

Board of Health Hybrid Meeting
in Person - Town Hall, 334 Main Street, Great Barrington, MA
Thursday, November 3, 2022

1. CALL TO ORDER: (Roll Call Vote) – Chairman Michael Lanoue opened the meeting at 6:30pm.
Present in person: Michael Lanoue, “aye.” Present via Zoom: Dr. Ruby Chang, “aye,” Peter Stanton, “aye.”
Also present: Health Agent, Rebecca Jurczyk; Health Inspector, Stephen Browning
2. MEETING MINUTES:
 - a. October, 2022 (Discussion/ Vote)

P. Stanton made a motion to approve the minutes of the October 2022 meeting; R. Chang seconded. M. Lanoue asked if any discussion – there was none. Roll call vote: R. Chang, “aye,” M. Lanoue, “aye,” P. Stanton, “aye.” All in favor: 3-0.
3. BOARD OF HEALTH QUESTIONS/ UPDATES:
 - a. Flu & COVID-19 Clinics – R. Jurczyk reported on vaccination clinics held in Berkshire County and Great Barrington by the Southern Berkshire Public Health Collaborative. She stated to-date, in Berkshire County, there have been 20 clinics and 2,336 doses of flu and Bivalent vaccines administered. In Great Barrington, four of five clinics have been held and 390 vaccines given. She noted a significant increase in vaccines, though this year included COVID vaccines. R. Chang noted the clinics have been well organized and managed and she encouraged people to get vaccinated.
 - b. Message from DPH for preventing illness and staying healthy this season – R. Chang emphasized best practices for the winter/holiday season including the effectiveness of the bivalent booster and precautions such as masking and home testing especially when visiting others/in large groups. She stated the TSA requires masks on public transportation. She also noted the presence of triple flu, COVID and RSV in the community. It was agreed that DPH guidance be made available on the Town/BOH website.
 - c. Local Composting Program – R. Jurczyk stated the BOH has discussed exploring a composting program as currently, there is no municipal program – though the Sustainability Committee has recently made this a priority. She noted the Committee’s Growing Better Great Barrington report and R. Chang added there will be a public reading on December 5 – and highlighted other states that require composting and have banned disposal of food products, requiring composting at home/at a facility. It was noted there are compost buckets around Town and P. Stanton clarified they are from Berkshire Compost which picks up. He noted other towns have composting at transfer stations which Great Barrington could do working directly with Berkshire Compost to pick up/transport. It was agreed that R. Jurczyk should extend an invitation to Berkshire Compost for the next BOH meeting on December 1 to discuss composting guidelines and any related barriers/challenges.
4. PUBLIC HEARING GLYPHOSATE MORATORIUM.
 - a. Re-Open Public Hearing (Vote)

P. Stanton made a motion to open the public hearing on glyphosate; R. Chang seconded. Roll call vote: R. Chang, “aye,” M. Lanoue, “aye,” P. Stanton, “aye.” All in favor: 3-0.

 - b. Board of Health comment period – M. Lanoue stated the current discussion is whether, at this time, to extend the moratorium or develop a regulation. He expressed his preference for creating a policy if objectives could be accomplished equally well as with a regulation - and to extend the moratorium for 6 months to gather more information. R. Chang recommended extending the moratorium a few months and continuing the BOH discussion to learn more, get public input and increase awareness. She also suggested inviting Joe Aberdale, DPW Superintendent, to a meeting get his perspective as he is responsible for Town land and maintenance.

The BOH discussed the glyphosate documentary and agreed the Fire Station would be an appropriate venue with a 7pm midweek showing, but not in conjunction with a BOH meeting. R. Jurczyk agreed to look into it further and to schedule - and to confirm parameters for the screening with Nan Wilde. The BOH discussed promoting the event via Eileen Mooney's newsletter, social media, Town announcement/website post and a flyer at the post office/libraries.

c. Public comment period (time limit 5 minutes per speaker)

- i. Vivian Orlowski, Lake Buel Road, speaking on behalf of the Agricultural Commission she thanked the BOH for the discussion - and noted the Great Barrington pollinator community/action plan is relevant to any decision-making due to the vital importance of pollinators. She urged against using glyphosate on Town owned/managed property for its detrimental effect on pollinators, wildlife and people applying the product - and encouraged land care policies eliminating glyphosate use and practices to manage invasive plants without impacting pollinators and human health. She shared perspectives on the negative impact of using glyphosate from other Agricultural Commission members and urged new strategies/solutions. She encouraged the BOH to develop a ban on glyphosate use on Town owned/managed property – and to extend the moratorium period while developing enforceable regulations and doing public outreach.
- ii. Andrea Panaritis, 30 Seekonk Road, stated she is a member of the Agricultural Commission and encouraged a ban on all glyphosate on Town properties and to continue the moratorium. She noted the impact on pollinators, food stuffs, groundwater, etc. and offered to share documents/materials on the detrimental impact on honeybees/other pollinators and sample MA town glyphosate policies.
- iii. M. Lanoue asked about local farm use of glyphosate – it was confirmed that farmers in Great Barrington are using glyphosate. V. Orlowski stated this is a right to farm community and the BOH does not have jurisdiction - but it was noted glyphosate could be spread to schools and public parks. She clarified that farmers are aware of glyphosate concerns, but are incentivized to use it and that transition to other methods is difficult and costly. She encouraged having the BOH to get perspectives from Parks and Recreation, Conservation Commission and DPW Superintendent.
- iv. Nan Wilde suggested efforts to ban the sale of glyphosate and influence homeowners to use professionals to apply it, when needed. She also encouraged public education and outreach and offered to provide pamphlets for distribution.
- v. Sari Hoy stated in MA there are strict regulations on using any pest control on school grounds and students/families must be notified in advance. She noted in her business, she uses glyphosate minimally, directly spraying invasive plants with heavy treatment in the first year and spot treatment in the second – and no continued use – after which native plants tend to return. She stated there is no residual impact on the soil.

d. Board of Health Discussion & edit period

- e. Motion to close or continue Public Hearing (Discussion/ Vote) – M. Lanoue asked for views on whether to close the public hearing and vote on the extension or continue the public hearing. R. Jurczyk stated the moratorium expires December 31, so the public hearing can be continued to the next meeting or have a vote now to extend the moratorium. She noted the BOH committed to discussing glyphosate in an educational manner at two meetings and that has been accomplished. The BOH discussed continuing the moratorium and the public hearing and making it a standing agenda item to continue discussion/input.

P. Stanton made a motion to continue the public hearing on glyphosate to March 3, 2023 at 6:30pm; R. Chang seconded. M. Lanoue asked if any discussion – there was none. Roll call vote: R. Chang, “aye,” M. Lanoue, “aye,” P. Stanton, “aye.” All in favor: 3-0.

f. Motion to approve, continue, deny the Glyphosate Moratorium. (Roll Call Vote)

P. Stanton made a motion to extend the glyphosate moratorium until April 1, 2023; R. Chang seconded. M. Lanoue asked if any discussion – there was none. Roll call vote: R. Chang, “aye,” M. Lanoue, “aye,” P. Stanton, “aye.” All in favor: 3-0.

5. BOARD OF HEALTH BUSINESS:

- a. Review sample Public Health Advisory for high levels of Manganese in public drinking water.
(Discussion/ Vote) – R. Jurczyk stated the discussion is whether to issue an advisory on manganese in Housatonic water after hearing from the DEP and reviewing its related documents. She noted the BOH could issue its own advisory or provide links/refer residents to state provided information.
 - i. R. Chang noted a correction that magnesium-related nervous system issues are uncommon and are considered on a case-by-case basis – and it is noted in the DEP report. She also stated the information on the DEP website is difficult to sort through. She expressed support for the BOH to issue its own advisory especially due to concerns about children.
 - ii. R. Jurczyk stated the circulated draft advisory has been checked for accuracy and reviewed/edited by the DEP.
 - iii. R. Chang approved of the draft, but asked that a link to the DEP report/fact sheet be added.

P. Stanton made a motion to approve the public health advisory on excessive manganese; R. Chang seconded. M. Lanoue asked if any discussion – there was none. Roll call vote: R. Chang, “aye,” M. Lanoue, “aye,” P. Stanton, “aye.” All in favor: 3-0.

6. HEALTH DEPARTMENT UPDATES:

- a. FY24 Budget review – R. Jurczyk suggested opening the conversation on the FY24 budget as the BOH has discussed several new projects it may want to support for Housatonic Water Works customers, addiction-related resources, etc. She stated she would schedule one-on-one meetings with each board member to discuss - and noted there would be a vote on the budget in December.
 - i. M. Lanoue asked about the Public Health Excellence Grant and how those funds can be used. R. Jurczyk replied it is an open question – there are contracted dollars left over in the budget from the nursing program and the hope was to use those funds to bolster other areas of public health that are under resourced – but the funds may need to be put back into the nursing program to support initiatives such as the vaccine program. She stated she has inquired and is awaiting confirmation. The BOH expressed interest in exploring other funding options, if possible.
- b. Health Department Report - R. Jurczyk shared a COVID data dashboard provided by the Public Health Institute of Western MA for Berkshire County showing key indicators on cases, testing and deaths. R. Chang noted Berkshire County’s numbers are higher than statewide – but added that could be because there is more testing. The BOH agreed to place the dashboard on the website.
- c. Added item: Housatonic Water Works – R. Jurczyk stated in October there was an increase in complaints about brown water likely due to flushing the system – the DEP initiated testing based on those complaints and she is tracking the reports/data. She also stated in October the Selectboard met with Aquarion Water Company and is meeting with the GB Fire District on November 21 for an information session.
- d. Added item: R. Jurczyk introduced Stephen Browning, new Health Inspector, who is already doing inspections and settling into the role.
- e. Added item – Permit and license renewals – R. Jurczyk reported packets are ready and the renewal letter is being sent with online permitting instructions – though those without a computer can request a hardcopy application. She noted last year, most people submitted online.

7. CITIZEN SPEAK TIME: There was none.

8. MEDIA QUESTIONS: There was none.

R. Jurczyk confirmed the December 1 meeting would be hybrid.

9. ADJOURNMENT: (Roll Call Vote) – Chair Lanoue adjourned by roll call vote: R. Chang, “aye,” M. Lanoue, “aye,” P. Stanton, “aye.” All in favor: 3-0. The meeting was adjourned by unanimous consent at 8:16pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Stacy Ostrow, Recording Clerk