

CITY OF GLOUCESTER
Board of Health
Minutes of the Meeting
April 22, 2021
5:30 p.m.
Remote Meeting Via Zoom

Board members virtually present courtesy of a system organized by the City's IT Department: Chairperson: Dr. Richard Sagall; Frederick Cowan; Joe Rosa; and Claudia Schweitzer. Present from the Health Department: Assistant Health Director: Max Schenk. Absent: Vice-Chairperson: Robert Harris and Health Director: Karin Carrol

Also present Mayor Sefatia Romeo Theken and Nicole Keiser, Chief Administrative Officer.

The meeting started at 5:30 p.m.

This meeting is recorded by video and audio in accordance with state Open Meeting Law. Consistent with the Governor's orders suspending certain provisions of the Open Meeting Law and banning gatherings of more than 10 people, this meeting will be conducted by remote participation. If you are calling in on a phone you can press Star 9 (*9) to request to speak. If you are watching on a computer or device there is a "raise hand" button that you can tap or press to request to speak. Please use either of these options during oral communications to be recognized to speak.

PUBLIC ORAL COMMUNICATION

Mary Ann Boucher of 93 Mount Pleasant Street appeared before the board. She stated that she took her grandchildren to the East Gloucester School to play and she noticed a rat box behind the school. She was wondering if this is safe to be used around children. *Mr. Schenk* stated that the Health Department will look into the rat boxes and follow up on the issue.

NEW BUSINESS

Review of Proposed Application for an Alternative Mosquito Management Plan Required for a Municipality to Opt Out of Spraying Conducted by the State Reclamation and Mosquito Control-

Chairperson Sagall stated that as required by the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs in order for the City to opt out of mosquito spraying performed by the State Reclamation and Mosquito Control Board the City must submit an application.

Mr. Schenk stated that in September, resident Debra Kramer brought to the boards' attention that legislation had been passed regarding mosquito control and options that were being made available to communities. He stated that the hope was that testing would be made available by the State because the only way to obtain testing by the State previously was to join the

Mosquito Control District and pay \$87,000 a year for three years. He stated that the new legislation will allow the State to spray communities that are of sufficient cause and concern without consent from the communities unless the community opts out. He stated that the opt out application has to be voted on by the City Council and has to include an alternate mosquito control plan designed by the Board of Health and be submitted by May 15, 2021. He stated that the draft alternative mosquito control plan is based on past practices of the community and the Boards' past stance. He stated that the draft plan is centered upon education and outreach and minimal enforcement possibilities to protect the public. He stated that the plan does not include spraying and there has not been any arbovirus cases in the last five years.

Mr. Schenk reviewed and presented the proposed plan. He stated that the plan has worked in the past without having to use any chemical spraying. He stated that BTI dunks are excluded from the plan and can be used by the City as they are made from a natural substance. He stated that private property owners can opt out of spraying, however if the State deems an area high risk the State can still spray.

Mr. Cowan asked if residents were allowed to use BTI dunks if the City does not provide them. *Mr. Schenk* responded that BTI dunks can be bought by residents and used without any licensing by residents.

Ms. Schweitzer asked if BTI dunks were harmful to animals or the water supply. *Mr. Schenk* responded that they are not harmful to animals or the water supply.

The board agreed to support the application for opting out of spraying for mosquitoes and agreed that the steps, such as public education, that the City has taken in the past have been successful.

Mr. Schenk stated that the Health Department stands behind successful past practices. He stated that proven most effective means for protection against arbovirus or tick-borne disease have always been personal protection and education.

Nome Graham of 1 Bickford Way appeared before the board in favor of opting out of mosquito spraying. She thanked the board for their education approach to mosquito control. She asked if there was a way to include wording that makes it clear that if the City becomes at high risk that there is a protocol to come along with it. *Mr. Schenk* stated that there is a protocol embedded within the proposed plan.

Marcia Hart of 2 Fremont Street appeared before the board in favor of opting out of mosquito spraying. She stated that she is very relieved to hear the Boards' opinion of mosquito control. She stated that she is concerned about the lack of community awareness regarding the program. *Mr. Schenk* responded that the Health Department found out by happenstance and if Ms. Keiser hadn't been contacted by Councilor Cox the Health Department may not have known until it was too late to opt out. He stated that there was not much public outreach because the Health Department was scrambling trying to figure out how the process worked and how they

would get a plan together quickly enough in order to get through the process. *Ms. Hart* stated that a statement should be made to the State about being more proactive about notifying communities.

Patti Page of 3 Tidal Cove Way, representing Mortillaro Lobster appeared before the board in favor of opting out of mosquito spraying. She stated that the personal property opt outs are annual and they must be submitted electronically by the end of March. She stated that healthy biodiverse ecosystems are the most effective way to manage mosquito control. She stated that anytime mosquitoes are targeted lobsters, shrimp, crabs, and snails are also targeted. She stated that BTI dunks are partnered with methoprene and methoprene is the substance that can also affect lobsters, shrimp, crabs, and snails.

Lisa Rigsby of 3 Taylor Court appeared before the board in favor of opting out of mosquito spraying. She stated that she is also concerned about the use of BTI dunks and how they can also be harmful to birds, bees, and other insects. She asked if BTI dunks would be used at the critical level or the high level of the proposed plan. *Mr. Schenk* stated that the City's decision to opt out lies with the City Council and the City's Administration.

Amanda Nash of 8 Exchange Street appeared before the board in favor of opting out of mosquito spraying. She asked who they can contact at the State to voice concerns about the lack of transparency on the issue. *Mr. Schenk* responded that she could contact the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs or the State Reclamation and Mosquito Control Board.

Brent Tarr of 18 Timberview Drive and 80 Essex Avenue appeared before the board in favor of opting out of mosquito spraying. He asked if salt marsh mosquitoes carry EEE. *Mr. Schenk* responded that it is not that the salt marsh mosquitoes don't potentially carry EEE, they are listed as one of the 12 species of mosquitoes on the Massachusetts Mosquito Control Board site. *Mr. Tarr* asked if private mosquito spraying companies would fall under the proposed plan. *Mr. Schenk* responded that the proposed plan is only specific to the Reclamation Board spraying.

Senator Bruce Tarr appeared before the board. He thanked everyone for the work that has been done and for communicating with his office. He stated that he has taken note on the comments that have been made regarding communication and notification. He stated that on March 19, 2021 they had sent notice to all of the chief executives in the municipalities informing them of the deadline. He stated that the Division of Local Services also sent out notices.

Councilor Barry Pett appeared before the board. He stated that he appreciates the input from the Board of Health and the residents. He stated that he is concerned with the differing ingredients in the BTI dunks. *Mr. Schenk* responded that they do not know which BTI dunks would be used. He stated that the companies that provide the dunks work more with private residences and not municipalities. He stated that it would come down to a bidding process and they did not have time to investigate further on the BTI dunks. *Councilor Pett* asked who would

give the City Council the expertise if they needed to resort to BTI dunks. *Mr. Schenk* responded that he would be happy to work with the City Council to try and provide some follow up information on BTI dunks.

MOTION by Mr. Rosa that the Gloucester Board of Health approve a plan to be forwarded to City Council to deal with mosquito control. **Seconded** by Ms. Schweitzer. **CARRIED.**

OLD BUSINESS

Discussion re: letter of support for Health Director Regarding Concerns Associated with COVID-19 Response Actions by the Administration-

Chairperson Sagall read the following statement:

“In order to understand our concerns, it’s essential to understand the role of the Board of Health, the Department of Health, the state Department of Public Health, and the city of Gloucester in our efforts to protect the residents of Gloucester during the current pandemic.

The Gloucester Board of Health is responsible for implementing measures to improve and maintain the health of Gloucester residents. Although part of the city government, the Board reports to the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, not the city nor the mayor.

The Gloucester Health Department is charged with executing the policies, rulings, and regulations approved by the Board of Health. Health Department Director, Karin Carroll, represents the board, overseeing the department employees in their duties. Although the department staff are city employees, they ultimately report to the board and not the city.

The members of the Board of Health accept that the principles of public health as the best means to achieve the goals of improving and maintaining the health of the Gloucester residents. This effort involves following the protocols designed to control and lessen exposure to infectious diseases such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

At the Board’s April 8, 2021 meeting, Director Carroll read a letter addressed to the Board listing a number of episodes where the Mayor’s actions were contradictory to the plans of the Board, violated the regulations of the state Department of Public Health, and may have violated protections required by HIPAA. As Director Carroll said, “These actions, however well-meaning, can adversely affect public health and should not continue.”

After Director Carroll read her letter to the Board, the Mayor was given an opportunity to address the issues raised in Carroll’s letter. This was followed by comments and questions from the Board. The Mayor and Director Carroll had a number of opportunities to respond and/or explain the actions in question.

At the conclusion of the comment period, a motion was made and passed unanimously to charge the chair of the Board of Health to compose a letter expressing the Board's support of the actions of Director Carroll, City Health Nurse Hiland, Assistant Director Schenk, and the staff of the Department of Health in the work they have done during the current pandemic.

The Board of Health expresses their support and gratitude for the untiring work of the entire Department of Health in implementing the policies provided to lessen the impact of the pandemic on Gloucester residents. In addition, the Board expresses its support of all city employees in their following the policies as promulgated by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health and not taking steps to circumvent these policies. The Board urges city employees to refer health-related questions to the proper staff, to not interfere with established protocols and to support the actions of the Board of Health and the Health Department.

The Board wants to specifically thank Director Carroll and City Nurse Hiland for their work to control the pandemic, educate city residents, and work with state and local officials in testing and vaccination programs. The city is fortunate to have all the members of the Health Department.

Submitted by Richard J. Sagall, MD, chair of the Gloucester Board of Health”

The board thanked Chairperson Sagall for drafting the letter. *Mr. Rosa* stated that Gloucester has done especially well during the pandemic in large measure by efforts of the Health Department but it has been a challenge and communication has not been perfect but hopefully they have learned how to make it better.

MOTION by Ms. Schweitzer that the Gloucester Board of Health accept the letter that was read by Chairperson Sagall. **Seconded** by Ms. Rosa. **CARRIED.**

OTHER CONCERNS OF THE BOARD

Chairperson of the Board of Health- *Ms. Schweitzer* stated that Chairperson Sagall has informed the board of his departure from the Board of Health and they should start to seek out candidates to replace him.

Chairperson of the Board of Health- *Chairperson Sagall* stated that it was reported in the newspaper today that the Health Department received a grant for \$125,000 to support regional substance abuse and prevention. He congratulated everyone involved in obtaining that grant.

Health Department Website- *Chairperson Sagall* stated that the Health Department has a new blog and website www.gloucesterpublichealth.com

Next Regular Monthly Meeting Board of Health- The next Board of Health monthly meeting is scheduled for May 6, 2021 at 5:30 pm.

MOTION by Mr. Cowan to adjourn.
Seconded by Mr. Rosa **CARRIED.**
MEETING ADJOURNED – 6:32 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

_____/S/ Bobbi Orlando_____

Bobbi Orlando

Accepted by:

_____/S/ Richard Sagall_____

Richard Sagall, Chairperson

Documents Referenced:

April 22, 2021 Board of Health Agenda

Application for Municipality Opt Out

City of Gloucester Proposed Alternate Mosquito Control Plan