



**TOWN OF NORTH READING**  
*Massachusetts*

**Board of Health**

**North Reading Board of Health Meeting Minutes  
January 31, 2023  
Teleconference/Virtual**

**Members Present:** Gary Hunt, Chairman  
Karen Martin  
Pam Vath

**Others Present:**  
Robert Bracey, Health Agent  
Pam Merrill, Public Health Nurse  
Christine Doolin  
Mary Samost  
Steve O'Leary  
Suresh Rao

RECEIVED  
2023 APR 19 PM 3:11  
TOWN CLERK'S OFFICE  
NORTH READING, MASS.

**7:00 PM**

Mr. Gary Hunt opened the meeting.

**Public Health Nurse Update**

Pam Merrill stated the nursing home reported a positive patient back on January 17. Between January 17 to January 25 the nursing home went from 1 positive COVID case to 32. At this time all three units have positive cases.

Pam stated that she and Mr. Bracey had a zoom meeting with the DPH and Epidemiologist. We looked at guidance from October 2022 and then November 2022 where guidance was updated for long term care facilities. The State insisted if you are not able to isolate then you don't need to separate the positives from the negatives, you should "isolate in place".

Mr. Bracey asked what qualifies you to make that determination? They did not answer that for us. We had discussed with the nursing home and suggested that they should have positives with positives, negatives with negatives, and exposed with exposed, if that's what they choose to do. The nursing home emailed back and said they were in the process of moving patients. But, DPH was against that. We explained it was not our order, to do just a suggestion based on the guidance that is in writing.

Mr. Bracey expressed to the Board what a great job Pam Merrill is doing.

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Mr. Bracey stated that the CDC and DPH guidance states in the very first sentence that the nursing home will isolate patients who are positive from non-positive. The nursing home did do that for a week, however concern grew because we saw the numbers rise from 1 to 32. Out of 32 positive cases, 11 were staff, including consulting people that come in from the outside and at that point there was two residents on each floor that tested positive.

The nursing homes approach to that was they were going to isolate in place and again, we felt that was not working. We did have a difference of opinion on the way to interpret the regulations. We did have a zoom meeting with DPH and Eileen McCabe, and expressed our concern if somebody was positive in a room and their roommate was not positive then that positive person should be isolated. In the guidelines it does state you can isolate in place if you didn't have the space.

Mr. Bracey stated that during COVID they did have the space to isolate residents and in his opinion their isolate in place wasn't working. The order that was drafted are things that the nursing home has already implemented. Under the DPH guidance it says if you have 20% or more of your population that has tested positive you will put a freeze on any new admittance. With this new order, we can at least stop new patients who are positive from coming into the nursing home. We are also providing them with 200 mask COVID-19 test kits. We want to work with the nursing home to make this order successful. We did go over the order with KP Law and they gave us their blessing.

Mary Samost asked if patients leave the nursing home for outings/lunch is that one of the sources of the outbreak?

Pam Merrill reports that they believe the original outbreak came from a family member of the first person who tested positive. The family member had traveled and they declined testing prior to coming in for the visit. To Pam's knowledge the residents are not allowed to go out of the facility with family members but if they smoke or need to go to the hospital that is allowed.

Suresh Rao asked what kind of policy is the nursing home following, is it the one from the DPH with a curtain separating two beds or are they putting people on different floors.

Pam Merrill stated that they are currently putting positives with positives, negatives with negatives and exposed with exposed. That did involve moving some patients from one floor to another. The nursing home really tried to not impact the patients on the view unit which is a locked unit. Suresh Rao stated that the nursing home should have a contingency plan.

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Pam Merrill stated that Mr. Bracey suggested an afternoon or a weekend day at the Town Hall to give away some kits and PPE. Pam also resupplied the O'Leary Center. Mr. Bracey stated that he spoke to the Director of Public Safety and we will be coordinating with the nursing home to get them the test kits, also to the Library, Senior Center and schools if they need any.

Mr. Bracey reports that he talked with Leah who runs the clinics and we are trying to decide on some potential dates for additional clinics and we are trying to decide if there is still a need for them right now.

Pam Merrill reports that the Lions Club Eye and Ear Clinic went well. We had 14 residents sign up and 4 walk in's. They currently have a waiting list of 19 for the next clinic. The clinic did include a physician and he went over the results with the people. Pam reported the only issue was space and parking at the Edith O'Leary Center. Pam has reached out to Sharon at the library and may reach out to the Saint Theresa's and see what they have for space. The residents that went, said the clinic was well worth it. They will test children too, they would just need different equipment.

Mr. Hunt asked if we will be having more of these clinics in the near future

Pam stated based on space and the Lions availability. Pam's goal is to get them scheduled with us every other month.

### **Town Sewage Project**

Gary stated that he and Mr. Bracey met with the Director of Public Works, Joe Parisi and the Town Administrator, Michael Gilleberto to learn more about the project. We asked that they provide us a list of the addresses and facilities that are going to be proposed, so we can look into what sewage exists on those properties and the condition of those sewage systems. Gary asked if that has happened yet.

Mr. Bracey stated that that we have the number of properties but have not yet received a complete list with addresses.

Gary Hunt stated that we talked in that meeting about getting someone to look at the list and gather the data because we don't have the resources to do the research on all those properties.

Mr. Bracey stated that yes that is something they still have to get us.

Gary stated what we were told the majority would be commercial properties and 60 single family dwellings.

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Mr. O'Leary apologized for not being available at the meeting. Steve stated to the Board what is going to be asked of them is to give thought to what guidelines and requirements you may be voting on or imposing on anybody along the sewer line. The area this will effect is all of route 28, Park Street out to Concord Street and then North Street from Main all the way to Lowell Road. What people will want to know is if the Select Board decides it's going to be an opt-in proposal rather than a mandated tie, what will be the requirements if a septic system fails or in need of repair, and when do we think it's reasonable to expect them to tie in.

Rather than getting bogged down with the specific properties, it's more situational as to how it will be handled in relation to the size, capacity of the system and current conditions.

Mr. O'Leary stated that Greenbriar just spent approximately 2,000,000 on their wastewater treatment facility so that should have a good life expectancy. Pulte Homes is approximately 4 years old now and they spent 4,000,000 building so, it might be 25 years from now and the public utility will be right there when they are ready to tie in.

Mr. Hunt stated we don't want to mandate someone to connect if they have a brand new system.

Mr. O'Leary also mentioned that's why the Board is considering the opt-in rather than the mandated proposal. Depending on what the Board of Health decides, there may be a time where you will not have an opportunity to opt out, but you will have to tie in.

Mr. O'Leary stated that if there is a property outside of our jurisdiction then we would just need to be informed.

Gary Hunt stated that most of the larger properties will be outside of our jurisdiction which means we do not permit them.

Mr. O'Leary stated that we may through special legislation be able to require them to tie into a public utility if that system fails. The State may make a determination or they may apply to the State DEP to upgrade or fix their system but we can at some point weigh in and say why are you letting them discharge back into the ground when they have a public utility at their door step. This is critical information to us because the number of users that we are going to have to maintain the system and pay for it is a critical element that we need to understand.

Gary Hunt stated that's why we asked for a list of who is proposed to tie in so we know who they are and make a determination as to who the DEP permits and who we permit.

Most of the condo complexes, Walmart and Stop and Shop are permitted by the DEP.

Mr. Bracey stated that Park Colony, Pulte Homes, Greenbriar, Edgewood, CVS, Walmart and Stop and Shop are all under Mass DEP permit. He explained there is a 24 hour contact when

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something occurs and the fire department generally gets the first call and then they call the Health Department and we work with them to rectify the situation and notify the Mass DEP. Eventually the Mass DEP through their ground water discharge permit will figure out what's happening.

Suresh Rao stated that the Health Board already has regulations on what somebody should do with their septic system when they want to repair or upgrade it. This seems to be more of a financial issue and not a health issue.

Mr. O'Leary stated his understanding is Mass General Law addresses if there is a public waste water system going through your neighborhood, at some point you would be required to tie into it. The tie in cost would be less than a replacement cost of an entire system. Going forward there would be a monthly bill.

Suresh Rao stated that was his point, It would be the individual's financial decision to pay 50,000.00 or tie in and pay less.

Mr. Bracey stated that he will confer with some of his colleagues to see if they may have been in a similar situation. He also stated whatever regulations that we put together based off of 310, require to have a public hearing.

Gary Hunt stated if you are looking for scenarios we will get you those.  
Mr. O'Leary stated that would be very helpful.

Pam Vath stated that the selectmen need to add a sentence that says we are looking for something that will help an individual tax payer make a decision on whether to tie in or not.

Mr. O'Leary stated that we do not have the authority to do anything until Town Meeting decides to support paying for this project.

Gary Hunt stated we don't necessarily have to research the systems history but we are going to want to know who has DEP jurisdiction and who doesn't.

### **Health Agents Report**

Mr. Bracey stated that we are in the budget cycle now and the Health Department has put in a request to be level funded this year. He will be meeting with the Town Administrator and the Finance Director this Friday to go over the Health Department budget. We will be working on our budget presentation for the Board of Selectmen along with our Annual Report.

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Currently we are trying to get caught up on some of our food service inspections and those are going pretty well and the Environmental Health Program is quiet right now due to the weather.

Under the food protection program we did offer an annual Food Managers Certification class, but did not receive a lot of responses. Most establishments are up to date.

Mr. Bracey stated that Pam Merrill will work on bringing in an intern from DPH. One of the ideas we would like to do is have a health fair along with screenings for certain ages that should be done. The hope is to have representatives at the health fair to answer any questions residents might have. We hope to have the intern from DPH to work on the Health Fair idea.

Karen Martin asked how the intern position is going to be funded. Mr. Bracey stated that it will be funded by DPH and we would provide the intern with hours. He was going to confirm.

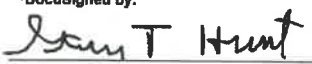
Pam Merrill stated that there is an application we would fill out on line and put our interest in including what we are looking for.

**Karen Martin Motioned** to approve the revised tobacco regulations.  
**Motioned seconded by Pamela Vath**  
**All members voted unanimously in favor.**

**Pamela Vath Motioned** to approve the proposed language of the newest nursing home regulations.  
**Motioned seconded by Karen Martin**  
**All members voted unanimously in favor.**

Next Board of Health Meeting is scheduled for February 28, at 7:00 PM.

**Pam Vath motioned** to adjourn the meeting at 8:30 pm.  
**Motion seconded by Karen Martin**  
**All members voted unanimously in favor**

DocuSigned by:  
  
518423958FEC48B  
Gary Hunt

DocuSigned by:  
  
6A9AF14FEB41408  
Pamela Vath

DocuSigned by:  
  
1928A173D478487  
Karen Martin

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