



Town of Agawam

Board of Health

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Gladys Fernandez-Largay, MD	- Chairman
Mary Jo Safford, NP	- Vice Chair
Mary Lee Bertrand, BSN	- Member
Michael Theroux	- Health Agent
Sherry Petrucci, RN	- Public Health Nurse
Lauren Kennedy	- Sanitarian
Beth Ceccarini	- Secretary

Meeting Minutes - March 9, 2022

Meeting held via ZOOM due to Novel Coronavirus

Attendance : All members present,

Documents distributed at meeting :
-Board of Health Agenda

Meeting Called to Order : 5:00 pm. Chairman Fernandez read the rules for virtual meeting guidelines due to the Governor's Extension Order. This order expires on April 1, 2022.

Approval of minutes : A motion to approve the February BOH minutes was made by Vice Chair Safford and seconded by Member Bertrand. Motion to approve minutes: 3-0.

Citizen Speak Time : None called to get a BOH meeting invitation.

Old Business :

School Nurse Position : Nurse Sherry told the Board she had a candidate who interviewed for the substitute nurse position but actually took the full time School Nurse position posted for AHS. This position has been open since school started in September and we are happy it is finally filled. She is set to start on March 28th. We are still looking for Substitute Nurses for the schools. Board Members asked if there has been any word on the nurses moving over to the school Dept. or if any further discussion of pay scale upgrades was addressed. Members asked if there really is a pay discrepancy according to what other towns are paying their nurses. Nurse Sherry found in her research that our nurses are paid about ten thousand plus dollars less than 3 surrounding towns. There are only 3 communities in Massachusetts that still have their School Nurses on the town side of the budget. She noted that is why we cannot find good qualified candidates for these positions as it took 6 months to fill one position. She also noted that it is a negotiation year and some of those items need to be addressed during those negotiation meetings. When a vote was taken by the nursing staff it was 9-1 in favor of the move. There will need to be some changes made by the administrators as well for oversight of the nurses as Sherry will not be part of that union if they move.

17 Cambridge Street Inspection : Agent Theroux told the Board there is a court case with the owner and the occupant living at the residence. The court requested another complete inspection of the property. The occupant requested that the Sanitarian Lauren do the inspection because she was unhappy with the results she was given by the Health Agent. Sanitarian Lauren told the Board that the occupant did very little of the requested work and had thrown away almost nothing as requested in the Correction Order. There was no dumpster on the property when the Sanitarian was there inspecting. She came to the same conclusion as the Health Agent that the house is inhabitable and with the utilities shut off the Condemnation Order should stand. Agent Theroux stated there was some winterized done by the bank.

The Judge stated access will still be granted to the occupant to do updates, repairs and gather belongings within a certain window of time. There will be another court hearing within the month for an update. If no progress has been made to the property by the next court date, the Town will ask for a receiver for that property.

20 Ottawa Street update : Health Agent did an inspection on this property today with the Building Inspector and the Property Receiver. The owner is still in a health care facility. The Receiver has been working on the immediate concerns but much more needs to be done from the original Correction Order. The bank seems to have gotten involved and is looking to take the property back due to its vacancy. The Health Agent and Attorney Pikula are happy keeping the receiver on as he has made progress getting much needed work done. They feel he will continue to work on that in good faith.

New Business :

In-Person Board of Health meetings

Chairman Fernandez told the Board that the Governor's Virtual Meeting Extension ends on April 1st. Agent Theroux asked what the Boards pleasure was about our April meeting being done in person. The members agreed and said it was time to get together. Chairman Fernandez stated that if in the future a member was not comfortable with the idea she would work with them to come up with hybrid plans and borrowed computers if necessary. All members will meet at the Senior Center for our April meeting.

Mask Updates Schools/Transportation: DESE (Department of Elementary and Secondary Education) has given each community the option to enact mask mandates in schools and on transportation. Agawam has opted to not wear masks in schools and busses but is required to wear them in designated spots such as all Nurses' Offices and Special Education classrooms if needed.

School Nurse Activities : Nurse Sherry told the Board the School Nurses have had better numbers in the last few weeks with students and staff regarding COVID. She reiterated the new Nurse hire for AHS. She informed the Board one of our School Nurses is on extended medical leave until the end of the school year. Our School Nurse Float is covering that school position. Board members hope that the Town would see what the School Nurses have gone through in the last year and grant them more money in the negotiation process given the expanding and changing roles in the schools. They stated if not an immediate change then in the near future that could be part of the budget plan. They also commented that the chances of getting more qualified nursing candidates would improve drastically and do such wonders for the moral of the current staff that had stayed in the Town's employment for many years. Agent Theroux stated that hopefully with the School Budget, which is much higher than the Town's budget, and the required licensing needed it would improve their chances of higher salaries in the near future if not right away. As of today, the negotiations will be done on the Town side. All agreements will need to be carried over to the Schools Budget on/before July 1st.

Public Health Nurse : Nurse Sherry told the Board from the onset of the pandemic in March of 2020 until February of 2022 we had a total of 6,766 COVID cases reported in our community. That would be roughly one quarter of our population which has been affected. She noted it is impossible to get an accurate count of pandemic cases using the CDC's, Mass DPH's and the Governor's guidelines for the pandemic. Another factor is that the Government is giving away home testing kits to all families that signed up for them. When residents take the home tests almost no one called our office to report they had COVID. The same can be said for the four test kits distributed to some of the school/staff population by the School Department a few months back. Most of those people, who tested positive, did not inform the State or the Health Department with their results. Also, there were people who had COVID twice in those time ranges. For all those reasons, a truly accurate count can never be had. From February 20 - March 5, 2022 we had 58 cases, and 266 people were tested. Nurse Sherry is now working on medication delegating for unlicensed professionals in our schools. For an example, if a teacher or a 1:1 paraprofessional needed to give a student an epi-pen.

Chairman Fernandez thanked the Health Department for their continued efforts on behalf of the Community as a whole regarding health care needs. She also lauded the side work that often goes without notice from the public that keeps our town residents safe.

Adjourned: Motion to adjourn was made by Vice Chairman Safford seconded by Member Bertrand. With

a vote of 3-0, the meeting adjourned at 5:25 p.m.

BOH/bc