening up, she has been meeting with the Communications team as well as Sgt. Burman and the Planning Department to ensure businesses open up safely.

Ms. Mortensen noted that in regards to future vaccine/inoculations, we will need to concentrate on our Medical Reserve Corps in the very near future.

Mr. Narayana inquired as to whether the State discloses the number of people tested by city or town; Sgt. Burman noted the State only reports State-wide data on testing, not by municipality. Ms. Ball noted this is something that the Mass. Municipal Association, Mayors and Town Managers have been advocating for, it would be helpful information to have and she will stay on it.

Ms. Mortensen commended Mill Pond on their frequent correspondence and updates.

Thomas Curran, Food Inspector, noted he has been conducting COVID verifications utilizing the Google document with a checklist of requirements for outdoor seating. Ms. Teller inquired as to whether the Board has access to the document, Mr. Burman shared both Google documents with Board Members. Mr. Oram noted that all the establishments offering outdoor seating have been visited and Beth Reynolds had also sent out reopening documents. Mr. Oram noted that they are not required to let the Board of Health office know whether they are opening to outdoor seating. Mr. Oram noted there are probably 50-60 food and retail establishments. Mr. Curran noted that normally there would have been more inspections done by this time, but now we are concentrating on nursing homes and supermarkets; he is trying to get back to routine inspections and get back on par. Board Members agreed that the number of inspections needs to be stepped up.

Inter-Municipal Agreement (IMA) for Regional Nursing, review Proposed IMA and status of regionalization of nursing services

Mr. Oram noted the Town's Inter-Municipal Agreement (IMA) is a three-year agreement with Framingham, Hudson and Holliston; this was to begin July 1, 2020. Mr. Oram is concerned that three of the towns are similar in size but are paying different costs. A Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) grant will pay for the start-up costs; the cost to Ashland will be \$10,000.

Nancy Cleary joined the meeting.

Ms. Mortensen would like to have Town Counsel's opinion and other information before the Board votes to approve the IMA. Mr. Oram noted that MAPC worked as a region to create the job description. Ms. Ball inquired as to whether there is a baseline for the time allocated to each town to ensure we are getting what we are paying for. Mr. Oram noted that the Section 7 of the IMA states: "It is the responsibility of the lead municipality (Framingham) district staff and Board to ensure fair and appropriate use of the district staff so that the time is fairly allocated across the municipalities." Mr. Narayana inquired as to whether we will get the same services with the IMA that we were receiving prior to COVID-19, he noted we need to be clear as to what our needs are; Ms. Mortensen noted that her intention in doing this was to allow us to have more services for our money, and open up more opportunities for our residents. Mr. Daniele noted that now that we have an Agreement, we need to look at what services we have not been able to offer because we do not have someone in the nurse position for enough hours to provide those services; what are the things we have wanted to do. We need a clear statement of what we want that nurse to do so the nurse will understand our goals and objectives. Ms. Mortensen noted that each town was to create their own job description; she asked Mr. Oram to get the Board a copy of the job description from the other towns. Mr. Oram said he was informed that Framingham has already hired someone. Ms. Mortensen tabled the discussion until we have more information.

Clerk's Agenda:

Discuss Possible Rating System for Restaurants and Food Establishments

Ms. Teller discussed visiting a city which had a rating system, she noted you would want to eat in the restaurants with the letter grade A. Ms. Teller noted that the new food software program has the capability to do this. Sgt. Burman explained that the Food Code Pro Program has some great features, such as all updates to the Food Code are automatic. The Town of Uxbridge uses this software and the rating system, Members may want to go to their website to see how it looks. Sgt. Burman noted that it also has the COVID requirements report built in. Sgt. Burman noted that he found a grant to pay for the first year of service, and would include two new tablets. Mr. Curran noted that we have had discussions with this vendor a couple years ago, at that time the price was much higher. Mr. Curran noted this software has many features the current software does not have and is more user-friendly. The grading piece is appealing if applied properly, there are pros and cons. The Board agreed the incentive will be great for the restaurants to do well, and could be a tool for balancing the frequency of inspections. Mr. Oram noted that the iPad Pro does not work with the WinWam software. Mr. Oram noted that they have evaluated other companies, but Food Code Pro is a great opportunity, the only disadvantage is that it is not available with the iPhone. Board Members inquired as to where the reports are filed and if they have access; Sgt. Burman explained they are on a Town shared drive, reports can be put on a drive which Board Members could access. Sgt. Burman suggested that Attorney Mead review the contract.

Motion: Ms. Teller made a motion that, upon approval from Town Counsel, we go forward with this software for training and licenses for two people and get going on it as soon as possible. Mr. Narayana seconded the motion.

Vote: 5-0. Motion approved.

Ms. Mortensen asked Mr. Oram to send the Contract and grant to Attorney Mead.

Health Agent's Report

FY20 Update

Mr. Oram noted there is an exceedance in payroll, which funds should have come from the COVID account. Everything else is in line.

Intern, Meredith Daly

Mr. Oram indicated that Meredith Daly has found two other communities that she is going to intern with and will not be working in Ashland.

Review of May 19, 2020 Meeting Minutes

This agenda item was moved to the next meeting date.

Next Meeting Dates and Agenda Items

- Inter-Municipal Agreement for Regional Public Health Nurse
- Ms. Mortensen would like to move forward with the Mary Mortensen Award next meeting. Mr. Daniele offered to write the Award Proclamation. We can arrange an in-person meeting at a later date.
- Restaurant Food Software Program
- Dona Walsh, Nomination as Animal Inspector
- Reorganization of the Board
- July 7, 2020, July 21, 2020 are the next meeting dates.

Adjournment

Motion: Mr. Narayana made a motion to adjourn. Ms. Teller seconded the motion.

Vote: 5-0. Motion approved.

The meeting adjourned at 8:05 PM.

ASHLAND BOARD OF HEALTH
DOCUMENTS REVIEWED AT THE 6/23/2020 MEETING
(All items stored in the Board of Health files unless otherwise noted)

1. Graphs of Total Cases, Combined Total Cases and Cleared
2. Tobacco Compliance Reports – Marathon Mobil, Lucky Farms and Che’s Liquors
3. Tobacco Regulations
4. Food Grading System Information
5. Draft Inter-Municipal Regional Nursing Agreement
6. FY20, Year-to-Date Budget
7. Draft Minutes, May 19, 2020