

**Town of New Salem
Board of Health
Minutes for February 20, 2024
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; Carolyn Hochard, Nickki Riel, Cristy Page, North Quabbin Health Collaborative; Ashley Gough, Town of Orange BOH Agent; Jason O'Brien, Shared Services Inspector

Meeting called to order at 6:30 pm

Discussion Regarding Potential Shared Inspection Services

Ashely spoke first introducing herself and the North Quabbin Health Collaborative. This is a shared service arrangement hosted in Orange where she is the Board of Health Agent. They inspect food, housing, and camp inspections. They have recently brought on Carolyn as a Public Health Nurse, who outlined the range of nursing services that can be provided. Jenny then noted she is presently the towns Public Health Nurse, and this would help by taking much off her plate. Matt noted the hard work Jenny put in while serving in that role. Matt then asked Ashley some questions regarding how the program would work with New Salem and how requests would be prioritized. Ashely responded that they've established that the process would be to contact the shared coordinator and to take the time to adjust the process as they work. She didn't think a formal form is needed for contact. In each case they've worked with towns to establish the relationships necessary. Nikki will help with scheduling. Jason noted that he mostly just needs information. Matt submitted he has a list of permitted bodies in town and can get that to Jason. He reminded that we don't have a lot of establishments, just a few that are mostly food related. All are up to date with their permits. Jenny noted we also have some housing issues recalling several houses that are in process to being condemned. Matt agreed suggesting we haven't really gone to Housing Court due to budget and time restraints. Ashely noted we could probably seek grant funding under regional services. Jenny reminded that we have at least two properties on the backburner that will have to be addressed in the spring. Matt interjected to add a third possible property that appears to be emerging via a complaint. Something tenant-landlord related.

Jenny then recalled that sadly we have a few situations where nobody should be visiting particular locations alone. She then asked Jake to get Jason the contact information for the Town Clerk. Matt then asked for Jason to be appointed as Health Inspector. The Board was amenable. Pat then asked how many towns are involved. Ashley responded 5 including Warwick and Petersham. Nikki noted that they should be kept involved in news and announcements for community events. They would eventually do clinics which would require advertising as well. Ashley then reported that they have a good location for the collaborative that will include a space for meetings. Jenny then recalled that the town has done a flu clinic the past 10-12 years and we have a lot of seniors in town. Matt then asked Pat, as a veterinarian, if he might be willing to work with the collaborative to do a rabies clinic in town. Pat expressed willingness to help. Jenny reminded those present that our Animal Control Officer is regional and based out of Turners Falls. We don't presently have an Animal Inspector. Matt noted he has always been surprised by the fact that MDAR hasn't already been into see the Board over the lack of such an official. This is usually a joint appointment by MDAR and the Board and runs a year. The biggest thing is the barn book and the inspecting of farm animals. Matt recalled that we don't get much of the big city type stuff, but we do get tick born illnesses. He also highlighted educational opportunities that the regional collaborative could do. Jason stressed he lives close by, so he can be very responsive. This prompted Jenny to inform those present that the Building Inspector is retiring, so the Zoning Enforcement Officer he'd work with will be new as well. Jenny asked when the next collaborative meeting would be. Ashley responded March 12, 2024, at 6:30 pm. It was agreed this would go on the Board's next agenda with the intention of adopting the regional inspectional services.

A motion was made by Lynn to appoint Jason O'Brien as the Health Inspector for a term to expire on June 30, 2025. The motion was seconded by Jenny and passed unanimously.

Transfer Station Update

➤ *New Attendant Settling in Well*

Jenny reported that the new Transfer Station Attendant has settled in well. Things appear to be going well at the Transfer Station. Although, afternoons remain quite busy. She also ensured the new attendant has the proper gear (like gloves) for the job. There will be a virtual training coming up with FCSWMD that she intends to have the new attendant go to.

➤ *Transfer Station Gate in Disrepair*

A request has been made by the Transfer Station Attendants for replacement of the Gate and some of the fencing in the area. The gate is difficult to move and open. At present it has to be picked up and moved in an unusual manner rather than simply swinging on its hinges. So far there has been one quote to fix it by a fencing company that suggested installing a new 6x9 galvanized chain-link gate. Cost would be about \$2,381. Lynn asked if the existing gate could simply be repaired. Not that she was opposed to replacement, but wondered if it is repairable. Pat agreed suggesting that it could be a few of readily repairable issues. Lynn agreed inasmuch as if it truly needs replacement she'd support it, but if it's just a matter of a new hinge that would be worth exploring as it would be far more affordable. It was agreed to put this topic on the agenda for a March meeting so that a formal decision can be made.

Agent Letter

Matt reported he needs a letter signed by the Board of Health saying he is their employee for a licensing matter. It was agreed to approve this letter. Jake agreed to print it and asked the Board to authorize its chair to sign the letter. It was so agreed.

A motion was made by Lynn to authorize Jenny to sign a letter for the Board of Health Agent saying he is the Board's Agent and is employed by the town. The motion was seconded by Pat and passed by majority vote with Jenny abstaining.

Unknown Animal Attack (Likely Bobcat or Fisher)

Lynn reported on a report of an animal attack. It was likely a bobcat. Pat noted that the animal may have had rabies since it was behaving strangely. They typically die in 10 days after reaching that point. So, the bobcat is likely deceased at this point. Matt noted that this falls under the jurisdiction of the State Environmental Police and the only thing we should do is reach out to the person who was bit to ensure they have received the proper treatment for rabies exposure.

Miscellaneous Items

Lynn reported on an incident that occurred recently this past weekend. There was a goat that had a bag over its head that its horns were caught in. After much effort they detained the goat and took the bag off. The goat then took off into the woods and went to a house in town. There were cats in a cage outdoors, and various other animals. A wellness check was requested from the Police Dept. After the wellness check the homeowner spoke with them and insisted that the animals are all in good health and fed. This seemed to defy the situation witnessed. The police officer who responded told Lynn that he's had to visit this property more than once and so have others including MSPCA. Jenny submitted this could be a sticky situation given the property owner is a former town employee. Pat suggested that there may be some mental health issues involved too. Jake interjected to remind that this person has had some issues that have appeared before the Selectboard, and the Board should be very careful to ensure adherence to MGL in all procedures. Matt concluded that this is an example of why we need an Animal Inspector.

Scheduling Date & Time of Next Meeting

It was agreed to call for a meeting on March 26, 2024. The meeting will be at 6:30 pm in person at the Stowell Building. It was also determined to call a virtual special business meeting for earlier in the month.

Board of Health Agent Update

Matt reported that work has been finished on all license renewals for 2024. So, everyone who was supposed to renew has renewed. The only establishment that hasn't renewed is New Salem Cider, but they're seasonal and closed. They did renew last year, so they likely will do it again. Lynn suggested reaching out to a Leverett BOH member who is familiar with the people behind the business. She was confident they open by July. Jenny noted she

thought they opened earlier. Matt then reported on discussions he's had with the New Salem General Store. They are thinking about expanding, which would involve acquiring one of their neighbors. He reported he's happy to help them to some extent, but they'll need engineering and other consulting work to fully ascertain the potential. They'll also have to consider the septic system, which is designed for a home and not business. He also noted they could benefit from the well on that property as they have issues with their existing water source. Meanwhile, if they serve 25 people on a regular basis, they have to have a public water supply as defined by DEP. We could officially alert DEP, but it's likely not necessary. Technically it's a state issue rather than a local one. Matt then updated on 365 Petersham Rd. He has conducted his first visit for the temporary permit. He reported that things did not improve to the extent he would have hoped, but they do have some time to respond. He has informed the property owner that there should be progress. Once the temporary housing permit expires, that leaves the town with few options aside from going to court. So there needs to be forward momentum. Matt then stated he would send a letter in the mail to them about that inspection and reminding them of the terms of the temporary housing permit. If they are not out of the trailers by April as required, another condemnation hearing will have to be held. The Board acknowledged that potential, but as Jenny noted, it was agreed best to cross that bridge when and if necessary. Matt finished by reporting on a complaint received from a tenant in town who is concerned about conditions at the property she rents. He noted he would respond and offer to inspect but will need more information including address.

Minutes

The Board considered its minutes from meetings held on January 9, 2024. Jenny noted a few minor corrections including a spelling error in the first paragraph. It was agreed to approve the minutes as amended.

A motion was made by Jenny to approve the minutes of January 9, 2024, as amended. The motion was seconded by Pat and passed without objection.

Adjournment

A motion to adjourn at 7:52 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