

BOARD OF HEALTH MEETING
Thursday, August 18, 2022

1. CALL TO ORDER: (Roll Call Vote) – Chairman Michael Lanoue opened the meeting at 6:30pm. Those present via zoom: Dr. Ruby Chang, “aye,” Michael Lanoue, “aye.”

Absent: Peter Stanton

Also present: Health Agent, Rebecca Jurczyk

2. MEETING MINUTES:

- a. June 16, 2022 Meeting Minutes (Discussion/ Roll Call Vote) – Minutes will be discussed/ approved at the next meeting.

3. HEALTH DEPARTMENT UPDATES:

- a. Housatonic Water Works & DEP – R. Jurczyk provided an update stating since July there has been an issue with brown water and the Health Department has received many complaints. Under standard protocol, they have been forwarded to the DEP as it is the regulatory authority. They can order HWW to go to the residence within a week to take a sample, get it tested, and lab results are sent to the DEP and Town Manager. She noted she has not heard from the DEP regarding anything being flagged. She noted the DEP is testing for specific contaminants when getting roily water complaints - manganese, iron, color, chlorine, turbidity, PH, alkalinity and total dissolved solids. She noted it is unclear what is the criteria/rationale for what they test for and stated she is checking with DEP about the criteria and if there can be additional testing.

- b. Housing: Sanitary Code Violations - R. Jurczyk provided updates:

- i. 364 Park Street – There have been long-time issues with this property as during compliance checks new violations were found. She stated full compliance was achieved in June.
- ii. 12 Bernard Gibbons Drive – There are long-standing violations for mold. Mold remediation has now been completed via a ventilation system. It was confirmed all the multi-family units have this issue and have received new ventilation systems.
- iii. 266 Park Street – This is regarding occupant complaints of lack of heat in the winter. There was an inspection in April and a timeline for required work was sent, but nothing substantial was completed. The Board authorized an extension of the correction order except for one heating violation - the extension expired and only one violation was corrected. The heating requirement was paused, but will be reinstated on Sept 15. It is an option to issue fines, but due to extensive work needed to get heating up to requirements, compliance is unlikely. R. Jurczyk suggested discussing the situation with Mark Pruhenski to get Town Council’s help in Housing Court. The Board agreed with this approach.
- iv. 208 South Street – This is regarding one person who had multiple complaints about a hording issue. It is an owner-occupied home and health agents had been working with the owner starting in March to clear the yard. Later there were additional complaints and inspection revealed the situation had regressed. A correction order was issued to address accumulation of yard materials/stuff which is currently outstanding with 30 days to comply. She clarified that compliance here would mean progress being made and no issues that could cause harm to neighbors or be a food source for vermin.

- c. Feeding of Wildlife Bylaw – R. Jurczyk made a correction - this would be considered a regulation

not a bylaw. She stated feeding wildlife is not good for the wildlife, residents and neighborhoods and has been an issue for a few years. Recently, it was raised by Shep Evans as a growing problem and there have been several recent incidents. She stated a regulation would allow the Health Department, Animal Inspection/Control or the Police Department to enforce against feeding wildlife and keep animals from doing harm.

- i. The Board was supportive of having a regulation and R. Jurczyk reported P. Stanton was supportive as well and he also suggested issuing educational materials via social media. R. Jurczyk shared “Four Reasons Never to Feed Wildlife” poster as an example. She noted there is a draft regulation that can be reviewed by Town Manager/Town Council and a public hearing will be held. She also clarified that a regulation has the same force as a bylaw, but the Board can pass a regulation more immediately due to public safety concerns. It was also noted securing/animal-proofing garbage is important.
- ii. It was agreed that the matter would be discussed at the Board’s September 1 meeting.

d. Health Department Staff – R. Jurczyk stated Ned Saviski’s last day is August 3 but he has agreed to work 5-8 hours per week in the interim, especially doing food inspections. There has been good response to the job posting and interviews are being scheduled - she noted the Board will be asked for input on the final candidate(s). She also stated there is a senior volunteer helping in the office to cover phones/reception so the office can remain open while R. Jurczyk is out on inspections.

4. BOARD OF HEALTH QUESTIONS/ UPDATES:

- a. R. Chang stated the moratorium on glyphosate is coming to an end in December and asked to discuss how to inform the public and organize information sessions during Board meetings to host speakers and Q&A. She suggested the Town have a more permanent regulation. M. Lanoue agreed.
 - i. R. Jurczyk suggested a timeline - to start discussions in October with the public hearing process and discuss whether to continue the moratorium as is, make it a regulation, or a policy which does not require a public hearing, but she noted it is a good practice to get public input. She noted the Agricultural Commission is interested in being involved and formulating a formal opinion from the Conservation Commission. She suggested continuing the public hearing through November/December so it occurs after the full growing/vegetative season and to see if the Board gets any Notices of Intent for the use/application of Glyphosate so that information can inform the path forward. She also stated the new DPW Superintendent should be looped in. She noted there is opportunity for further discussion at the September Board meeting.

5. BOARD OF HEALTH BUSINESS:

R. Jurczyk stated this is part of series of discussions at Board meetings regarding additional health-related resources and services in and around Great Barrington.

- a. Introduction from Gary Pratt; Rural Recovery Center, located in Great Barrington 67 State Road. Discussion of services provided. G. Pratt presented on the Rural Recovery Center’s mission, operations, staff and services stating the Center opened in June serving adults in southern Berkshire County on Monday, Wednesday, Friday 11:00am-4:30pm. The Center uses a community-based peer support model for those impacted by substance use – current users or those in recovery, family/friends and the community.

direct assistance and access/navigation of a vast service network/community connections. In addition, it provides an information hub and referral tree for primary care providers doing substance use screenings. G. Pratt highlighted community events Smash the Stigma 413 on September 17 and the International Overdose Awareness Vigil on August 31. He stressed the importance of meeting people where they are and offering rapid, meaningful connections.

- i. R. Chang asked if the Center offers needle exchange – G. Pratt stated it does not, but it is provided via a Berkshire Harm Reduction mobile unit that comes to the Center monthly. She also asked if the Center provides naloxone – G. Pratt stated it does and provides training as well. She also suggested broader advertising of the Center in public areas and with providers.
- ii. M. Lanoue asked what are first steps for walk-ins – G. Pratt stated it is to assess why they are there and make connections to services/support.
- iii. The Board discussed the Center’s funding including state funding, Community Impact grants and opioid settlement funds that will be allocated by the Board. The Board stated it would provide support for the Center to the extent possible. G. Pratt noted the donations page on the Center’s website.
- iv. Public comment
 - Hillary Rush, 1060 Main Street, thanked G. Pratt and offered to help promote the Center at her business. She also inquired if the Health Department has discretionary budget - R. Jurczyk stated it is a municipal budget and has constraints. She noted the only opportunity for funding is in the budget process which starts in February – and budget line require Town Meeting approval.
 - Denise Forbes, 325 North Plain Road, asked if there has been an increase in substance use due to the wide availability of cannabis – G. Pratt replied there has been an increase nation-wide – more related to circumstances over the last two years than access to cannabis.
 - Michelle Loubert, 70 Division Street, expressed her perspective regarding cannabis funds being used to support the Center’s work.

b. Public Health Excellence Grant Update (discussion/ vote)

R. Jurczyk stated this is a general update and review of current/go forward status for the grant received last year for the Great Barrington Public Health Nursing Program. She noted the DPH is asking Towns to choose one entity holding the Public Health Excellence Grant to align with – either Berkshire Public Health Alliance or the Southern Berkshire group. R. Jurczyk introduced Laura Kittross, BRPC/Berkshire Public Health Alliance.

- i. L. Kittross provided an overview of the Alliance’s history convening/supporting 21+ municipalities to enable the sharing of grants, staff, and public health services/programs – and its role in the growth of Public Health Nursing, inspection services and a range of other programs. She noted that while the DPH is asking municipalities to choose one entity for the grant/shared services, regardless of its choice, Great Barrington can remain part of Alliance – as it provides many benefits beyond this one grant.
- ii. M. Lanoue asked why the Board was being asked to choose an entity – L. Kittross replied it may be related to DPH capacity assessment as dual memberships distort the data.
- ii. R. Chang confirmed that the insurance money from vaccine clinics would be shared pending a vote at the September 15 Alliance meeting.

- c. COVID-19 Community Updates: R. Jurczyk stated COVID numbers have decreased significantly June to July and still in the green regarding CDC transmissions. The Board discussed CDC guidelines regarding post exposure protocols noting if a person is exposed there is no longer a

requirement to quarantine, but wearing a mask is recommended. If a person has symptoms, protocol is to isolate day 0-5 and wear a mask day 6-10. If a person does not want to wear a mask days 6-10, they must do two tests within 48 hours and both need to be negative.

6. CITIZEN SPEAK TIME:

- a. Denise Forbes stated regarding Housatonic Water Works that there was a meeting attended by 40 people and it is a crisis situation for residents at Flag Rock/Bernard Gibbons to get clean drinking/bottled water. She stated she has not heard back from the DEP and asked for assistance – she stated there would be a protest downtown. She stated her position that HWW be audited, and if deemed unfit for its intended purposes, be taken over by a public entity. She also shared that residents have discussed not paying their bills and putting the money in an escrow account.
- b. Trevor Forbes, 325 North Plain Road, stated there is a need for small water bottles which are currently banned in Great Barrington. He noted HWW presents a public health risk in the way they operate and is bullying customers. He added it should be noted to the Town that activities of directorship of HWW is counter to public health and the good of its customers.
- c. Michelle Loubert expressed concerns about the elderly getting access to water stations and bathing, laundry and cooking with brown water. She stated ARPA funding is available and may be used to help residents/improve the situation.
- d. Hillary Rush emphasized the urgent need to get bottled water to residents of Flag Rock and encouraged generating ideas on ways to help. She also stated Home Depot has free test kits, but it was noted there is a cost for the testing.
 - i. M. Lanoue stated he had talked to the Town Manager about getting bottled water as the Department of Health does not have a fund that can be used. He acknowledged the need to speak out about this critical situation - and stated the Board is doing what it can.
 - ii. R. Chang commented that the issue is getting worse and stated the Board should send a letter to the Selectboard noting the public health hazard and risk to the elderly – and substances in the water could cause health injuries in the long-term. L. Lanoue agreed and stated he would work on a draft letter to be discussed at the next meeting. It was also noted that in conversations with the Town Manager, he stated there is no funding available.
 - iii. The Board discussed the draft to the Selectboard should focus on the health of HWW customers and strongly urge the Town to come up with interim corrective measures while deliberating about other avenues.
- e. Nan Wile, 909 Main Street stated that there needs to be public outreach/education about glyphosate and noted she has access to films that cover the subject well.
- f. Devon Arnold, 35 Silver Street, emphasized the importance of further education on glyphosate and its impact on health and ecological well-being and urged the continued moratorium on Town properties.
- g. Trevor Forbes stated a case should be made for the use of ARPA funds for HWW situation as funds are designated and designed to help people with improvements in water quality – not just funds for HWW, but help people's situation in relation to water. He encouraged that be added to the letter to the Selectboard.

7. MEDIA QUESTIONS: None

8. ADJOURNMENT: (Roll Call Vote) – Chairman Lanoue called for the meeting to adjourn by roll call

vote: R. Chang, “aye,” M. Lanoue, “aye.,” Chairman Lanoue adjourned the meeting by unanimous consent at 9:00pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Stacy Ostrow, Recording Clerk