

Ashland Board of Health
Meeting Minutes
September 7, 2021
ZOOM Meeting

Ronald Etskovitz, Chair
Diane Mortensen, Vice Chair
Rajit Gupta, Health Agent/Director

Barbra Sekesogundu Simon, Clerk
John Byrnes, Member
Bernadette Lunkuse, Member

Members Present Via Zoom Meeting:

Ron Etskovitz, Diane Mortensen, Jay Byrnes and Bernadette Lunkuse

Members Not Present

Barbra Sekesogundu Simon

Others Present:

Rajit Gupta, Health Agent/Director
Laura Clifford, BOH Admin. Assistant
Sergeant Ed Burman, Ashland P.D.
Olivia Dufour, Metrowest Tobacco Control District
Dona Walsh, Animal Inspector
Stephen Morgan, Resident
KG Narayana, Former BOH Member

Call Meeting to Order, 6:00 P.M.

Mr. Etskovitz called the meeting to order at 6:02 P.M.

Citizens' Participation

Steve Morgan, resident, noted that he has sent a couple emails to the Board in regards to an existing cemetery and legacy sewer leach fields pertaining to the Mindess School Project and inquired as to whether it falls under the Board of Health's jurisdiction; Mr. Etskovitz noted that we will take this under consideration.

COVID-19 Update

Sergeant Burman noted there are currently 19 open cases of COVID. There will be a vaccine clinic on September 15th at 270 Elliot Street, this is for anyone in need of a first or second dose. Sgt. Burman stated that a total of 16,458 total vaccines were given out at the regional Covid Clinic; 622 Ashland residents were fully vaccinated with both first and second doses, as well as 100 residents who were fully vaccinated at the Ashland Senior Center.

Olivia Dufour, Tobacco Control Agent, update on the Metrowest Tobacco Control District

Olivia Dufour noted that it has been a year since she was appointed as the Tobacco Control Manager for the Metrowest Tobacco Control District (MTCD); she thought it was important to update the Board regarding the work they have been doing. Ms. Dufour presented information through PowerPoint slides with a plan of what they look forward to in FY22, which includes Packet Deliveries, Compliance Checks and Retail Inspections. Ms. Dufour explained the compliance check process, she noted that the new State fines will be instituted if there are any compliance failures. Ms. Dufour

discussed the outline of the MTCD Work Plan which includes Tobacco Retail Surveillance, Enforcement, Policy Development and the administration of the Municipal Tobacco Program. Mr. Etskovitz inquired as to whether all of the vendors are aware of the new fining schedule to which Ms. Dufour noted they were made aware of the new, heftier fines. Ms. Dufour noted she is hoping to do some additional staff training in the future. Mr. Gupta noted that in regards to inspections under MTCD, versus having our own Tobacco Agent conducting inspections, we will ensure that the number of inspections stays on par with what we had. Board Members thanked Ms. Dufour for her work and MTCD's collaboration with Decisions at Every Turn.

James Adams, Ashland Public Schools Superintendent, School's COVID Protocols

Superintendent Jim Adams joined the meeting via audio, he updated the Board regarding the School's protocols. Guidance was received from the Department of Education and Department of Public Health which are requiring back to full in-person learning. The State has mandated mask wearing for K-12 through October 1st, Mr. Adams expects this date may be extended. The School Committee will watch the local data. The Schools will be following a Test and Stay program which means that when they determine someone is a close contact and are asymptomatic, they will test for a 7-day period and remain in school. If they have been vaccinated, they will not require testing. Mr. Adams noted that prior to the Test and Stay program, when students were sent home to quarantine, thousands of learning hours were lost. 81% of High School students are vaccinated, approximately 70% of Middle School students. Mr. Adams noted that they are continuing their quarterly air quality testing and changing filters to the highest quality filters on a regular basis, classrooms are also equipped with air purifiers. Mr. Etskovitz and the Board thanked Mr. Adams for his work.

Review of the Ashland Board of Health Regulations relative to the Keeping of Animals

Ms. Mortensen reviewed the revisions that were made during a meeting with Dona Walsh, she noted that an evacuation and medical plan will also be part of the new permit application. Ms. Mortensen noted that we will only require the notifying of abutters when a request for a variance is made. Mr. Gupta noted that Section D of the draft Regulation will be removed because we will require a permit regardless of the number of chickens. The updated Regulations will apply to new permit applications, or updated applications; they do not apply to current Permit holders. Ms. Mortensen explained that the distance from an abutter's dwelling was changed to 50 feet and the distance from the applicant's dwelling was changed to 10 feet. The word "variance" will be used throughout, and will replace the word "waiver". The Frequently Asked Questions sheet will need to be updated once the Regulations are finalized. Ms. Mortensen noted that we will plan to have a Public Discussion at the next meeting, and vote on the Regulations at the following meeting. Mr. Narayana suggested that the Board may want to consider using the Lot Line as the basis of the distance requirement, rather than the dwelling, because the dwelling location/footprint could change if the owner was to expand.

Review and Vote on Revised Board of Health Fee Schedule

Mr. Gupta explained that the revised Fee Schedule includes a fee for Food Trucks which the previous Fee Schedule did not. The Mobile Food fee will change to a flat yearly fee rather than a seasonal fee option. A Plan Review fee has also been added. There is no longer a 50% transfer fee for a new ownership, new owners will now be required to pay a full permit fee. Other fee changes included rounding out the fee amounts.

Motion: Mr. Byrnes made a motion to accept the changes to the Board of Health Fee Schedule. Ms. Mortensen seconded the motion.

Vote: 4-0. Motion approved.

Discuss Dates for Board of Health Meeting/Retreat to review Goals/Objectives

Ms. Mortensen explained that in the past the Board has met to talk about Board Members' individual and group goals. Ms. Mortensen noted that Members could choose a topic or project that is important to them, whether it is helping at clinics, the Tobacco Control Program, Medical Reserve Corps or Decisions at Every Turn, etc. This could be a meeting to brainstorm ideas. It would need to be a public meeting, but would not need to be televised. Board Members discussed the possibility of going back to in-person or hybrid meetings.

Consent Agenda:

- **Review and Approve Minutes: June 30, 2021, July 20, 2021, August 17, 2021**
- **Review FY22 Budget**

Mr. Byrnes noted a typo in the minutes in which his name is not listed. The Board agreed to hold off on the approval of minutes.

Motion: Ms. Mortensen made a motion to approve the consent agenda with the exception of the minutes. Mr. Byrnes seconded the motion.

Vote: 4-0. Motion approved.

Health Director's Agenda:

Arbovirus Update

Mr. Gupta reported that there are currently four human cases of West Nile Virus in Massachusetts. These cases are fortunately not in Ashland or the surrounding communities. We are still at the "Low" level but we must continue to be diligent to prevent mosquito bites.

Beach Reports

Mr. Gupta explained that the Ashland Beach was closed to the public on Saturday due to high bacteria count, but after Labor Day it is technically closed for the season.

Abandoned Pools

Mr. Gupta reported that two complaints were received for abandoned pools and both have been brought to compliance. Abandoned pools pose a threat of EEE and West Nile Virus.

Residential Kitchen: Mama O's Bakery

A Residential Kitchen Permit was issued to Mama O's Bakery which was previously issued a Cease and Desist Order due to operating without a permit, the business is now permitted and operating.

Discuss Agenda Topics for Future Meetings

- DEP Approved Innovative/alternative septic-system technology, whether to continue to require Board of Health Approval
- Public Discussion for Keeping of Animals Regulations

Mr. Gupta noted that he has been in discussions with Tom Ryder and hopes to have some information regarding the approval of Eljen systems soon.

Mr. Gupta mentioned that they will be looking for MRC volunteers to help at the Boston Marathon, and will reach out to Board Members as well.

Mr. Gupta will have a student intern from Boston University, he will provide further information to the Board soon.

Mr. Etskovitz suggested we have the new school building on a future meeting agenda so that we are aware that we have covered what is under our jurisdiction, including the burial ground.

Adjournment

Motion: Mr. Byrnes made a motion to adjourn. Ms. Mortensen seconded the motion.

Vote: 4-0. Motion approved.

The meeting adjourned at 7:35 PM.

ASHLAND BOARD OF HEALTH
DOCUMENTS REVIEWED AT THE 9/7/2021 MEETING
(All items stored in the Board of Health files unless otherwise noted)

1. COVID-19 Confirmed and Probable Cases – Charts
2. PPT Slides – Tobacco Control Plan
3. Draft Keeping of Animal Regulations
4. YTD Budget FY2022
5. Board of Health Office Revised Fee Schedule
6. June 30, 2021, July 20, 2021, August 17, 2021, Draft Meeting Minutes
7. A recording of the meeting is available at WACATV.com