

**Board of Health
Meeting Minutes
April 3, 2023**

Present:

Susan Schwartz, Chair
Maureen Richichi, Vice Chair
Bea Brunkhorst
Ann Kiessling
Anita Raj

Staff Present:

Heidi Porter, Director of Health and
Human Services
Julie Genova, Public Health Nurse
Danielle Williams, Interim Recording Secretary

Others Present (In-person or by Zoom):

Bedford TV
Mike Rosenberg, Bedford Citizen
Alison O'Connell, Bedford Resident

Robert Kalantari, Bedford Resident
Helen Kalantari, Bedford Resident

The meeting was called to order at 7:11 PM (Note: meeting start was delayed due to technical difficulties with the hybrid meeting equipment). Ms. Schwartz chaired the meeting.

Revised Communication Policy – Discussion and Vote

The Communication Policy needs to be revised based on a Massachusetts Supreme Court ruling on public discourse at public board meetings. The BOH Communication Policy was originally put in place on December 6, 2021.

Dr. Kiessling indicated that inquiries submitted to the Board of Health should get a response.

Ms. Porter noted that submissions do get a response noting that the submission had been received and sent to BOH members for review and consideration at future meetings. If a detailed written response is warranted, then a response would be given. Ms. Richichi motioned approval of the amended Communication Policy. Dr. Brunkhorst seconded the motion. A vote of 5-0-0 approved the revised policy.

Public Comment

Ms. Schwartz opened the meeting to any public comment.

Mr. Robert Kalantari, 8 Donovan Drive, read from written notes that he prepared for this meeting. He started by thanking the BOH for the initiative of assessing the COVID-19 response and hopes they will look at all the data available and not just from google searches of studies. Regarding a task force at the state and local level for contact tracing; he asked if that provided any beneficial results. People were told to wear a paper mask for protection even when outside and in public places such as restaurants; however, masks could be taken off when sitting. People were told to stay 6 feet away in lines at checkouts but could sit next to each other on airplanes. People were told to take a test when traveling no more than 3 days prior and get tested immediately once returned. People were told by the CDC that the same test we take in the US before traveling can be used to return to the country if the test was taken 3 days before so a person can take a test in this country, then go to France and come and not test. Some people have taken a test in the morning and be negative and

then test positive in the afternoon, like in his case. People were told that natural immunity was not good enough and that many vaccines were needed. It would be good to find out if natural immunity was good protection. The schools were shut down and caused a lot of social and mental issues for children. Was shutting the schools down the right action? Most of the actions taken were wrong and we can't change the past but we can learn from it. From Mr. Kalantari's own research, people who died from COVID-19 were not treated early enough. Pneumonia was what was killing them. People were not aware that they had pneumonia and only went to the hospital when they couldn't breathe and O2 saturation was at 65%. A pulse oximeter would have helped folks to know this. His nephew in California had COVID-19 and was told to stay home; however, Mr. Kalantari asked him what his O2 level was and his nephew noted it was at 90% and he told his nephew to go to the hospital, which he did, and his nephew was treated and came home with oxygen. Were ventilators helpful? People died because they were put on ventilators and that was not the right course of action. All these things happened and today when we ask Dr. Fauci what could have been done better, his response was he wished he had mandated masks earlier. If people were allowed to go to the hospital and get treated, a lot of the million and a half of people that died from COVID would not have died. Mr. Kalantari indicates that he has no agenda and is not criticizing the BOH however these are the things that he would like the BOH to look at when reviewing data for their COVID-19 review.

As there were no further public comments, Ms. Schwartz closed the public comment portion of the meeting.

BOH Reorganization – Nomination of Chair and Vice- Chair and Vote

Ms. Schwartz started with the Chair Person position and asked if there were any nominations.

Ms. Raj nominated Ms. Schwartz for Chair. Ms. Raj noted that Ms. Schwartz has put her heart and soul into the position this past year and the initiatives and topics that she has brought forth for discussion.

Dr. Kiessling nominated herself for Chair. She noted that this is the third time that she has been nominated and that it's her turn to be Chair. She stated that this is her 7th year on the Board and that the Chair should be rotated through the members so that each member gets an opportunity to be Chair as the residents would like it to be. The Select Board rotates their Chair with their members.

Ms. Schwartz noted that she has enjoyed being Chair this past year and that the BOH has achieved a lot. She would like the opportunity to accomplish some of the goals that the BOH was still yet to achieve.

Mr. Kalantari asked if the public can provide a comment on this.

Ms. Schwartz noted that once she opens up the matter up for discussion.

Ms. Richichi asked Ms. Porter if rotation is a policy of the Town.

Ms. Porter responded that there is no policy on term limits or anything along those lines. The various boards do various things. The BOH, in her tenure, has gone from Co-Chairs to establishing a Chair and Vice-Chair position. Some boards have repeated Chairs and some rotate Chairs so there is no standard policy for Committees and Boards in town.

Dr. Kiessling again noted that this is her 7th year and it is her turn to be Chair.

Ms. Schwartz asked if Mr. Kalantari would like to comment.

Mr. Kalantari noted that he has been on the ZBA (Zoning Board of Appeals) for 8 years and is the current Chair of that Board. The same thing happened on his Board. While there is no policy in place, the Board should rotate the Chair. When he hears Dr. Kiessling saying that she has been on the Board for 7 years and that others who have been on the Board for less than her and she has not had a chance to be Chair, there is something wrong with that situation. If she is qualified to be on the Board, then she is qualified to be Chair.

Alison O'Connell, 15 Fitchdale Ave, noted that she also supports Dr. Kiessling for Chair. She also is in favor of Chair rotation in general and believes that it is good practice to do so.

As there were no other comments, Ms. Schwartz asked for a vote for Chair.

Dr. Kiessling voted for Dr. Kiessling

Dr. Brunkhorst voted for Ms. Schwartz

Ms. Raj voted for Ms. Schwartz

Ms. Richichi voted for Ms. Schwartz

Ms. Schwartz voter for Ms. Schwartz

A vote of 4-1-0 approved Ms. Schwartz as Chair.

Ms. Schwartz then asked for nominations for Vice Chair.

Ms. Raj nominated Ms. Richichi for Vice Chair.

As there were no other nominations for Vice Chair, Ms. Schwartz called for a vote for Vice Chair.

Dr. Kiessling abstained from voting

Dr. Brunkhorst voted for Ms. Richichi

Ms. Raj voted for Ms. Richichi

Ms. Richichi voted for Ms. Richichi

Ms. Schwartz voted for Ms. Richichi

A vote of 4-0-1 approved Ms. Richichi as Vice Chair.

BOH Minutes - Review and Vote

The meeting minutes from March 6, 2023, were reviewed and amended as requested. Ms. Richichi moved to approve the minutes as amended; Ms. Raj seconded the motion. A vote of 5-0-0 approved the meeting minutes from March 6, 2023

Animal Inspectors – Nomination and Vote

Ms. Porter indicated that the BOH is requested by the State to nominate inspector(s) to provide assistance in doing inspections of farms and for the local Keeping of Animals Permits as well.

Dr. Brunkhorst moved that in accordance with the Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 129, Section 15, the Bedford BOH nominate the following two Town Employees as Inspectors for Animals for the year ending April 30, 2024: Mike Leskowski, Bedford Police Department and Heidi

Porter, Director of Health and Human Services. Ms. Richichi seconded the motion. A vote of 5-0-0 approved the motion.

Dr. Kiessling asked if Mr. Leskowski was the Animal Control Officer just for Bedford or for Lexington also and what is his role exactly.

Ms. Porter responded that Mr. Leskowski performs animal inspections on behalf of the Town Clerk before the Clerk's Office can issue any kennel licenses. The kennels in Bedford are generally in homes that have more than 3 dogs on the premises. He also ensures quarantines of cats and dogs receiving bites from wild or domesticated animals whose rabies vaccination state is unknown. The Health Department will receive reports from local vets and/or the State of any animal bites that occur and of any testing for rabies that is confirmed by the State lab.

Ms. Richichi inquired in the instance that a fox that was walking around town and appeared to be rabid, who would get the call for that.

Ms. Porter answered that the Police Department would get notified and they would have the option to reach out to State Wildlife as backup; however, they will typically take action and have been trained in the proper euthanizing technique. Rabies testing is performed on the animal's head so that must remain intact in order for a proper test to be performed.

Contracted Health Inspector – Nomination and Vote – Alan Perry

Ms. Porter noted that Alan Perry is a seasoned retired Health Director who served the Town of Raynham and most recently the City of Attleboro. Mr. Perry was the Vice President during Ms. Porter's tenure as President of Massachusetts Environmental Health Association (MEHA). Mr. Perry has maintained his trainings and certifications and is available to provide inspectional services a few days per week on a contracted basis.

Dr. Kiessling asked if the BOH members could meet him.

Ms. Porter replied that if the BOH members were interested that she could request Mr. Perry appear during the May or June BOH meeting via Zoom.

Dr. Brunkhorst inquired about the food inspections.

Ms. Porter answered that the contracted food inspectional service vendor, Mojin Solutions, will be taking care of the food inspections. Mr. Perry will be utilized for any complaints related to food and in conjunction with any re-inspections needed. The former Assistant Health Director's e-mail has been forwarded to Ms. Porter.

Ms. Schwartz asked, in addition to having Mr. Perry join in on the BOH meeting for May or June, if Ms. Porter could provide a separate page on her report going forward of the workload that Mr. Perry does.

Ms. Porter noted that it is not necessary that Mr. Perry be voted in as a Health Agent but because of issues that have been encountered in the past with Housing Court, it has been very difficult process when someone is not an agent of the BOH who is deemed to be executing the work of the BOH and the regulations and bylaws that are in place.

Ms. Richichi moved to appoint Alan Perry, Contracted Health Inspector, as an Agent of the Bedford Board of Health for the purpose of conducting various public health outreach activities and inspections related to applicable enforceable codes. Ms. Raj seconded the motion. Motion approved by a vote of 5-0-0.

Regulation of the Bedford Board of Health Restricting the Sale of Tobacco Products. – Review of Revised Draft and Vote to put forward for a Hearing

Ms. Porter indicated that Town Council has been very busy and she has not heard back from them regarding whether or not the BOH can put forward the regulation for a Hearing as it was most recently voted. The question being asked of them is whether the BOH can impose the State level fine of \$1,000; \$3,000; and \$5,000 for non-State (Local) violations. She questions whether the BOH should reverting back to issuing non-criminal disposition fines of \$100; \$200; and \$300 for the Local regulation violations but incorporating the regulatory language that was worked on to be put in for State fines and suspensions. For non-criminal disposition, a fine cannot be in excess of \$300, per the MGL. There is still a bit of time before the legal notice would have to be put in for the two-week advance time frame before the next meeting.

Dr. Brunkhorst questioned what would happen if the regulation were left as is.

Ms. Porter stated that there is uncertainty over what would happen if a local violation fine was challenged because of the current local fine limitation under non-criminal disposition. There are a few communities that have blanketed their regulation to have the same fine/suspension for State and Local violations. Lisa Stevens-Goodnight, who is the Tobacco Control Manager, doesn't know of any community that has had to enforce a local violation under that structure to date nor has there been a challenge to that particular enforcement so it is a grey area. It is conservative to go with the draft version presented and then if a change is needed in the future, then it would be a quick change to do so.

Dr. Kiessling questioned why Town Counsel's approval is needed.

Ms. Porter answered that Town Counsel would be the entity to defend the town if it were sued over enforcement of the regulation.

Ms. Schwartz reiterated that the options on this are to put forth the regulation as the BOH has already voted on, which is having the State and Local fines and violations to be the same even though they may not have the authority to do so, or change the Local fines back to the \$100; \$200 and \$300 amounts.

Dr. Kiessling motioned to ratify the current version of the Regulation of the Bedford BOH Restricting the Sale of Tobacco Products. Seconded by Ms. Richichi. Motioned approved by a vote of 5-0-0.

COVID-19 Pandemic Response – Draft Evaluation Frameworks – Presentation of Draft Frameworks, Discussion of Evaluation Process and Potential Vote

Ms. Schwartz indicated that there are two versions of potential Frameworks presented. One version was provided by Ms. Richichi and the other from Dr. Kiessling.

Ms. Raj noted that she interpreted Dr. Kiessling's version as additional or alternative questions.

Dr. Kiessling noted that Ms. Richichi put forth a comprehensive table for the Health Department to complete which is not a community response Framework. Dr. Kiessling also indicated that she wants to get this done before the School Superintendent leaves because the information from the school community would be extremely insightful. Dr. Kiessling further stated that the questions on her version are a pretty simple way to see how the school and community were impacted. The Framework that Ms. Richichi has presented will not allow for a community review.

Ms. Schwartz raised the question to both Ms. Richichi and Dr. Kiessling of what would be done with the information that is obtained from each of the Frameworks.

Ms. Richichi indicated that her Framework would allow for the review of functionalities and capabilities of Departments of Public Health and public institutions by bringing them down to a local level and then taking the work that is considered 'Public Health' and looking at the different categories and reviewing how we as the BOH performed in our responsibilities in response to the pandemic and what could be have done better. There is value in looking at what the BOH and HD were charged with and what was within our purview and from that data we can see how we can better be prepared and respond to the next pandemic. An example being how we can better reach people on social media and may survey the people in town to see what sites they use. A lot of information was put on the website; however, do we know how many people come to our website for information?

Dr. Kiessling noted that her Framework is a much more global overview. It's based more on what other countries have done and what general things happened in the community. How many businesses did we lose because of 6ft distancing. She seeks to find out what exactly happened in Bedford. We need an overview of how the community fared. This would be the only way the State can see what they did or did not do well. Dr. Kiessling continued to say that Ms. Porter got most of her information from the DPH. The schools got their information from DESE and from what is understood, these two entities did not talk to each other. This information would reflect how the community was handling all this mixed messaging. Dr. Kiessling noted that she tried to raise a whole lot of red flags on the 6ft distancing as it made no sense and now the CDC says that they did not release that information. Nobody is owning up to the justifications to shut down the schools.

Ms. Porter relayed that the schools had to shut down because DESE said they had to and then they came to the 3ft distancing option.

Dr. Brunkhorst noted that that they would have to involve members of the school department; however, she doesn't think that losing the Superintendent would lose the information but we could ask him his thoughts on the subject.

Dr. Kiessling reiterated that if we don't get this information from him before Mr. Conrad leaves, that the data will not be complete. Information about what Mr. Conrad faced on a daily basis and how he was managing his decision making throughout the pandemic is an important part of the Framework.

Ms. Porter inquired that maybe a community evaluation team made up of different departments and multiple community representatives could better assess the kind of data Dr. Kiessling seeks to acquire

Ms. Richichi inquired about what they would do with the information gathered from the questions in Dr. Kiessling's Framework. For example, #4 reads – Were you overall comfortable with the following guidance decisions as they were broadly implemented? What do we do with the information if we find out people were not comfortable with following the guidance decisions.

Dr. Kiessling asked if everyone has reviewed the 2017 CDC Guidelines for pandemic response. The 2017 Guidelines used community response to guide some of the things that they were suggesting. This would be that type of community response she is seeking.

Ms. Richichi noted that in the case of the 2017 Guidelines, they were looking at the Flu pandemic so some of the suggestions are not relevant to a novel coronavirus. Ms. Richichi questioned what the BOH would do with the answers to these particular questions and cited question #7 – What % of our workforce/school community was hospitalized and questioned how this information would better prepare the BOH for the next pandemic.

Dr. Kiessling replied if that number is zero then you might not be quite so worried about the school community.

Ms. Richichi then asked whether it was the purview of the BOH to make the decision for the schools.

Dr. Kiessling noted that the BOH might not make the decisions but some group in Bedford needs to get this ball rolling. Some kind of community review on how we responded to the pandemic. Children suffered and are still suffering and we are not sure how many businesses Bedford lost. How many businesses survived only because they were getting money from the government. It's the community that has been through two years of trauma and we need to know how people managed it.

Ms. Richichi questioned if the BOH gets a sense of how people managed through the pandemic, what they would do with that information as it relates to a future response.

Dr. Kiessling wondered if we would find out it is communication gaps or will we find out that we don't have the right people at the state level talking to each other to help with the disconnect. How else would the state get this feedback if not from us?

Ms. Richichi noted that there is value in a community review if the whole community buys in but she is not sure if the questions in Dr. Kiessling's Framework are what should be used. Parents are not going to answer a survey in May or June. This will not be on the school's radar at the end of the year and as people are not regularly considering COVID anymore.

Dr. Kiessling indicated that parents shouldn't be the ones to complete the survey. Perhaps the feedback should come from the school committee but definitely we need a buy in from the school before this year is over.

Ms. Richichi asked what the goal would be other than getting a sense of what happened from the COVID-19 pandemic to make us better prepared for the next pandemic. Because depending on the pathogen and the virus of the next pandemic we would have different responses. If it was found out that something happened in the schools and some businesses closed needlessly, or people weren't talking to each other, or from mis-communication or mis-calculation, how would this inform what we as a town do for the next pandemic?

Dr. Kiessling noted that you would have to set up a different communication pattern if that is the problem. If we lost businesses because of confusion around what they were being told then we need to know that.

Ms. Richichi questioned how we as a local BOH would stage future response based on this novel coronavirus when there was disagreement on so many levels about spread, contagiousness and other factors? How do we as a BOH manage our responses when the evidence is not there to point to a solid evidence-based direction? Early in the pandemic, the messaging, information and research wasn't clear about a lot of things.

Dr. Kiessling suggested putting out a request that we want some communication from a different professional panel. The information that we got from our federal and state government was really piecemealed. Other countries were more collaborative. The BOH won't know what to do with the information gathered until the information is gathered.

Ms. Raj commented that the things that she would like to see in the future are: 1) a group like the Northborough Southborough medical/scientists board that were meeting and analyzing the information would be a useful thing in Bedford; and, 2) there was a lot of confusing information and for a lot of people whose expertise is not in medicine and sciences. At first the concern was contact but then things changed and it started because doctors were seeing people getting critically ill and they didn't know what to do so they were e-mailing colleagues for information about what worked and what didn't. In science you expect that you are going to learn new things that contradict something that you knew last week and it was coming out as official data. As Mr. Kalantari noted, the changing information had real effects on people and we got whip-flash. Joe Schmoe is standing behind you at the store and giving you the evil eye because you don't have a mask on or you don't have it on the way they want you to have it on. This was a big part of the problem that people had and people weren't aware of how quickly things could change. Thirdly, the presidential administration that was in effect at the time just wanted it to be over in two weeks. If there was stronger leadership then there might have been better communication between the CDC and DESE and the other organizations and perhaps that information might have come down to the state level better. Ms. Raj stated that she was Chair at the beginning of the pandemic and the BOH did consult at that time to decide what we thought we were responsible for and not responsible for as far as imposing restrictions and taking actions. While we were prepared to administer vaccinations and Ms. Porter was prepared to vaccinate 3,000 people in a week and a half, we were only given vaccine for 300 people.

Dr. Brunkhorst stated that at the previous meeting she stated she would have liked to have seen a timeline for response and restrictions. She looked this up and CDC has a great one but the problem is that it is too detailed. It's chaptered and versed to exactly what happened. She thinks having a local one would be helpful. Community response should be made by a group of people who represent many facets of the community.

Dr. Kiessling asked who should drive that.

Dr. Brunkhorst stated that we should start it and put it out there, such as the At-Risk Meeting that Ms. Porter attends where everyone is there.

Ms. Porter noted that this would be more of a Bedford Community Partnership (BCP) meeting type of matter as opposed to At-Risk. BCP involves all of the community partners including business representation.

Dr. Kiessling stated that this shouldn't be rushed but should get started as this is a big research project. We need an answer and a plan for a potential H1N1 pandemic as we don't have a plan for H1N1 and the best place to start is to figure out how the community managed and how comfortable they felt with what information they were getting for this pandemic. The only way to do it is to start asking questions.

Ms. Schwartz noted that there will be one opportunity to look at the BOH, the HD and the Community response and want to make sure that it is comprehensive and suggested that some of the members are going to Massachusetts Association of Health Boards (MHAB) conference in the next few weeks and should inquire there as to what other communities are doing and what MAHB is doing and then we can come back to either BCP or the Select Board or School Committee or the Chamber of Commerce and inform them of the community review but an analysis of the BOH response should be done to contribute to that review.

Ms. Porter inquired about how the HIV/AIDS Task Force was established years back.

Ms. Richichi noted that it was a joint initiation between Co-Chairs, David Black (former HD Director) the Assistant Superintendent (at the time) that focused on developing a policy at schools for students who could potentially have AIDS and consisted of health education in the school system and in the community. The Task Force lasted about a year and did develop policies and some community education but then that was the end of it. Ms. Richichi recalled that there was an ad placed in the Bedford Minuteman that this task force was forming and they were looking for volunteer members.

Ms. Porter added that maybe we can be the initiator of this project and contact the Select Board Liaison for potential buy in.

Dr. Kiessling stated that she didn't think there was a need for that and that this initiation should just come from the BOH and that the BOH needs to decide what questions we want to ask and then figure out who is going to answer them. School Committee, School Nurses and Administration should provide some feedback. We already know what the HD went through.

Ms. Schwartz noted that a representative from HD, BOH, School Committee, Chamber of Council and the Select Board should come up with the questions.

Dr. Kiessling relayed that this would not happen by May.

Dr. Brunkhorst inquired as to why that would need to happen by May.

Dr. Kiessling answered if it doesn't happen by the end of school that it won't happen.

Ms. Raj stated that maybe since Mr. Conrad is leaving that we could schedule some time with him so he could give us his input and then we could have that information to feed into the review.

Dr. Kiessling stated that what is important is that the approach does not put any blame out but to determine what went right or went wrong.

Ms. Richichi noted that she is very uncomfortable initiating conversations when it is not clear what the goal is, what the objectives are, what can be accomplished by doing this and what the plan is moving forward. Ms. Richichi would have to see a well thought out plan before she can fully support moving forward on this matter. She noted that she is also not comfortable with any of the BOH members going before the Select Board without having a well thought out plan in place. This will take much time, energy, research and development. The plan should be laid out as to who we want to talk to, what information is to be gathered and how that information will be used. This must be known in order to explain to people what the purpose is in order for them to buy in.

Dr. Kiessling noted that if that is the case then they will not get a good response. The problem is that COVID is winding down and people do not want to think about it. If this review is not done before the end of the school year, then it will not happen. Dr. Kiessling stated that the questions to be asked are already known.

Ms. Richichi stated that she doesn't think the questions on Dr. Kiessling's Framework are the correct questions to be asked.

Dr. Kiessling asked Ms. Richichi to come up with another list of questions.

Ms. Richichi replied that she wouldn't have that kind of time within the next month as this is something that would require many hours, focus, energy and coordination to devote.

Dr. Brunkhorst added that she would love to involve an epidemiologist in this plan.

Dr. Kiessling commented that she isn't sure that these are epidemiologist questions. The people involved should be the front-line people and people who had to make decisions every day and try to figure out what resources and information was used, what would make it easier for them and how they would like it to happen next time. Speaking with Mr. Conrad for an hour about what he was facing would be hugely helpful.

Ms. Richichi questioned how that would be done if Mr. Conrad indicated that the communication was not clear from DESE.

Dr. Kiessling replied that DESE would be told that.

Ms. Richichi asked about the possibility of whether the Superintendent's office already informed DESE of that unclear communication.

Dr. Kiessling noted that they would not know that until they spoke to Mr. Conrad. She also noted that she has spoken to DESE regularly and DESE's frustration was that they were not getting any communication from the Mass Department of Public Health (DPH).

Ms. Porter stated that a DESE representative was on every daily DPH conference call and were speaking of all the engagement and interaction and the input from DPH on their guidelines and strategies for COVID prevention and response.

Dr. Kiessling asked who were the DESE representatives on those calls.

Ms. Porter responded that she could find out their names.

Ms. Schwartz indicated that this was something that was not going to be finalized this evening as the Board members are still undecided about how to move forward.

Dr. Kiessling asked if the BOH was not going to move forward with conducting the community COVID review.

Dr. Brunkhorst questioned moving forward with the BOH COVID review.

Ms. Schwartz noted that she would accept a motion to move forward on either or however she doesn't think that they are ready yet to proceed with the community review.

Dr. Kiessling asked when would the BOH know they are ready to proceed? She noted that this is a big research project and when you start a new research project the first thing you do is get the ground work laid. Once that ground work is laid, then you know where to go next. Currently there is no information to lay the groundwork on until we get some feedback from the people that were at the front lines the entire time. A research project is not started with you knowing exactly what will be done with the data.

Ms. Richichi indicated that she would need a better understanding of the plan and who are intended to be a part of it.

Dr. Kiessling answered that it would be the Chamber of Commerce, the School Committee and anyone else that was impacted such as Facilities. All of the big players in town had to make decisions besides the BOH such as the business people in town including the churches.

Ms. Richichi noted that this review seems more of a school focused review.

Dr. Kiessling indicated that it was due to the fact that they were the ones most impacted.

Ms. Schwartz stated that it seems that there isn't enough information to move forward with the community review at the moment.

Dr. Brunkhorst commented that more than just these questions are needed for this Framework, however the Framework that Ms. Richichi has drafted seems more realistic at the moment. While she would contribute towards input of the questions; she feels a Task Force should be created.

Ms. Schwartz noted that it appears that the BOH/HD review Framework has most people on board to move forward; however, the community review Framework requires more information to be added before proceeding. She asked if there are two people on the BOH willing to make sure that we are getting full prospective on it.

Dr. Kiessling noted that she is willing.

Dr. Brunkhorst also noted to be willing but wants to be sure that the Framework is more realistic by not just talking to one person and also by including some professional help.

Ms. Porter noted that an epidemiologist would be beneficial to provide feedback.

Ms. Schwartz asked if all agreed to move forward with the Framework that Ms. Richichi developed for the BOH/HD COVID review and that Dr. Kiessling and Dr. Brunkhorst would work on the Framework for the community COVID review.

Dr. Kiessling noted that she is concerned about not having another meeting for 6 weeks because of the end of school.

Ms. Raj noted that Dr. Kiessling was the only one pressing the end of the school year timeline. Whether the review is done in May or in July, the BOH would get an appropriate response as they are all professionals and will provide the necessary feedback that is requested.

Ms. Schwartz indicated that the ask here is that both Dr. Kiessling and Dr. Brunkhorst work on the Framework structure and not begin interviewing people just yet.

Dr. Brunkhorst stated that she also wants to have a group of people, including some professionals, together to get some assistance with putting the questions together to be asked as these current questions will not provide the answers that are needed.

Dr. Kiessling noted that other countries pulled information together as they went along which the US did not do. Communities and states are not doing any reviews such as this, which is disappointing.

Ms. Schwartz added that MAHB can be consulted and that much appreciation to Ms. Richichi and to Dr. Kiessling for the work they put into the Frameworks.

COVID-19 Response – Data Evaluation, Mitigation Review and BOH Discussion

Ms. Porter reviewed the COVID-19 data and noted that the cases continue to decrease. There were 35 cases in the month of March. Wastewater numbers also continue to decrease and are currently at 250 mRNA copies per milliliter. Positivity count is at 2.91 and Bedford is still at LOW for the Community Level.

Dr. Kiessling questioned Ms. Porter if the ICU Occupancy by Bed numbers are COVID related.

Ms. Porter stated that those numbers are about total capacity in the ICU, not just COVID cases.

Reports – BOH Liaisons and HD Staff

Ms. Genova reported that public health and awareness initiatives are ongoing. Planning and communications for summer camps have been initiated. The HD met with Hanscom Air Force Base public health representatives, Lt. Bali and Sgt. John and discussed common public health initiatives and identification of communication goals for addressing the well-being for Hanscom AFB residents. Three BP clinics were conducted in the COA for March.

Ms. Richichi inquired about #1 on the PHN Report and inquired if she has always done the MAVEN case investigations.

Ms. Genova stated that she does all the communicable disease investigations and that Public Health Nurses are responsible for doing all the communicable disease cases that require investigation for the towns. Ms. Genova reported that she presented the monthly wellness education of Moving Your Body for Better Health at the COA on 3/13 and was well received. She attended the Regional Mental Health Implementation Team Meeting that was with the regional nurses for discussion of what the initiatives are going to be. She also attended the Wellesley College Centers for Women and the Metro West Women's Fund discussion on middle school girls' mental health and social media usage and how they are at a higher risk. The outcome of the discussion was to encourage communication and for parents to communicate.

Ms. Porter stated that Bedford has held a few dinner and discussion forums on different mental health topics. Mallory from Minding Your Mind came and spoke about her mental health journey as a young adult and a QPR training with Jon Mattleman was also held. Another forum on teen mental health is scheduled for May.

Dr. Kiessling questioned if social media is most of the issue.

Ms. Genova responded that anxiety is broadly existing in the teen population in many forms and from many sources but social media contributes to the constant exposure. April's presentation to the COA will be on the topic of medications.

Ms. Raj inquired about the item on the PHN Report regarding the opioid settlement.

Ms. Porter replied that this was from the J&J Opioid Settlement, the roll out of the funds to the various communities that applied for funds and the different ways the funds can be utilized. Tentatively, she hopes are that something can be done regionally for better usage of the funds and that will involve a Substance Use Prevention Coalition. The towns in the Public Health region would have to buy in, however some are just interested in purchasing Narcan for police response.

Dr. Kiessling asked if Narcan was available over the counter and how that was going to manifest for the PD.

Ms. Porter indicated that Narcan will still have a cost and they would need to find funds to purchase it but the important part is the training programs and access to these materials.

Ms. Richichi noted that the cost will be higher than people think and that some insurance companies may or may not cover that cost. Recommendation is for all households to have one and that those who would have need to have it travel with them like they would an epi pen.

Ms. Porter reported that as Ms. Genova mentioned, they met with Hanscom AFB PH Department and had an opportunity to coordinate with them on an animal bite case where a dog bit another dog. The HD has been receiving training on MUNIS which is the new Town financial system. Ms. Porter was part of the town staff that met with the developer, Brian DeVellis who is the proponent for the Carlisle Road residential development and they provided feedback on behalf of the HD consisting of trail access to and from the property, more sidewalks and connectivity and access for mosquito control and tick barriers. A farewell gathering was held for Katharine Dagle and was well attended. Ms. Porter attended Annual Town Meeting where the new Biosafety Revolving Fund was established and the BOH budget was approved. Mental Health 1st Aid Training will be held on 5/23/23 and currently three CERT team members are registered and the training was opened up to Town employees and residents. Two Food Bank grants for equipment and staff support have been finalized as food insecurity is still high. Grant funds cannot be used to purchase food or grocery gift cards but can be used to support capacity and for food storage. Besides partnering with Greater Boston Food Bank there may be an opportunity for the Food Bank to partner with Merrimack Food Pantry to access more food. Expansion of the fresh produce distribution will include a new relationship with the Boston Area Gleaners in addition to current partner Gaining Grounds.

Dr. Brunkhorst inquired about Biosafety applications as this is the time of year for them.

Ms. Porter noted that Biosafety applications were due by 3/31/23. IBC Meetings will continue in a ZOOM format unless they are new or have a change in a project that needs to be viewed. Lantheus is a new facility coming to Bedford that Ms. Porter met with last week. Some outreach will need to be done for new IBC Meeting members. The Assistant Health Director's position is posted on the town website, MHOA, MEHA and Indeed.

Dr. Kiessling asked what group Ms. Porter suggested to be a good liaison group to outreach regarding the Framework.

Ms. Porter replied the Bedford Community Partnership (BCP).

Dr. Kiessling asked if she could inform them of the intention of the community review and get some feedback and thoughts on the matter.

Ms. Schwartz noted that it was discussed that Dr. Kiessling and Dr. Brunkhorst would come up with who the target audience is and what questions you want to ask and then present to that audience, once approved by the BOH.

Dr. Kiessling asked how often the BCP meets.

Ms. Porter replied that they meet monthly during the school year and that she doesn't feel comfortable approaching the BCP on the matter until Dr. Kiessling and Dr. Brunkhorst have a solid Framework laid out.

Ms. Raj inquired about #24 on Ms. Porter's report regarding the Bedford Safe website being updated. Ms. Porter indicated that she added information about firearm safety courses.

Dr. Kiessling asked why the BOH isn't meeting again for 6 weeks.

Ms. Porter noted that there were conflicts with most of the dates for May's meeting and earlier in the year the BOH decided to meet May 15th.

Dr. Kiessling noted that the BOH has met on a Wednesday if needed and it would be better not to wait 6 more weeks to meet.

Ms. Porter noted that some of the members had conflicts for the first week of May and that was why the date for May's meeting was decided to be May 15th.

Open Discussion

Ms. Richichi stated that there was a Healthy Bedford meeting at the end of March and they are planning a Walk/Bike/Roll to school event and a bike rodeo. Safe Routes to School Coordinators through the MA DOT have done some observations of the routes to school and will provide the report. A gun buy-back date is being planned for June allowing for a day for collection of firearms from adults and another day for children to turn in toy guns.

Ms. Porter noted that there was a donation of an adult-sized Tricycle by a resident to add to the bike library inventory. Saturday, the HD will be hosting a Rabies Clinic in conjunction with Countryside Vet and appointments are still available.

Ms. Schwartz relayed a thank you for the budget being approved at Town Meeting. Another thank you and well wishes for Ms. Dagle and Sarah Stanton, who have both been great assets for Bedford, the HD and BOH. Ms. Porter's review will need to be completed sooner due to Ms. Stanton's departure and ask the BOH members to provide feedback via e-mail by end of day on Monday.

Ms. Richichi moved to adjourn the meeting of April 3, 2023. Ms. Raj seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a vote of 5-0-0.

Documents and Exhibits Used During this Meeting

BOH Communication Policy Draft Amendments 4/3/23 (redlined)

BOH Communication Policy Draft Amendments 4/3/23 (accepted)

BOH Draft Minutes – 3/6/23

Proposed Motion – Animal Inspectors

Proposed Motion – Contracted Health Inspector as Agent

Bedford Tobacco Sales Regulation Final Draft - same fines – current version

Bedford Tobacco Sales Regulation w/TC Edits and adjusted fines – updated version

Draft – BOH/HD COVID-19 Response Evaluation from M. Richichi

Draft – Bedford Community Review of SARS2/COVID-19 Response from Dr. A. Kiessling

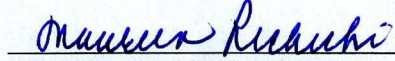
COVID-19 Data – Last 2 Months


Director's Report

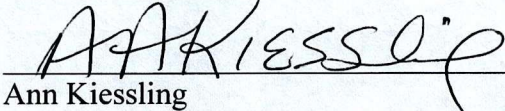
Public Health Nurse Update

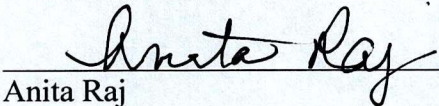
The next scheduled meeting of the Board of Health is May 15, 2023.


Susan Schwartz, Chair


Maureen Richichi, Vice Chair


Beatrice Brunkhorst


Ann Kiessling


Anita Raj