

**Town of New Salem
Board of Health
Minutes for December 12, 2023
Meeting Held at the Stowell Building**

Attendance: Jenny Potee, Chair, Patrick Temple, Lynn Layton, member(s), Board of Health; Matt Fortier, Board of Health Agent; Andy Ohlson

Meeting called to order at 6:31 pm

Interview(s) for Transfer Station

➤ *Andy Ohlson*

Jenny began discussion by providing an overview of the position and the details of the job including the hours. It's about 8.5 hours each Saturday as attendants arrive a little early to unlock and then a little late to lock up at the end. Andy responded he has been the attendant in the past back when the Transfer Station was first opened. At the time it was just one attendant. He was the first one to bring in a stove for winter heat. He noted the steps taken for recycling at that time and contrasted the differences with the current Transfer Station. Lynn and Jenny noted a few things that have changed, such as textile recycling mandates, rules on mattresses, and various other items. The position is service in all weather. Andy noted he gets that. Jenny submitted the current shed for attendants is much nicer with better insulation and a composting toilet. Still, people can be difficult at times. She asked for a few examples from Andy. Andy responded he spent 8 years as the Animal Control Officer in more than one town. He never had problems with animals, it's often people who just can't get along. Obviously, he's also been an attendant. Andy noted that when the recycling program first started, not everybody was on board. Some would blow up and resort to name calling. But he dealt with it. Jenny noted we have new items too like composting. And it's broad taking meat and bones, etc. Andy reminded that a big difference is the compactor for cardboard. That wasn't how it was then. Patrick noted that it is obvious that Andy knows the job and knows most people in town. Lynn agreed suggesting that while obviously there have been changes, it seems that Andy knows the job. That said she asked him if he had any qualms or concerns. Andy responded he had none. Jenny asked about availability to fill in on Wednesdays. Andy responded that he wouldn't have an issue with that. He also didn't foresee that he'd need to take a lot of time off but presumed there would be substitutes. Jenny responded we have at least one and hope to have another substitute available. Ideally attendants would arrange with the subs for coverage without the intervention of the Board itself. Andy asked about the hourly wage. Jake responded it's \$21.60 an hour. Lynn reminded we're selling stickers for the Transfer Station at the moment. Jenny noted 80-year-olds get theirs free. Andy had no issue with selling stickers for the Board either for the Transfer Station's use or for bags. Andy then departed and the Board determined to proceed with making a job offer. It was further determined the start would be on January 6. Jenny agreed to arrange for keys and to help facilitate signing of paperwork. Jake agreed to notify the Town Treasurer.

A motion was made by Lynn to offer Andy Ohlson the position of Transfer Station Attendant for the hours and wages set for the position. The motion was seconded by Patrick and passed unanimously.

Discussion Regarding Need for Additional Substitute Transfer Station Attendant

Jake reported that Carl Seppala is willing to serve as a substitute. Jenny noted Al Newman will also continue to serve. It was agreed to have Carl as a substitute as it's good to have more than one.

Transfer Station Update

➤ *Current Status*

Jenny reported all metal is in the container that should be, and the entire paved area is now clear. The station actually looks neat and tidy. The swap shed is also closed.

➤ *Reminder on Sale of Stickers*

The sale of 2024 stickers have begun. \$25 dollars for the year and free for those 80 and older.

➤ *Police Officer Investigation of Speeding & Unruly behavior at the Transfer Station*

Jenny reported that one of the towns police officers was able to identify the resident who was speeding through the gate and within the Transfer Station. This occurred after Jenny spoke with the Police Chief. The Chief has asked that attendants make the Police Department aware of these incidents as they often can in fact identify folks and utilize methods like community policing.

Miscellaneous Items

Jenny noted we don't presently have an Animal Inspector. There was some discussion of the difference between Animal Inspectors and Animal Control Officers. Jake elaborated that ACO's answer to the Selectboard and are mostly concerned with domesticated animals such as dogs and cats. Mostly dogs. Animal Inspectors answer to the Board of Health and inspect farm animals, in particular they do barn inspections and maintain a barn book that they are supposed to give to the MDAR. In fact, the Animal Inspector is jointly appointed by the Board of Health and MDAR. Jenny suggested we look into trying to find someone to fill the Animal Inspector role.

Scheduling Date & Time of Next Meeting

It was agreed to call for a meeting on January 9, 2024. The meeting will be at 6:30 pm in person at the Stowell Building.

Board of Health Agent Update

➤ 365 Petersham Road – Investigation & Conditions of Property

Jenny started by reporting some news from the Police Chief. The Chief has reported that this property lost a dog due to a car. The Chief also reported his department called DCF after witnessing a two-year-old child with nothing on but a diaper sitting next to Rt. 122. Matt reported that he's now seen the interior. Allegedly the minor children have never been allowed in the house. The house is a hoard and there is a hoarding problem. The homeowners' adult daughter and another adult living on the property have indeed been working hard to clean it up. But despite all that's been removed so far, there's still a lot. What wasn't anticipated at all was the fact that the furnace in the basement is out of order and the only source of heat in the house are portable space heaters. They've also removed smoke detectors and carbon dioxide alarms likely due to smoking inside. The hoarding is in every room on the first floor and the basement with pathways. This constitutes a significant fire hazard. He has reached out to the Fire Chief to inspect the premises. The adult child is willing to install a woodstove. Matt expressed concern that this might not be installed properly given the circumstances. Jenny asked if it's clear the furnace is broken or if there is simply not fuel. Matt responded it's clearly been disabled and is not working. The two adults living on the property aside from the owner have conceded that the furnace is broken. Lynn noted her personal experience with a family member who struggled with hoarding. It takes a long time to do this. Jenny asked if the homeowner spoke at all.

Patrick responded he was present, and she spoke a bit and answered some questions. Patrick further reported there were chickens in the house and as a vet he had some concerns about some cats in the house too. Matt suggested sending Animal Control in. Patrick concurred. The condition of the cats strongly concerned him. Matt then noted that the Building Inspector is not able to inspect as he is in ill-health but will send his alternate. He then reported on the plan for a re-inspection. Under the Health Code the idea is for these types of violations the timeline for compliance is pretty immediate. But we understand it can take time, so by immediately we mean demonstrating intent to comply. That means pulling permits to do repairs, and other good faith efforts at progress. If that fails, they are noticed again, and we hold a hearing. The minor children have not yet been removed by DCF, but if the Board of Health condemns the property, then they will likely act. Jenny asked if we have to put them up for any period of time. Matt responded the owner occupant situation means that no we don't have to. Only to cover reasonable expenses. The homeowner is essentially the landlord and therefore is responsible. He elaborated that he has told all the parties the circumstances and what might happen. The Board will have to make decisions on this. Patrick asked about a hearing. Matt outlined how that would work. Patrick asked about the timeline if the property is condemned. Matt responded they'd have 5 days to vacate. Jenny emphasized that this isn't malicious, we want to help these people and most importantly, help the minor children. Lynn concurred with that notion. These are little children, not even school aged. We need to work at what we must and keep DCF informed.

➤ *Routine Report*

Matt briefly reported on permits issued, noting the new fee schedule is being implemented. Meanwhile the North Quabbin Health Collaborative in Orange is preparing to do food inspections for towns in the region. There would be no cost to the town, and they would provide food inspections in town. Lynn asked how it is funded. Matt responded there's a grant and the permit fees are still collected for the town. It's just a matter of the Board authorizing Matt to utilize them and delegate food inspections to them. In time they may be able to help with more things. The whole idea behind this program was to do more.

Minutes

The Board considered its minutes from meetings held on November 14 and December 12, 2023. Seeing no need for corrections it was agreed to adopt them as written.

A motion was made by Jenny to approve the minutes of November 14, 2023, as written. The motion was seconded by Patrick and passed without objection.

A motion was made by Jenny to approve the minutes of December 5, 2023, as written. The motion was seconded by Lynn and passed without objection.

Adjournment

A motion to adjourn at 8:04 pm was made by Jenny and seconded by Lynn. The motion passed without objection.

Respectfully Submitted,
Jake K. Voelker, JD
Interim Board of Health Clerk