

**Board of Health
Meeting Minutes
June 5, 2023**

Present:

Susan Schwartz, Chair
Maureen Richichi, Vice Chair
Beatrice Brunkhorst

Absent:

Ann Kiessling
Anita Raj

Staff Present:

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

Others Present (In-person or by Zoom):

Bedford TV
Mike Rosenberg, Bedford Citizen

Lisa Cimino, Bedford Resident
Todd Crowley, Bedford Resident

The meeting was called to order at 7:02 PM

Public Comment

Ms. Schwartz opened the meeting to any public comment however as there were not Public Comments offered, the public comment period was closed by Ms. Schwartz.

Ms. Schwartz noted that since the Hearing and Vote on the Keeping of Animal Permit Application for 34 Hillside can't be called until 7:10pm, the review and vote of the Meeting Minutes from May 15, 2023, will be next. Ms. Richichi moved to take review of the May 5, 2023, Meeting Minutes out of order. Dr. Brunkhorst seconded. A vote of 3-0-0 approved to move the minutes up in the agenda.

BOH Minutes - Review and Vote

The meeting minutes from May 15, 2023, were reviewed and edits were made. Ms. Richichi moved to approve the minutes as amended; Dr. Brunkhorst seconded the motion. A vote of 3-0-0 approved the meeting minutes from May 15, 2023.

Keeping of Animals Permit Application – Hearing and Vote – 34 Hillside Avenue

Ms. Schwartz opened the Hearing for the Keeping of Animals Permit for Bill and Lisa Cimino of 34 Hillside Avenue.

Mr Southard reviewed the summery for the proposed animal permit. The Cimino's are applying for an animal permit for up to four Nigerian Dwarf Goats. The goats will be kept in the backyard that has a fenced in area and a shelter for them. An inspection was performed by Mr. Southard and Ms. Porter from the Health Department on 5/30/23. Goats were observed as clean and free from obvious disease. Their diet consists of hay and is supplemented with minerals. Bedding is cleaned daily. Deep cleaning of sheds to be done in Spring and Fall. Food is stored in the owner's house. Hay is stored in garage nightly and in a sealed plastic bin on elevated platform. No evidence of pests observed. Drinking water is changed each morning and evening. Natural treatments are used for ticks, mosquitos and fleas monthly from April through September. Manure and soiled pine shavings are stored in a manure pile in the corner furthest away from all abutting residential structures and covered with leaves, pine shavings and grass clippings to control odor and are then used for

gardening. No odor was observed during inspection. Property is not near wetlands or conservation land.

Three abutter comments were received:

45 Hillside noted to be in favor but inquired about the conditions of the goats during the winter temperatures. Ms. Cimino responded that the goats are kept inside the insulated (with fresh pine shavings) shed and they do grow a thick layer of cashmere during the winter months which helps keep them warm. Water is heated during the winter months.

24 Hillside emailed to say they were in favor.

Another Hillside abutter reached out to indicate they were in favor and that they were cute and friendly.

Mr. Southard does recommend to ratify the issuance of their permit.

Ms. Schwartz asked Lisa Cimino to tell the Board more about the goats.

Ms. Cimino noted that they used to live next door to Dr. Ann Kiessling on Concord Road who has goats. Ms. Cimino's daughter, Arielle, who is an adult now, moved back home and inquired about getting goats. They planned on just getting three goats however the location in Groveland that they got the goats from had four and they couldn't leave just one behind. Ms. Cimino noted that they had to educate themselves on caring for the goats. Shifts are taken in the care of the goats. There was an incident that the goats were given a something they are not supposed to have from the rhododendron family causing the goats to get sick; however, they were able to treat the goats according to guidance from the livestock hospital in Ipswich and they recovered completely.

Dr. Brunkhorst inquired how long they have had the goats. Ms. Cimino responded since last August. She had no idea that they had to approach the Town about getting a permit beforehand and did eventually complete the paperwork. Katharine Dagle had informed her that there is more to the process such as abutter notifications, an inspection and attending a BOH meeting for approval.

Ms. Richichi asked about lighting in the winter. Ms. Cimino noted that they have a solar light for the yard and Christmas lights in the winter.

Ms. Richichi asked if they make much noise to which Ms. Cimino noted that they do make noise in the morning and if people come around, they try to look for some attention; however, they do quiet right down.

Ms. Schwartz questioned what the plan is for when they go away. Ms. Cimino noted that her daughter and son-in-law are adults and are capable of looking after them.

Ms. Schwartz opened the meeting up to the public.

Mr. Crowley, who is an abutter and who did receive notification inquired if Ms. Cimino was supposed to apply for the permit prior to getting the animals.

Ms. Porter responded that that is typically the course of action; however, there have been cases where that has not always happened and the BOH has considered applications after the fact.

Mr. Crowley noted that he has lived at his residence for 31 years and that the noise is more than Ms. Cimino has indicated and they hear the goats all the time, they sound like children in pain and feels that four is a lot to have. Mr. Crowley indicated that he has a dog and tries to keep the noise from his own dog down if he barks a lot so that it doesn't disrupt neighbors. He also notes that it is disappointing to hear that the process is being done backwards. Mr. Crowley did inquire how tall the fence is that keeps them in.

Ms. Cimino responded that it was 5 feet. She also noted that she would pay better attention to the noise the goats are making to help allay Mr. Crowley's concern. She hears the goats when she is out interacting with them but does not hear them when she is inside but will pay more attention for noise while she is inside.

Ms. Schwartz inquired if the goats are the noisiest when she is outside with them or when they are playing by themselves.

Ms. Cimino noted that when they are just outside together, she really doesn't hear them but when she and the family are out there for longer periods of time, they are right there and normally do not make much noise however she will pay more attention to the noise level.

Dr. Brunkhorst said that this information being discussed is very useful because the hearings give people to opportunity to voice and discuss concerns. Historically, the BOH has had an interest in letting people have these kinds of animals and have worked very hard on the regulations to ensure people have guidance as well as balance and ensure the regulated parties are responsible.

Ms. Richichi noted that she has concern as this is the second hearing in which noise from goats has been a problem for abutters. She understands the BOH's intent; however, they also have to be respectful to neighbors and the impact on neighborhoods. Ms. Richichi stated that Ms. Cimino and Mr. Crowley can provide feedback to each other and to the board for any concerns.

Ms. Porter also stated that anytime there are any type of noise complaints, the Police Department, respond and track the calls and will notify the Health Department of concerning matters. These permits are issued on an annual basis, have annual inspections done and are reviewed for such things as complaints received. The HD does work with owners and neighbors voicing concerns and/or complaints to resolve issues to avoid having to hold hearings, but hearing can and will be held if needed. The HD also keeps track of the permitted animals in town using the GIS mapping system.

Ms. Richichi asked about tightening up the application process and what would happen if all of the abutters objected to the animals for a property that was applying for a permit and already had them in place.

Ms. Porter responded that in that case it would be considered a nuisance and they would be ordered to remove the animals from the property. Not all animals will require a permit to be issued, Residents can have up to 6 chickens without a permit. Either the Keeping of Animals Regulation or the Nuisance Law must be complied with either way.

Ms. Schwartz asked for any other comments on this matter. None given.

Ms. Richichi moved to issue a Keeping of Animals permit for up to four goats for Lisa and Bill Cimino located at 34 Hillside Avenue. Dr. Brunkhorst seconded. A vote of 3-0-0 approved the permit.

Summer Health Inspector as Agent of the BOH - Nomination and Vote – Noah Southard

Ms. Porter stated that Noah Southard was the HD intern last summer in between his junior and senior year of college and received great exposure working with the department during that time and since Katharine Dagle had left the HD, Ms. Porter reached out to Noah to see if he was available during this summer to help support our office in doing inspectional services for such things as Pools and Animals and for this should be appointed by the BOH to act as an agent.

Ms. Richichi moved to appoint Noah Southard, Summer 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 and programs. Dr. Brunkhorst seconded the motion. A vote of 3-0-0 approved the appointment.

COVID-19 Pandemic Response Evaluation – Use Framework Process in Round Robin Format

Ms. Schwartz stated that in the Framework drafted by Ms. Richichi, there were a number of categories and a number of questions and that only the first two questions will be reviewed at this meeting.

Each person on panel was called on and offered the responses below.

FUNCTIONAL CAPABILITIES:

1. Emergency Preparedness and Response: Coordination, Planning, Monitoring (activate emergency protocols; collect data; develop public-facing reporting mechanisms; support or advance capacity)

Question 1: What did BOH/ HD do that worked well?

- We were prepared to dispense vaccine. Had an existing EDS Plan in place that was exercised regularly including volunteer dispensing.
- COVID Dashboard in place.
- Monitoring MAVEN Cases – communicable diseases already in place.
- Partnered w/ volunteers, first responders and CERT for testing and clinics.
- Supporting the organization of a community food bank to address food insecurity
- Existing strong relationships with town and school staff.
- Already following applicable state guidance.
- Formed/joined a regional collaborative to enhance capabilities
- Built on existing communication avenues.
- Relied upon existing relationships with colleagues.

Question 2: What challenges did BOH/HD encounter?

- Lack of scientific knowledge of SARS COV-2
- Authority challenges relative to schools/DESE.
- State established vax distribution not using locals

- Constantly changing guidance
- The no. of MAVEN cases requiring CT – ration of cases to nurses.
- “COVID task force” vs TM Staff meeting – nomenclature
- Delayed Fed/State govt response (i.e. funding, PPE, vax).
- Clarification of Nat/state/local boundaries. (i.e. Governor/BOH declaration of emergency).

2. Communication & Community Engagement (educate and update the community on evolving trends and policies; disseminate latest information and data; combat misinformation)

Question 1: What did BOH/ HD do that worked well?

- Dashboard set up early
- Website served as a mode for distribution of local advisories
- With town partners HD prepared regular (daily, then bi weekly, then weekly) messaging to the Bedford community specific to the Bedford community.
- Announcements/guidance went to our local permittees using existing contact lists.
- Public forum with town and schools
- Utilized sign boards/highway sign
- Utilized existing technology/outlets to distribute information
- Staff on hand and in office to answer questions – available to the public
- Encouraged public comment at meetings (transition from pre-pandemic meetings)
- Deployed CERT effectively to engage w community.
- Leveraged good relationships with existing permittees and staff

Question 2: What challenges did BOH/HD encounter?

- Continuous misinformation in media (i.e. conspiracy theories)
- Website’s search engine was not as effective as it is now
- Quickly changing information lead to some misinterpretation
- People feeling like their rights were taken away
- Mandates lead to politicization and caused angst
- No local MD leader/champion to lean on
- Lack of disaggregated data from the state.
- Not having the answers to all questions – but able to get them
- Not knowing where everyone was getting their information – not everyone had a computer
- Physically taxing – having to respond asap w communication at any time of day
- No single source/access point for communication
- Strain on employees/responders
- HD vs BOH – nomenclature
- Remote working, HD office moved to TH

3. Surveillance & Case Investigation & Management (organize testing, contact tracing)

Question 1: What did BOH/HD do that worked well?

- Able to give info to residents re: testing and vaccinations
- Purchased and distributed test kits as early as possible
- Contact Tracing by PHN, contracted nurses and school nurses, volunteer nurses and 2019 interns
- HHS umbrella in place – able to connect social services with residents in Isolation ID'd through Contact Tracing
- Evolved COVID Dashboard as new data became available – added vax rates, school cases once self-reported, hospital data, waste water
- Already well versed in the use of MAVEN
- Supported the early PCR testing w FD in the early days
- Collaboration between BPS and HD
- Heidi's reporting on the periodic DPH calls

Question 2: What challenges did BOH/HD encounter?

- State definitions of “Residents” due to VA, Hanscom and CWV (MAVEN).
- Asymptomatic transmission
- Calculated/state provided population for Bedford skewed (using UMASS metrics) because of HAFB
- Changes in the definition of a positive case
- Difficult to reach people for CT
- Hard to ascertain testing early in the pandemic.
- Integration w schools – what was school decision vs HD/BOH
- Dealing w demand for testing and lack of funding for town wide testing.
- Changing I/Q protocols
- Recommendations re: treatment, where to get Paxlovid
- Lack of compliance by some cases (i.e. FB posts of parties)

Reports – HD Staff, BOH Liaisons and BOH Goals

Ms. Genova reported that there were 24 COVID cases to date in May. Planning, communication and inspections are ongoing for summer camps 2023. Noah will be taking the lead on these however Ms. Genova will be available for any issues/questions/concerns that come up. Three BP clinics were conducted in the COA for May. Instructed and certified the Bedford Public School Nurses in BLS CPR. Attended the COA Dementia Friendly Bedford Initiative meeting and Ms. Genova is still working on the Alzheimer's and Brain Awareness presentation for the COA on 6/12.

Ms. Schwartz interjects that she forgot to read a statement from Dr. Kiessling relative to the COVID-19 Pandemic Response review: “The Working Assumptions re: COVID19 Pandemic Response:” markedly understate what was known by infectious disease scholars and virologists about the SARS class of coronaviruses. Much of the CDCs 2017 guidance to avoid a flu pandemic stem from experience with SARS1 and its cousin MERS decades ago. The fact SARS2 spread so quickly because it was a relatively mild respiratory infection for most healthy people, the fact the receptor would mutate rapidly because it was a relatively mild infection, the facts that neither masks, nor 6' distancing, would provide highly effective barriers to infection spread were all known, and stated, by scholars from the beginning of the outbreak in early 2020.”

Ms. Schwartz asked if this statement read changes anything noted in the Round Robin review answers. Panel indicated no.

Ms. Genova continued that Lyme case are ticking up.

Dr. Brunkhorst inquired about the Region 4AB Public Health Emergency Preparedness Coalition: Crisis and Emergency Risk Communications Workshop that Ms. Genova attended.

Ms. Genova replied that this is a group that is comprised of 60 cities and towns throughout the Boston Metro area and work collaboratively to meet the goals associated with the CDC and MDPH Emergency Preparedness initiatives and other local public health efforts. These meetings assess each city and town's emergency preparedness and materials and equipment and communications. Drills are done periodically to review emergency preparedness and be sure things are in place for the future.

Ms. Porter added that this work has been done for decades and in collaboration with our Emergency Dispensing Plan. There is template messaging for any health pandemic and that plan is based off of the Anthrax Plan scenario. These workshops help communities develop this messaging and having it prepared and to practice action skills as well. The meetings are monthly but the workshops are infrequent. They try to build skills for departments/staff that are not the front-facing staff for the town and/or city.

Ms. Schwartz asked if the number of camps has changed since last year.

Ms. Genova noted that there is one less camp from last year.

Ms. Porter added that a program was identified to be advertising as a camp and they were asked to remove the 'camp' label in their outreach. All licensed camps for the Town will be posted on the Camps webpage.

Ms. Schwartz inquired if there was a COVID death recently.

Ms. Genova replied that there was one COVID death reported.

Ms. Porter reported that Ms. Genova has rendered her resignation effective as of Monday (6/12/23). An interview for the Assistant Health Director was held and an offer was made and the candidate will be starting mid-July. Ms. Porter was requested by the MA Health Officers Association (MHOA) to sit in on a panel discussion on local BOH experience encountering and mitigating situations involving hazardous materials. She attended the East Middlesex Mosquito Control Meeting and coordinated with YFS and the Rotary on a presentation by Bob Anthony, who is the Chair of the Rotary Action Group on Mental Health.

Ms. Porter continued with the inspectional services portion of her report. All food inspections are getting done. Mr. Southard will be supported in inspecting and completing camp permits. Alan Perry, the contracted Inspector, is still working with the Health Department. Bedford hosted the Household Hazardous Waste Collection Event in May during which a couple of CERT Volunteers assisted. The Minuteman Household Hazardous Product Committee is adding a 9th community to the group. She attended two IBC Meetings, for Prolacta, a new biosafety permittee and UBC, an

existing permittee. She is continuing to work with Maureen Lee of Mojin Solutions to coordinate activities around the FDA standards grant that will focus on Standard 3 that develops a risk-based inspection schedule and violation thresholds for the food establishments in town.

Ms. Richichi reported that she attended the last Healthy Bedford meeting for the fiscal year. Two successful Bike Rodeos were held in May at the Lane School where 70 students participated. Another Walk or Bike to School event is scheduled for October. Some discussion was held on the Safe Routes to School arrival and dismissal assessments. Lane and JGMS have their recommendations that they are reviewing and hopefully there will be an assessment on the High School soon. There were signage improvements on the kids walking and biking to Lane school by MCC parking lot. An adult tricycle was donated to the Bike Lending Program and there is discussion on going about how to inform the community of this. Some ideas were having a demonstration at Bedford Day; having the trike be in the parade and possibly having generations riding on bicycles all at once around town. GBFB estimated that 1 in 3 people have some food insecurity in the community. The Bedford Food Bank is serving 180 households per week. The Summer Food Program is still being discussed. Safe Routes to School's annual report had the Lane School rodeo event on the cover. No word from the school regarding school start times.

Ms. Schwartz reported that the Bedford Safe Campaign website has all different information on keeping Bedford safe from Gun Violence such as safe storage and conversation starters. The first Gun Buy Back event was held on 6/3/23.

Ms. Richichi continued to report that this event was staffed by the Middlesex Sheriff's Office and the event was held at the DPW using a drive through model. \$100.00 Gift Certificates were handed out as part of the buy back. They hoped to get at least a couple firearms and actually received 35 in total. The Gift Certificates did run out due to the number of buy backs. An idea to regionalize to include other communities will be discussed.

Ms. Schwartz added that on 6/10/23, the Kid's Toy Gun Buy Back Event will be held at the Police Department from 9am – 11am. Bedford Farm's Ice Cream Vouchers will be handed out.

Ms. Porter stated the Gun Violence Campaign was one of the BOH Goals set back in June 2022 and it was amazing to see all the work and effort that went into planning to applying for grant funding to building the website to promoting to reaching out to MGH and hosting a forum to having such a successful event.

Ms. Richichi added that some towns receive funding local hospitals for gun violence prevention work. It was noted that Cambridge Health Alliance (CHA) may have bought out Emerson Hospital and perhaps we could reach out to Emerson Hospital for funding if the event gets regionalized.

Ms. Porter noted that CHA serves as the Community Health Network Areas (CHNA) for Cambridge and other communities that hospital system serves. The CHNA for our area is dissolving. Emerson Hospital does manage and distribute their own determination of need funds but they have to have very specific programming they support. Occasionally they do have opportunities for grants.

Ms. Richichi added she would be connecting with Scott Jones of the PD about doing a press release on the gun buyback event and the results.

Ms. Schwartz wanted to thank all of the organizations that endorsed the Gun Violence Prevention Campaign. Ms. Schwartz added that the Adult Mental Health First Aid Training was a great success and thanked the Health Department.

Ms. Porter noted that Mallory Fuller, the YFS Coordinator, worked with the Great Meadows Regional Coordinator and staff to get the Mental Health First Aid Training coordinated, scheduled and the outreach done for that training. There will be more opportunities for trainings like this in the future, including a Youth Mental Health First Aid Training.

Open Discussion

No other open discussions offered.

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

Documents and Exhibits Used During this Meeting

- Animal Permit – 34 Hillside Avenue Summary
- BOH Draft Minutes – 5/15/23
- Proposed Motion – Summer Health Inspector as Agent
- Public Health Nurse Update
- Director’s Report

The next scheduled meeting of the Board of Health is July 17, 2023.

Susan Schwartz, Chair

Beatrice Brunkhorst

Maureen Richichi, Vice Chair

Ann Kiessling

Anita Raj