



BOARD OF HEALTH

Town of Nantucket
131 Pleasant Street
Nantucket, Massachusetts 02554
www.nantucket-ma.gov

Commissioners: Malcom MacNab MD, PHD (chair), Meredith Lepore, (vice chair), James Cooper, Kerry McKenna, Ann Smith

Staff: Roberto Santamaria, Kathy LaFavre, John Hedden, Jake Visco, Anne Barrett, Erin Schrader

~~ MINUTES ~~

Thursday, January 18, 2024

4 Fairground Road, Community Room

This meeting was held via remote participation using ZOOM and YouTube.

Called to order at 4:00 p.m.

Staff in attendance: R. Santamaria, Director of Health & Human Services, J. Hedden, Chief Environmental Health Officer; J. Visco, Health Inspector; E. Schrader, Public Health Nurse

Attending Members: Malcolm MacNab, Meredith Lepore, Kerry McKenna, Ann Smith

Remote Participant: -

Absent: James Cooper

Early Departure: -

I. PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT

This meeting is being audio and video recorded.

II. PUBLIC COMMENT

The Chair opened the floor for public comments, inviting attendees to discuss any concerns not listed on the agenda. The room remained quiet, and no comments were made.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Action: **Motion to approve the minutes of December 14, 2023.** (Motion by: McKenna) (Seconded by: Lepore)

Vote: Carried unanimously

Action: **Motion to approve the minutes of November 16, 2023.** (Motion by: Lepore) (Seconded by: McKenna)

Vote: Carried unanimously

IV. EMERGENCY CONDEMNATION: 2 ½ MARBLE WAY (00::)

Sitting: MacNab, Lepore, McKenna, Smith

Discussion: **Santamaria**

Discussed an urgent matter involving the condemnation of a property found in severe disarray due to hoarding, structural damage, and health hazards such as mold and bug infestations.

Kathy Flynn, Health Inspector

Detailed her findings from the inspection, initiated by a call from the local police regarding a deceased occupant.

Action: **Motion to accept condemnation request. (Motion by: McKenna) (Seconded by: Lepore) (04:40)**

Roll-call vote Carried 4-0// McKenna, Lepore, Smith, MacNab (aye)

IV. SEPTIC LOAN REQUESTS

Septic Loan Request, 74 Arkansas (Amendment)

Sitting: MacNab, Cooper, McKenna, Lepore

Documentation: Supporting documents and staff recommendations.

Discussion: **Santamaria**
Explained that this is a previously approved septic loan request for 74 Arkansas Avenue. The topic was brought up due to a unique requirement from the mortgage underwriter associated with the loan. The underwriter requested approval for a higher loan amount — potentially 50% to 100% more than the cost of the septic system — to account for any unforeseen expenses or funding overrides that might occur during the system's installation.

Action: **Motion to accept the override loan request.** (Motion by: McKenna) (Seconded by: Lepore)

Roll-call vote: Carried 3-0// McKenna, Lepore, Smith, MacNab (aye)

V. TITLE V RELEASE: 3 SALROS ROAD

Sitting: MacNab, Cooper, McKenna, Lepore

Documentation: Supporting documents and staff recommendations.

Discussion: **Santamaria**
Explained that this was a request to release a lien for 3 Salos Road, signifying the successful repayment of a betterment loan related to septic system installation. The discussion highlighted the procedure for releasing liens and the return of unused funds to the community health fund.

Action: **Motion to release the lien for 3 Salos Road.** (Motion by: Lepore) (Seconded by: McKenna)

Roll-call vote: Carried 3-0// McKenna, Lepore, Smith, MacNab (aye)

VI. PUBLIC HEALTH NURSE UPDATE/DIRECTOR REPORT

Erin Schrader, Public Health Nurse

Provided an extensive update on the state of respiratory illnesses in Nantucket, expressing concern over low vaccination rates for flu and COVID-19. Schrader detailed the efforts made by the health department to combat these issues, including hosting vaccination clinics and planning for future outreach. Schrader also announced an upcoming leave in mid-March.

Schrader also provided an update on the health department's ongoing efforts to address mental health issues within the community, with a particular focus on suicide prevention. She highlighted the implementation of QPR (Question, Persuade, and Refer) training as a key initiative and announced that the health department is scheduled to host additional QPR training sessions, with the next one planned for Monday, February 12th.

Lepore

Noted that in previous years, the convenience of drive-through flu vaccination clinics likely contributed to higher vaccination rates. These clinics allowed individuals to receive flu shots without needing to exit their vehicles, providing an easy and efficient way to get vaccinated.

Stated a concerning observation was made regarding the low uptake of flu vaccines among pre-kindergarten children, as evidenced by recent state surveys. Despite the prevalence of flu, along with COVID-19 and RSV, leading to many absences among school children, vaccination rates remain low.

Acknowledged that historically, the Nantucket community has not engaged in flu vaccination to the extent possible. Until the last few years, the town did not offer flu vaccinations directly, which may have contributed to the current situation where many in the community, especially children, are not getting vaccinated against the flu.

Santamaria

Highlighted a correlation between the ease and convenience of accessing vaccines and the willingness of the public to participate in vaccination programs. The decrease in emphasis on making vaccines readily available and accessible is seen as a factor contributing to lower vaccination rates.

Stated Nantucket is not among the lowest three communities in the state regarding vaccination rates but ranks as the third lowest county. This comparison includes counties such as Barnstable, Suffolk, Norfolk, and Worcester. When comparing Nantucket County's vaccination rates on a national scale, the county performs significantly better than certain counties in other states, such as Chickasaw County. When data is stratified, Nantucket County's

position appears less favorable. However, when considering the amalgamated data across the United States, Massachusetts, including Nantucket County, ranks around the middle.

Highlighted concerns about the current societal challenges where science faces skepticism, contributing to a culture war against established scientific facts. Despite these challenges, Santamaria commends the enhanced collaboration between schools and the health department, marking a significant improvement in communication and joint efforts in public health. This collaboration is particularly crucial as they navigate through civil unrest and skepticism towards science.

Additionally, there's an ongoing effort to recertify equipment for the Massachusetts childhood vaccination program, enabling the provision of essential vaccines like MMR, HepB, and flu directly from the health department's office, a new and beneficial initiative to improve public health outreach and vaccination coverage.

Lepore

Emphasized the significant benefits of the health department's new initiative to provide vaccinations directly from its office. This initiative is particularly advantageous for new students who face delays in obtaining a healthcare provider and experience further delays if their vaccination records are not in English. Direct access to vaccinations at the health department's office would expedite the process, ensuring these students are vaccinated promptly and efficiently.

Santamaria

Stated the significant benefit discussed is the Massachusetts Childhood Vaccination Program (MCVP), which offers vaccines free of charge, a key factor contributing to Massachusetts' high vaccination rates. This program ensures that vaccines, including TDAP, flu, MMR, HepA, HepB, and potentially COVID, are accessible to all residents, regardless of insurance status or financial capability.

Additionally, there's an internal discussion about obtaining a DEA number to certify the health department's area as a clinic, which would enable the provision of travel vaccines, such as those for yellow fever and hepatitis, further advancing the department's clinical and community health services.

Mentioned that the health department is considering adopting a model similar to Cambridge Community Health (CCD), which offers extended office hours for vaccinations on specific days (e.g., Tuesdays from 5:00 to 7:30 PM) to accommodate walk-ins. This approach, supported by the Cambridge Health Alliance, enhances accessibility to vaccinations by providing flexible timing outside standard work hours, a feature aimed at bolstering community health engagement.

Moving forward into the upcoming fiscal year, the department has allocated budget funds, specifically \$50,000, for outreach consulting services. This investment is aimed at enhancing content creation and outreach efforts, with the budget being shared between the natural resources department and the health department.

The Visiting Nurse Association (VNA) visits have been significantly beneficial, and there are plans to expand this partnership in the upcoming fiscal years. This collaboration, highlighted as a key partnership with a nonprofit, aims to enhance home visit services and wellness checks, underscoring a commitment to improving community health outreach and support directly in residents' homes.

Director's Report

A meeting is scheduled with Henry Lind and Patrick Reynolds from Martha's Vineyard and Barnstable County to unify approaches to tickborne illness outreach.

The Nantucket website's tickborne illness page has been revamped with videos, information, and brochures to be promoted via social media, airports, and local news outlets.

A Serve Safe Managers course is offered in early February to support local restaurant managers and owners, reflecting a successful initiative with positive community response.

Sean's achievement in passing the Certified Professional in Food Safety course was highlighted, marking a significant credentialing step for the department.

A new inspector position has been posted to fill the vacancy left by Cathy Flynn's retirement, with interviews for qualified candidates planned.

Progress on the short-term rental program with user acceptance testing underway. Feedback is being integrated, aiming for an operational system soon.

Collaboration with Cottage Hospital and intern Cynthia Gad on a community health assessment, aiming to publish findings by the end of the fiscal year.

Efforts to address PFAS contamination on Tom's Way, including securing grants to cover connection fees to town water for affected residents.

Introduction of PFAS testing capability in-house, following new well regulations that began on January 1st.

Announced a forthcoming family medical leave in March to welcome a new family member, expressing confidence in the department's capability to function effectively in their absence.

Ongoing negotiations between the town and the firefighter's union were acknowledged, with a commitment to resolving outstanding issues.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

Action: Motion to Adjourn at 5:35 pm. (Motion by: Lepore) (Seconded by: McKenna)

Roll Call Vote: Carried 4-0// MacNab, Lepore, McKenna, Smith

Submitted by:
Elaina Cano