

**Board of Health  
Meeting Minutes  
May 15, 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  
Lisa Stevens-Goodnight, Tobacco Control Manager, MMA

Robert Kalantari, Bedford Resident  
Mike Rosenberg, Bedford Citizen

The meeting was called to order at 7:01 PM

Public Comment

Ms. Schwartz opened the meeting to any public comment, however as there were no Public Comments offered, the Public Comment was closed by Ms. Schwartz.

Ms. Schwartz noted that the next item on the BOH Agenda is the Regulation of the Bedford BOH Restricting the Sale of Tobacco Products – Hearing and Potential Vote however the time schedule for this agenda item is 7:10pm so the next item of the BOH Minutes – Review and Vote would be next.

BOH Minutes - Review and Vote

The meeting minutes from April 3, 2023, were reviewed and amended as requested. Ms. Raj moved to approve the minutes as amended; Ms. Richichi seconded the motion. A vote of 5-0-0 approved the meeting minutes from April 3, 2023.

Regulation of the Bedford BOH Restricting the Sale of Tobacco Products – Hearing and Potential Vote

Ms. Schwartz opened the Hearing for the Regulation of the Bedford BOH Restricting the Sale of Tobacco Products at 7:10pm. Motion moved by Ms. Richichi and seconded by Dr. Brunkhorst.

Ms. Porter stated that Lisa Stevens-Goodnight, who is the Mass Municipal Association (MMA) Tobacco Control Manager was present via Zoom for the meeting. Ms. Stevens-Goodnight helped the BOH draft these regulations and has been a great resource. The version of the regulation presented at the April BOH Meeting was put forward as the draft for the hearing, even though the BOH was still waiting for some comments from Town Counsel. Town Counsel did come back with comments and that amended version was provided to the BOH members for discussion this evening. The changes made to the current version are relative to transferring of a Tobacco permit and the fines that can be imposed for Violations of the Local Regulation. The language in the regulation wasn't completely clear that the Tobacco permits are not transferrable from one establishment to another. Also, the Board of Health can only implement a fine up to \$1,000 for violations of a local

regulation per State Law, so regardless of whether a violation is a repeat violation, only a fine of \$1,000 fine will be imposed.

Ms. Porter stated that the State Regulation is very specific in stating that the Local Board of Health “shall” implement a suspension for a violation for the sale to a minor and “may” for the other violations and the BOH had included the 3,7 and 14-day suspension structure in the regulation under consideration, which is consistent to surrounding communities. The final version of the Regulation will be added to the consolidated BOH Rules and Regulations webpage as well as to the Tobacco page of the HD webpage. The Regulation and hearing notice was sent out to the public, the legal notice for the hearing was posted in the paper (Lowell Sun) and sent to all the current Tobacco Permittees via e-mail and USPS. The only response to date was from AJ Ridge (Tenax Strategies - supports tobacco industry) who did provide the comment of clarification on the language regarding the transfer of permits in the regulation (in that permit transfers are not allowed).

Ms. Stevens-Goodnight noted that the changes discussed tonight look fine and added for the public record that the purpose of this updated regulation is to prevent youth access to tobacco products. Bedford is doing a good job putting some rules in place that help this goal.

Dr. Kiessling inquired if there is background information on liquid nicotine being classified as an ‘acutely hazardous waste’ by DEP.

Ms. Stevens-Goodnight replied that this classification by DEP has been in place for a while now, from her understanding. MMA is aware of this because when programs and schools confiscate products, they have a hard time disposing of the products and they have to be disposed in a particular way, depending on the amount. She will gather more information on where that classification came from and send it to the BOH.

Ms. Schwartz inquired if anyone from the present public has any comments or questions on the hearing for the Regulation of the Bedford BOH Restricting the Sale of Tobacco Products. Since no one from the public had any comments or questions, she asked for a motion regarding the regulation.

Ms. Raj move to approve the Regulation of the Bedford BOH Restricting the Sale of Tobacco Products as amended today, May 15<sup>th</sup>, which will be in effect on June 1, 2023. Dr. Brunkhorst seconded the motion. A vote of 5-0-0 approved.

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

Ms. Schwartz indicated that the last meeting, the BOH had gone over the Framework that was presented by Ms. Richichi so tonight the BOH will review the Framework provided by Dr. Kiessling and Dr. Brunkhorst.

Dr. Brunkhorst asked if the Framework that Ms. Richichi put together was voted on.

Ms. Richichi indicated that it was not voted on to move forward.

Dr. Brunkhorst stated that she wanted to review the resources used in this Framework for context. “Lessons Learned From COVID War: An Investigated Report” done by the COVID Crisis Group

who are a non-partisan group. Some of these group members are from the 9-11 Commission. Two points on this report note that vaccine production was done really well but the federal government should have worked more on the messaging. The Boston Globe recently referred to a report from 2022 that Senator Joanne Comerford and Bill Driscoll provided feedback on, regarding how the State had used an outside vendor for vaccinations and didn't utilize local BOHs, such as Bedford experienced. The Boston Globe article also talked about lessons learned and the ongoing effort for surveillance using wastewater and other efforts. Dr. Brunkhorst attended the Massachusetts Association of Health Boards (MAHB) annual meeting and Marica Testa and Michael Hugo of MAHB got her in touch with Marina Lent, who is the appointed Health Agent from Martha's Vineyard BOH. Ms. Lent is a member of the MA Health Officers Association (MHOA) and wants to explore this kind of topic for an MHOA Quarterly Meeting. Ms. Lent stated that she would send a copy of their After-Action Report (AAR). The Framework that Dr. Brunkhorst and Dr. Kiessling are presenting involves questions to potentially be put forth to the Bedford Community Partnership (BCP) Group.

Ms. Porter noted that the BCP themselves probably will not provide feedback directly because the BCP members are representatives from town departments, organizations, parent groups and business and would take back what questions or information that is being requested to their associated departments for evaluation. The BCP meets monthly.

Dr. Kiessling explained that she wants to reach out to the people that were in the trenches during COVID-19, such as businesses and the schools, and get their feedback on what worked for them or what didn't work.

Ms. Schwartz stated that she would like to see what subset of the population we want to reach out to; what information we would like to them to provide feedback on; what we plan on doing with that information and then figuring out how best to get to that population.

Dr. Kiessling reiterated that we don't know what to do with the information until we get it. Dr. Kiessling also feels as though people would like to voice their opinion on this subject but not sure if doing a big community survey is the answer. Maybe this should be taken this to the School Committee and ask them how they can voice their opinion.

Dr. Brunkhorst noted that she would still like to see what happened with the communication and how it could improve within the Town.

Dr. Brunkhorst replied that she was hoping that the BOH would have gone with the Framework reviewing the BOH/HD response that Ms. Richichi has drafted to have a foundation to build off of and see what other ways the community could be involved.

Ms. Richichi asked that if the Schools or Parent Groups were asked for feedback, what would the BOH do with those concerns and feedback?

Dr. Kiessling noted that Question 1 (from the Community Evaluation Framework Draft) asks 'What were your major sources of SARS-COV-2/COVID19 daily information?' Did that information come from the Superintendent, or Facebook or the news.

Ms. Richichi questioned what the BOH would do with that information once it was gathered.

Dr. Kiessling answered that if the majority of folks got their information from Twitter, then maybe Bedford should utilize that platform more to provide information. Getting a better understanding of how the folks received their daily information will help the BOH to improve their communication in the future.

Ms. Porter noted that the Town Manager's Office was putting out daily communications during the earlier days of the pandemic and then that timeframe petered out. The Superintendent then began to provide information weekly to the school population and his weekly newsletter is still a valuable form of communication to the school population. When asking how people received their communication, you also have to ask whether the communication is effective or of value.

Ms. Richichi stated that the population probably received information that was happening within the schools from the Superintendent but if we are asking a more global question as to how they received information on the whole pandemic or mitigation strategies or implementing restrictions, the answer would be different.

Dr. Kiessling stated that Questions 3 and 4 from the Draft Framework do ask those questions. Any organization, such as gyms or businesses or churches could be asked these questions. Maybe the businesses in Town could be sent a mailing.

Ms. Porter suggested that this outreach to businesses could be provided by the Chamber of Commerce. When restrictions came in for specific types of businesses and organization during COVID, the HD worked with the Town's Economic Development Coordinator and the Chamber to get information to those Bedford businesses.

Ms. Schwartz added that these questions can be asked to the community as a whole and not just specifically to the schools or businesses.

Dr. Kiessling suggested doing a pilot to the businesses to see what interest is there for providing feedback on COVID response.

Ms. Schwartz wondered if this could be done with Ms. Richichi's Framework.

Ms. Richichi stated that her Framework looks at specific categories with one of the categories being community and community engagement (educate and update the community on evolving trends and policies; disseminate latest information and data, combat misinformation). The idea for this was that we were going to ask how well we did do that; what was effective and what wasn't and how can we do it better next time. Ms. Richichi noted that whatever is sent out to the community must have clear messaging of what we are asking these questions for the following purpose and not just gathering this information. The community should know what and how we are going to use this information.

Dr. Kiessling replied that we are looking to see if Bedford's response to the pandemic needs to be tweaked.

Ms. Richichi noted that Bedford's response was multi-faceted because lots of different agencies and organizations responded in Bedford and questioned if we are looking at how all of them responded to every aspect of COVID.

Dr. Kiessling responded that every organization responded a certain way based off of the guidelines that were given by the State and the State was likely getting their information from the CDC.

Ms. Richichi asked if the BOH was looking to see how agencies within Town were impacted or affected by the COVID guidelines provided by the State.

Dr. Kiessling responded no, and Question 2 is asking what source informed the guidance decisions for each organization around COVID and asks who was guiding all of the businesses in Town. The CDC indicates that it was OSHA. Was it OSHA or maybe it was the HD providing the guidance to them?

Ms. Porter noted that the HD would have sent the State guidelines provided by DPH, however businesses would have implemented more restrictive guidelines if they chose. If businesses or organizations were not in compliance then the HD has to ensure they were compliant and a cease and desist order could have been issued as stated in the Emergency Order that was issued.

Ms. Richichi asked if the BOH finds out that most of the school guidance came from DESE and the guidance came out as weekly reports to the Superintendent and that we find out that our school system wasn't comfortable with some of the guidance or didn't like some of the guidance being relayed, what role does the BOH have to communicate to DESE?

Dr. Kiessling noted that the BOH could write to DESE and be an advocate for the schools.

Dr. Brunkhorst stated it isn't known if the schools already gave some push back to DESE and that these Frameworks shouldn't be just put out to the schools but a more community approach.

Dr. Kiessling offered that maybe just two or three of the questions get sent out to the businesses, schools and clergy in Town and see what kind of response is received.

Ms. Schwartz noted that the BOH members are interested in starting the Framework that Ms. Richichi drafted for the BOH/HD review and most are interested in doing a community review but questioned should these reviews be done together or separately. She suggested that the BOH members provide feedback to whether the Community Evaluation be done after the BOH/HD review so that a better understanding of how to proceed with the Community Evaluation.

Dr. Kiessling thought the BOH/HD Framework was already in process but that is a department focused review and the job of the BOH is to advocate for an appropriate response to the BOH Emergency and the only way to do that is to evaluate Bedford's response to the most recent health emergency by reaching out to those who were most impacted such as the businesses, schools, clergy, the Council of Aging and maybe Carleton Willard as that makes up a good portion of the community.

Ms. Porter added that the rest of the community may feel slighted that they were not part of that conversation and the community as a whole would like the opportunity to provide a response.

Ms. Raj noted that she has been Googling AAR and would like to review some of the ones that have been published. The Bloomberg Group created a whole entity that collected the actions that

were taken by different communities. Burlington Vermont has an AAR. These may offer better ideas on how to approach doing a community review.

Dr. Brunkhorst stated that a lot can be learned doing the BOH./HD review and whether or not that is the starting point to approach the community review but it would be helpful to somehow get the questions that will give some answers regarding communication and how that can be improved.

Ms. Porter noted that talking about whether the 6-ft distancing debate was effective or not may not provide helpful information. The HD sent out the messaging regarding 6-ft distancing that came from the CDC, through the State and the HD relayed this messaging to the Town. She questioned whether it is the message being sent out or the way the communication was sent that would be evaluated. People can say that messaging sent out wasn't effective because they didn't like the 6-ft distancing messaging.

Dr. Kiesslering noted that the framework from the 2017 CDC Guidelines to Prevent Pandemic Influenza may be a good evaluation to use as a basis.

Ms. Richichi stated that the BOH owes it to the community to review and evaluate what the BOH response to the pandemic was, as that is what we have responsibility for and what we have control of and can make changes to for the next pandemic. Looking at the categories we can see what worked well and what didn't; how can we do this better for next time. The BOH should be working to identify physicians in the community that might serve on the BOH and other experts that can serve on a community Task Force. How we respond to the next pandemic will come from guidance from the CDC and the State but focusing on how the BOH can relay that guidance is something that can be looked at now.

Dr. Kiesslering asked how the BOH would know how effective or non-effective the communication was without asking the community.

Ms. Richichi responded that we need to look at how the BOH did the communication before we can ask if the communication was effective or not effective.

Ms. Schwartz proposed to proceed with the Framework for the review of BOH/HD evaluation and then based off of the data, see if that provides the basis to approach a community review. This Framework should only take 1 or 2 meetings to discuss and complete and can be put on the agenda for next meeting.

Ms. Porter stated that BOH members and HD staff should come prepared with the table completed for discussion. She also noted that Ms. Schwartz does need to officially close the hearing.

Ms. Schwartz asked if anyone had any comment on the Tobacco Hearing before it was officially closed. No one responded.

Ms. Richichi motioned to officially close the Hearing of the Regulation of the Bedford BOH Restricting the Sale of Tobacco Products. Seconded by Dr. Brunkhorst. A vote of 5-0-0 officially closed the hearing.

Ms. Porter stated that she would send out the Framework again so that everyone can have time to review and complete the table for the next meeting.

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

Ms. Porter stated that this would be the last meeting at which the COVID-19 data was provided as the Public Health Emergency will end on May 11<sup>th</sup>. Bedford will no longer maintain the COVID Dashboard but the data will remain posted.

Dr. Kiessling questioned Ms. Porter as to how many Bedford Residents have died, what the age range of the deaths were and what the number of hospitalizations.

Ms. Porter stated that there were 67 deaths for Bedford. The data for hospitalizations were only done by hospital region and not specifically by town. This is a category on the MAVEN database but only reported if you are an official COVID case by testing positive by PCR.

Dr. Brunkhorst inquired if the State would be tracking COVID boosters in the fall and continuing the vaccination rates.

Ms. Porter noted that the State adjusted the definition what it means to be fully vaccinated. She reminded all that COVID19 home testing kits are still available however the State will no longer be providing these going forward but they can be purchased at a designated rate. The HD will need to wait to see if COVID-19 vaccine will need to be purchased should it become an annual vaccination.

Ms. Genova stated that any vaccination given in MA is required to be recorded in the Mass Immunization Information System (MIIS) and the HD can track COVID specific vaccinations as it is done for Flu vaccinations in Bedford.

#### Reports – HD Staff, BOH Liaisons and BOH Goals

Ms. Genova reported that there were 22 COVID cases for April and 12 cases to date for May. Planning and communication is ongoing for summer camps. Four BP Clinics were conducted at the COA for April and two so far in May. The monthly wellness education in the COA for April was presented on Understanding Your Medications and Tick Borne Disease and Prevention for May. June is Alzheimer's and Brain Awareness month and that presentation will be a deep dive on: 1) differences in Alzheimer's and Dementia; 2) identification of risk factors and symptoms and the process for diagnosis; and, 3) the medically, emotional and social benefits early diagnosis and how to plan for the future for themselves and caregivers. Ms. Genova attended three Great Meadows Regional Grant Nurse meetings and a COA Dementia Friendly Bedford Initiative meeting.

Dr. Kiessling questioned #27 on Ms. Genova's report.

Ms. Genova responded that she attended the Public Health Emergency Planning General Coalition (GC) meeting for Region 4AB.

Ms. Porter stated that through the Region 4AB an Emergency Site Dispensing Plan was developed and ready to go should it be needed. This was going to be utilized for dispensing the COVID vaccines when they first came out however the HD only received 300 doses before the vaccine was moved to the mass vaccine locations. The Region also had provided funds for phones for emergency

communications. CDC provides these funds through the State for Emergency Preparedness. The HD exercises these plans by meeting on a regular basis and completing quarterly drills and when providing flu vaccinations at our town-wide flu clinic. This group was originally called Region 4A and included 33 communities and then Regions A & B joined together and is now about 70 communities. Part of this group was the Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) group which was a precursor to the CERT group. The MRC is now broken into three smaller MRCs. Cambridge Health Alliance (CHA) is the fiscal agent. There is a Health & Medical Coordinating Coalition (HMCC), which is the umbrella entity that focuses to connect the silos of Public Health, Hospitals, EMTs and Community Health Centers. An example of when the HMCC comes into play is the Boston Marathon, where all the groups get activated and have one representative that sits in the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) at MEMA for a coordinated response if needed.

Ms. Porter reported that an interview for the Assist Health Director is scheduled for tomorrow. Noah Southard is coming back to the HD for the summer to assist with things such as inspections and the Food Bank. Mental Health 1<sup>st</sup> Aid Training for Bedford is being held on 5/23. She participated in the interview for the new Veterans District Director who was extended an offer and will be starting the next week or two. The HD hosted a Rabies Clinic and 13 vaccinations were provided to cats and dogs. The Bedford Safe website was updated with additional resources. Through the Great Meadows Region, a Needs Assessment was conducted for which the State gives a report card on performance and the region exceeds performance standards in all PH categories. A new proposed initiative is for a Regional Substance Use Prevention Coalition which can gain access to the opioid settlement funds.

Dr. Brunkhorst inquired about #17 on Ms. Porter's report regarding the YRBS data.

Ms. Porter responded that the schools are going to be releasing it. The contractor that conducted the work has a presentation that will be presented during a School Committee meeting. Emerson Hospital does have the summary report of the findings on their website. Some of the findings noted were: 1) anxiety and depression are up; 2) kids not feeling like they have access to a trusted adult; and, 3) feelings of isolation. A virtual presentation will be held for kids going off to College as this is the time of year for that. The HD met with Full Circle, the vendor that will be setting the HD up on online permitting module. May is Bedford's turn to staff the monthly Household Hazardous Waste Collection event which will include 2 CERT volunteers and 2 Boy Scouts. One update on Restoration Advisory Board (RAB), the Navy is doing mitigation strategy where they are attempting to prevent migration of contaminants off the site over the next couple of months which is basically installing a carbon wall in the ground to filter the ground water.

Dr. Brunkhorst stated that she attended the first session for Cambridge Biosafety Board forum that was excellent which can be used by the community reps for training. A second session is Wednesday. Attended MAHB meeting which reviewed several topics. A presentation was done by the Office of Regional and Local Health on how to make the Boards of Health more equal. The Cannabis Law updates were not gone over due to lack of interest. PFAs (Per-and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances) case study was done in Nantucket.

Ms. Schwartz noted that Bedford is in many ways ahead of the game by being up to date and has covered many topics discussed at MAHB.



Ms. Richichi reports that the Gun Buy Back drive-through event is 6/3 at DPW from 9am – 12pm and the Kid’s Toy Gun Buy Back event is the following Saturday (6/10) at the PD from 9am – 11am. Haven’t heard from Brad Morrison (School Committee Chair) on the subject of school start times now that a new Superintendent has been hired but hoping this will be on the agenda for September.

Ms. Schwartz noted that she attends the COA Board meetings and Bedford has pledged to be more Dementia Friendly and the Select Board has also elected to join that pledge. The COA is also participating in a Walk Challenge. Ms. Porter’s review has been completed.

### Open Discussion

Dr. Brunkhorst had a question about the Recreation Department putting away some money for a turf field replacement.

Ms. Porter responded that there was something in the Capital Funding which did not pass so the Recreation Commission decided to fund a study to evaluate if a field is needed and what that would entail.

Ms. Richichi questioned why the Recreation Department could move forward on this since it did not get approved at Town Meeting.

Ms. Porter noted that the Recreation Commission is not using budgeted town funds but their revolving account, from program funds, that they have purview over.

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

### **Documents and Exhibits Used During this Meeting**

Bedford Tobacco Sales Regulation Final Draft – Hearing Posted Draft

Bedford Tobacco Sales Regulation – Hearing w/Recommended TC Edits to Posted Draft

BOH Draft Minutes – 4/3/23

Draft Community Evaluation Framework on Response to the COVID 19 Pandemic – May Meeting from Dr. A. Kiessling and Dr. Brunkhorst

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.

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Susan Schwartz, Chair

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Beatrice Brunkhorst

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Maureen Richichi, Vice Chair

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Ann Kiessling

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Anita Raj