

Ashland Board of Health
Meeting Minutes
September 15, 2020
Zoom/Online Meeting

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

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

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, BOH Admin. Secretary
Sergeant Ed Burman, Ashland Police Department
Dona Walsh, Animal Control Officer
Susan Piraino, Resident
Tom Curran, Food Inspector
Mark Dassoni, Resident

Call Meeting to Order - 6:00 PM

Ms. Mortensen called the meeting to order at 6:05 and noted the meeting was being recorded by WACA-TV.

Citizen's Participation

Mark Dassoni asked Mr. Oram a question regarding EEE, Ms. Mortensen noted this topic is on the agenda and will be discussed later in the meeting.

Mr. Daniele thanked Alan Macintosh of Doragon Ramen for his efforts in assisting Pizza Bella. Board Members agreed.

Request for Animal (Chicken) Permit with Waiver of Animal Regulation 6.2.1 for 19 Buckley Ave.

Ms. Mortensen explained that Susan Piraino is before the Board to request a waiver from the Animal Regulation 6.2.1 regarding the 25-foot distance requirement of a chicken coop from a dwelling. Ms. Mortensen did a site visit and noted that the drawing provided is accurate. Ms. Piraino explained that she would like to keep 6 chickens; she noted that she constructed the coop and structure and was unaware of the Regulation regarding the distance requirement. Ms. Piraino shared some PowerPoint slides, she noted that she has received no complaints from neighbors. The coop is contained within a greenhouse with rod iron gating and has a heating mechanism. Mr. Daniele discussed concern with liability to the Town and suggested a waiver/release.

Motion:

Ms. Teller made a motion to grant a temporary six-month permit, at which point there will be a reinspection by the Animal Control Officer. Mr. Narayana seconded the motion. Mr. Oram suggested the addition of any liability being on the owner, Mr. Narayana so moved the addition.

Vote:

5-0. Motion approved.

Updates on COVID-19

Sergeant Burman reported that during teacher professional development a few weeks ago, a couple of teachers tested positive. The actions taken went according to the plan in place. DPH assigned an epidemiologist, a mobile testing unit came out and 45 people were tested, it was very organized. Ms. Teller, who came out for the mobile testing, agreed it went very well. Mr. Etskovitz inquired, and Sgt. Burman responded, that they were not able to determine where the teachers contracted the virus, no students were in the building at that time. Sgt. Burman explained that he attends the School Committee meeting each Friday, they review data and make any decisions for the following week using a 14-day lookback. The schools opened yesterday and it was a very smooth start. Sgt. Burman noted that he speaks with Jim Adams, Superintendent, and Audrey LaCroix, School Nurse, each day. Sgt. Burman visited each of the schools to observe table and classroom setups; he noted the students have mask breaks. Staff is impressed with the students keeping their masks on. If there is a positive case, it will be a group decision based on Town-wide data. It is under review as to whether siblings should be removed from class if a member of the family is sick.

The State released information regarding a new Remote Enrichment Learning Program which allows individuals to open up learning pods in their homes with up to 24 children. Kelly Rund, Recreation Director, is planning to offer this Program at the Community Center, they will be required to have proper Covid inspections. They will start having students next week. Another individual has applied for a home program, but will need to meet Building Department requirements for daycares. Ms. Teller inquired as to how this will affect our budget; Ms. Mortensen explained that Covid expenses do not come out of the Board of Health budget and this Program would be covered through the Covid budget.

The planned date for the upcoming Flu Clinic is September 26th, it will be held at Keefe Tech and will be a drive-thru format. Mr. Oram is working on getting volunteers.

Appoint a Board of Health Member to serve on the Ashland Housing Production Plan (HPP) Steering Committee

Board Members discussed the Steering Committee and if this is something the Board should be involved in. The meetings will be virtual, it is short-term, running from approximately October through April. Mr. Etskovitz would be happy to help with this as long as the meetings are held during times which he can attend. The Board discussed 40B as it pertains to housing.

Motion: Mr. Narayana made a motion to appoint Ron Etskovitz to this Committee. Mr. Daniele seconded the motion.

Vote: 5-0. Motion approved.

Health Agent's Report

Food Program Update – Food Permit Application Update

Mr. Oram explained that he and Tom Curran have attended two trainings for Food Code Pro, a third training has been scheduled. Mr. Curran has been doing mock inspections for training and found a slight glitch in the grading system, the Company will customize the program for us, and there are capabilities the other software did not have. Mr. Curran will continue to familiarize himself with the software and hopes to get it rolled out soon. Mr. Curran discussed inspections, and noted that a restaurant will be required to close down for 24 hours if there is a case of coronavirus.

Mr. Narayana stated that due to the recent incidents that have occurred, it is important to know whether the owner of an establishment owns multiple locations, and if CFM's are working between multiple locations. The Board agreed it will need to be approved by Town Counsel. Mr. Narayana noted that the State may require notification of changes to our application. Board Members discussed the online payments, and noted that the online payment system does not collect the data.

Motion: Mr. Daniele made a motion to adopt the changes to the food inspection form contingent upon review from Town Counsel. Mr. Etskovitz seconded the motion.

Vote: 5-0. Motion approved.

EEE/West Nile Virus Update and written protocol

Mr. Oram noted that it has been a dry summer which has helped decrease the mosquito activity, but there has been an increase of West Nile Virus (WNV) in urban Boston areas, as well as EEE in southeastern areas where there are more wetlands. Mr. Oram has put together a protocol of what actions will be taken in the event of a high or critical risk level of EEE or WNV. Mr. Oram noted that he has contacted health agents from Plymouth and Middleborough, these towns are at high and Critical risk for EEE, both noted they have not banned outdoor seating. The City of Somerville is at high risk for WNV, Mr. Oram noted that he was told that they are not doing anything special due to the limited mosquito population. Mr. Daniele noted that it is more consequential this year if the Board were to decide to ban outdoor dining; while safety is always first priority, banning outdoor dining would hurt businesses. Mr. Oram is researching whether tent screens can be closed on all four sides and will report back to the Board. Ms. Teller suggested adding 55 and over communities, nursing homes and horse owners to the list of contacts; also add sign postings to the list of protocols. Mr. Oram noted that during a DPH meeting, Katie Brown, State Doctor, stated that based on history, the risk of EEE drops as of September 15th, but the risk remains until the first hard frost. Mr. Narayana noted that he was advised during a Conservation Commission meeting that there is stagnant water/a retention pond at Nyanza, this area should be sprayed. Mr. Oram will look into this.

Inter-Municipal Agreement for Nursing Services

Mr. Oram discussed meeting with Framingham, Hudson, Ashland and the MAPC, he noted that due to Covid, pay rates for nurses have increased. Mr. Oram noted that we are not sure where Holliston stands, but Southborough may be interested. A statement was put into the IMA that regional nursing services are for routine nursing services only, not in the case of a pandemic. Each community may need to increase their financial contribution to increase the salary.

Flu Clinic – Sept. 26, 2020

Mr. Oram noted that he, Sgt. Burman and Kitty Mahoney are working together with school nurses to get volunteers together for the Flu Clinic; Mr. Narayana volunteered to help. Mr. Oram noted this will be good training for future clinics, including when a Covid vaccine becomes available.

Review of Regulation related to Water Supplies, Private and Semi-Public

Mr. Oram explained there was an irrigation well installed at Robert Hill Way, he noted some VOC's (Volatile Organic Compounds) were discovered in the well test results; Mr. Oram explained that he recently went over Well Regulations with management. Mr. Oram noted that we need to determine whether VOC's collected during testing are in the water supply or were erroneously introduced at testing. Discussion on Well Regulations continued; Mr. Daniele noted that it has been some time since the Well Regulations have been reviewed. Board Members agreed to do an overview; Mr. Narayana offered to begin the overview one Section at a time. Mr. Narayana noted that Cirrus agreed to provide reports at the beginning and end of season, Mr. Oram will look into this. The Board discussed the well at Robert Hill Way, and agreed to put this on a future agenda.

The Board agreed to table the remainder of the agenda items with the exception of the Minutes. Ms. Mortensen suggested having a Consent Agenda on future agendas, which allows the Board to approve a list of items that do not need to be discussed.

Review of Minutes – August 4, 2020

Motion: Ms. Teller made a motion to approve the August 4, 2020 meeting minutes as presented. Mr. Daniele seconded the motion.

Vote: 5-0. Motion approved.

Mr. Etskovitz inquired as to how we can make the public more aware of Regulations, rather than granting waivers after the fact. Ms. Mortensen suggested making Public Service Announcements. Ms. Teller suggested fun facts and information could be included in the Town Manager's newsletter. Board Members agreed that the Animal Regulations are another Regulation that is due for a review.

Discuss Agenda Topics for Future Meeting Dates

October 6 and October 20, 2020 are the next meeting dates.

MRC, Budget, EEE Protocol.

Include consent agenda, and scheduled appointments.

Adjournment

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

Vote: 5-0. Motion approved.

The meeting concluded at 8:10 PM.

ASHLAND BOARD OF HEALTH
DOCUMENTS REVIEWED AT THE 9/15/2020 MEETING
(All items stored in the Board of Health files unless otherwise noted)

1. Town of Ashland Keeping of Animal Regulations
2. Letter of Request for Waiver from Animal Regulations
3. Covid-19 Graphs of Positive and Cleared Cases
4. Discussion and Vote re: EEE at BOH Sept. 17, 2019 meeting
5. Establishments with Outdoor Dining
6. FY21 Budget
7. August 4, 2020 Board of Health Draft Meeting Minutes
8. A recording of the meeting can be found on WACA-TV