

Western Hampden County Public Health District (WHCPHD)

Advisory Board

Town of Southwick

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MINUTES

February 11, 2025

OPENING: The regular scheduled meeting of the Western Hampden County Public Health District opened at 2:39 p.m.

Members in attendance:

Sue Brzoska- Town of Southwick

Wayne Precanico- Town of Russell

Jennifer Girard- Town of Blandford

Margaret McClellan- Town of Tolland

Jacob Chapman- Town of Montgomery

Staff members in attendance:

Thomas Hibert- Town of Southwick Health Director

Caileen Simonds- District Shared Service Coordinator

Tricia Sedelow- District Public Health Nurse

MaryAnn Deming- District Public Health Nurse

Kyla Botsian- BME Strategies Consultant

FPHS Review

Ms. Simonds reported Ms. Botsian, from BME strategies would be presenting an introduction to the Foundational Public Health Review, a part of the FY25 state workplan. Stating the Department of Public Health is pushing for the review, which contains two parts. Ms. Simonds shared with the board Kyla would share her slides and give the board a presentation and answer questions in more depth. Please refer to the uploaded meeting to watch the recorded BME strategies presentation portion.

Following the BME strategies presentation, Ms. Simonds asked if the board had any follow-up questions. Ms. Simonds and Ms. Botsian shared the ability meet with board members if they have their fiscal year 2024 budget and spending compiled prior to meeting.

Financial Report/Workplan Updates

Ms. Simonds reported financial spending of the grant was on track, shared staff continues to explore spending ideas and new programs. The district is still waiting on respondents to the New Parent Program, but staff is remaining optimistic.

Since the previous meeting shared staff met with our district public health physician Dr. Wong. Dr. Wong updated and renewed standing orders for year 2025. Ms. Simonds and Mr. Hibert shared their meeting with Massachusetts Health Boards Association, and CareMass to discuss the pooling of opioid abatement funds. Next steps later in the week include meeting with Chief Administrative Officer, Police and Fire Chiefs of the district Host town to gain support. Following that all towns selectboards will need to approve pooling the opioid funds.

Ms. Simonds shared with the board; a majority of the recent Massachusetts Department of Public Health meetings have been focused on the FPHS review. The review will include a large amount of town's involvement and participation, overall, the hope is it will be beneficial the district's towns.

Ms. Simonds commented additionally that Massachusetts DPH has been closely monitoring and updating on the avian flu. Nurse Tricia Sedelow would follow up on the topic in her report.

Nursing Reports

Nurse Tricia Sedelow and MaryAnn Deming shared monthly reports from December and January with board members prior to the meeting. Nurse Sedelow reported to the board high numbers of flu cases being reported in Maven, mainly in the Town of Southwick, even in the smaller towns. Nurse Sedelow did report sending notifications to all town's senior centers. Southwick posted notices on doors yesterday, letting people know to stay home, please, if you're sick, I'm sure you've seen it on the local news and national news. This high levels nationally.

Nurse Sedelow reported Covid-19 has seemed to drop off. The new concern being on the H5N1 virus. Every update is from State or national sources which Nurse Sedelow sends to the board. Daily updates, daily changes, nowhere close to panic stage. There's 67 people nationally have tested positive. It's going to be monitored in Massachusetts. The dairy cattle still are negative.

Ms. Brzoska questioned the relation between the bird and the human, and how humans are contracting the disease. Nurse Sedelow shared it primarily being respiratory, but there are still many unknowns. Ms.

Brzoska asked how they know it is Avian Flu, and not another strain of the flu. Nurse Sedelow shared they must have certain genetic testing for H5N1 following exposure but was not completely positive. The virus is primarily being found in Canada Geese, swans, and chickens. Cooking eggs to recommended temperatures, reported remain safe from H5N1 contamination.

Ms. Simonds added making sure not to be in contact with any dead birds. Nurse Sedelow agreed sharing protective gear should be worn when in contact with dead birds. Ms. Simonds shared if one bird in a backyard flock tested positive all birds in a flock must be killed, the virus is 100% fatal in these birds.

Ms. Simonds asked Nurse Deming if she wanted to add anything. Nurse Deming agreed with all points made by Nurse Sedelow, adding Norovirus the GI bug is still making rounds. Good hand Hygiene is always the safest route to protecting against all of these illnesses.

Review of Minutes

Ms. Simonds asked if there were any edits requested on the 12/10 meeting minutes. The board unanimously had no edits to make. Ms. Brzoska made a motion to approve the 12/10 minutes, Mr. Precanico seconded the motion. The board was unanimous in favor.

Shared Inspector Proposal

Mr. Hibert shared following the drop last fiscal year of a shared inspector, shared service coordinator Caileen Simonds has shown interest in inspections. Ms. Simonds has completed many of the free DPH trainings, upcoming is ServSafe, and Pool Operator. Mr. Hibert sharing even if the board does add inspections to her role, it is a good idea of more awareness of inspectors benefit to our district. Could also consider adding a small inspectional role to her job description. Could be beneficial to spending down grant funds and having an appointed back-up health agent in all of our district towns.

Mr. Precanico questioned how Ms. Simonds job description and role would change, how she would be paid. Given Russell's inspector being part-time, he reported not being opposed to the back-up inspector proposal.

Mr. Hibert responded saying long as the group is in support of the proposal, Ms. Simonds will continue the trainings, paid by the grant. Her job description currently had other duties included, so each board could appoint her as a back-up health agent if ever needed.

Mr. Precanico made a motion to approves spending grant funds on inspectional training for Shared Service Coordinator Caileen Simonds. Ms. Brzoska seconded the motion. The board was unanimous in favor.

New Business

Mr. Precanico brought up new business of Tobacco Inspections. Sharing with the board he met with Sarah McColgan from MHOA to discuss MHOA being the Town of Russell's tobacco inspector and compliance officer.

Ms. Simonds agreeing this is part of the 2025 workplan. Mrs. McColgan should have reached out to all towns except Southwick who is part of a tobacco coalition. An on-going process, and each town would have to elect MHOA as the tobacco compliance officer and inspector.

Next Meeting

Next Meeting- April 15, 2025, at 2:30 p.m.

Adjournment

Mr. Precanico made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 3:34. Ms. Brzoska seconded the motion. The roll call vote of the Board was unanimous in favor to adjourn the meeting.