



OBSERVER CORPS REPORT

BOARD OF HEALTH - 9-10-24

Hybrid Meeting, Recorded

LWVM Observer: Tom Krueger

Members in Attendance: Andrew Petty, Tom McMahon, Tom Massaro, Helaine Hazlett

Charter Committee Discussion - Department of Health and Board of Health

Mr. Petty began the discussion by enumerating the responsibilities, regulations and duties of local health departments. This is in the interest of protecting the public health with decisions made at the local level. This long list included writing and maintaining annual reports, retaining 3 different types of records, reporting dangerous diseases from the community, from deaths, from dairy farms; providing anti-rabies vaccine, reporting/investigating food poisonings, administering the sanitary code, etc. The duties continued to involve sanitary waste, landfills, septic and garbage problems, nuisance complaints, bakeries, seafood, pool/beaches, camps and motels, burial permits, participating in public health emergency preparedness, etc. etc.

In further discussion after the enumeration, Mr. Petty noted that the town designates a board of health who then has a public health director perform the duties. Regarding budget, he is supposed to spend 30% of his time with public health and 70% with waste services. In practice his actual work depends on the greater need. **It was also mentioned that for a town of 20,000 the MA DPH would suggest that the HD budget be \$739K - in reality, it is actual \$324K.** Mr. Petty tries to supplement this shortfall with grants, e.g., Public Health Excellence Grant, which provides \$114K. There are other grant opportunities - regional substance abuse grants, opioid funds, and other small grants. **In the state's eye, the HD needs a more robust funding and staffing.**

The budget cycle for FY25-26 has already begun with the initial budget to be submitted on 9/6/24. It is a long process and this is just the beginning.

Following this initial presentation, Dr. Massaro began the discussion of what the role of the Board of Health could and should be. He began saying that public health is not often prioritized. The role of public health in the US is behind the times and backwards compared to other first world countries. This is the result of a market driven orientation which public health does not fit into. Before the pandemic the question was how could public health serve the public. Today the role/definition should be expanded to how to make our citizens healthier. He went further to say that in MHD the distinction between the BOH and HD is not clear. In fact, as he reviewed the various bylaws at the state and MHD level, there is little or no mention of the BOH and only one mention of a director of health. He went further to reiterate he wanted to make the health of the

community better - more health promotion. (As example, the funding that Colorado found to have all newborns leave in car seats. Public health should deal with population needs.) In conclusion he wishes to figure out how to organize towards this goal.

Mr. Petty noted that the HD has been level funded for years which has prevented some other programs. He said that budget time is an opportunity for the BOH to ask for more to funds to aspire to these goals.

The topic returned to the ambiguous structure of the BOH and HD, one of which doesn't actually support the health director. It was noted that Mr. Petty after 15 years has never had a performance review despite all his good work. Perhaps a town charter may make changes to the structures of health department and BOH.

Board of Health Meeting Calendar: Ms. Hazlett reviewed the dates for the upcoming year. The BOH will meet the second Tuesday of the month, with the possible exception of January. (10/8;11/12;12/10; 1/14; 2/11;3/11;4/8; 5/13; and 6/17.

Community Health Update

The Mental Health Task Force met on 9/9 and has added a new member - a student from the high school who is both bright and articulate. Mr. Brett Mueller from Granite Recovery Center talked to the group about the difficulties with treatment and recovery units, in particular the short supply of mental health professionals. The student will soon give the group the perspective of the mental health of Gen Z. Dr. Lebon, the chair of the MHTF, will come to the BOH meeting in January.

In the spirit of addressing the best practices of the community health needs, U Mass Boston conducted a survey about mental health needs. Swampscott had a more expanded survey of the health needs of their town that they found very useful- the cost of which was \$35K. Dr. Massaro presented to the board a document titled Marblehead Cares - A Community Health Needs Assessment. "The proposed needs assessment will serve to inform the Board of Health and other Town leaders about unmet health needs in the community and will provide guidance on future steps towards making Marblehead a well-community for all..." Attached were three area for best practices - 1) conduct a maternal and child health landscape assessment... 2) mental health best practices- to strengthen partnerships of public safety, social services, school, etc. for identifying children and young adults at risk, and 3) age and dementia friendly best practices. He noted that there is state grant money available and urged the BOH to support a motion for the town administrator to submit grants for the first two needs assessments. The board moved and passed this motion.

Bills: Mr. McMahon read the list of bills paid by the health department over the past month. This included the vendor, amount, and reason for the bill.

Directors Report

Mr. Petty noted that we are near the end of mosquito season, but across the state there have been cases of EEE and West Nile. It is important to be aware of this, especially as one is traveling. The recommendations continue to be to use insect repellants, wear long sleeves, and caution at dusk.

He went on to discuss rodent control which is always a problem in a coastal community. When the department is contacted, they give out a flyer which discusses some mitigation practices. Since it has been dry, rodents often seek water sources, as well as fruits and vegetables and gardens. If there is major concern, they recommend hiring a pest control company.

The bidding for the transportation station work is about to begin again. Because of the delay some of the documents need to be redone. This work will cost less than \$42K. (The original bidding documents were about \$200k.). The board moved and passed an amount up \$41,575.

The next Household Hazardous waste event will be on 10/16 4pm-7pm. This will be posted.