

**Rehoboth Board of Human Services and Community health
Minutes of Meeting
December 14, 2023
Francis Building, Francis Farm Campus**

In attendance: Brittany Bixenman, Kimberly Ciociola, Marie-Juanita DiGioia, Robert Lambe, Richard Panofsky, Bruce Thayer, Gary Zimmer. Guest: Geraldine Hamel

1. The meeting was called to order at 7:02 pm.
2. Minutes. Inadvertently, the minutes draft for November 9, 2023, was not circulated. We will table action until the next meeting.
3. Public Health Report.
 - a) R. Lambe reviewed the various status documents. Covid levels are about where we were in October, well below pandemic levels. Cases are also low. So are respiratory illnesses (reported through November). Influenza-like activity is also low. Locally, hard frosts have lowered populations of ticks. There are reports of bites from lone star ticks, which can cause alpha-gal allergy (Meat allergy), in mid-Atlantic states. Rocky Mountain Spotted fever is another tick-borne illness whose range appears to be expanding eastward. When the weather warms, tick prevention will be very important. One case of Borrelia reported from routine screening of blood donors.
 - b) G. Hamel discussed recent occurrences of Hepatitis A in Massachusetts—2 females and 4 males, in Boston-area homeless and drug-using populations. Data from California show spikes in places that have adopted bans of single-use plastic bags.
4. Review of interdisciplinary issues from member boards and agencies.
 - a) Board of Health. G. Zimmer reported a new dumpster policy has gone to the BOS and for advice from legal counsel. He gave updates on the closing of spas. There are new local regulations for smoking sales, needed to permit local law enforcement to act.
 - b) Council on Aging. B. Bixenman reported that activities and meals numbers are expanding or holding steady. Meals are so popular they have started using tickets. There have not been any policy issues or illness events. Funding for the exercise equipment is still uncertain, but they will develop an exercise space lacking large equipment. The Council on Aging Board is arranging a planning meeting.
 - c) Rehoboth School Department. The health curriculum is approved by the state; however, our School Board enacted an opt-in rather than opt-out policy, and participation is predicted to be low. Continuing to have difficulty hiring nurse substitutes, and current staff often have to bounce from site to site. They are starting a Wellness Committee. They are developing a policy for animals in school (service dogs). They are still developing their Narcan process. Their School Resource Officer is helping develop a consistent policy for suicide intervention.
 - d) Human Services Department. Absent.
 - e) Rehoboth Community. K. Ciociola had no issues to cite.
 - f) Board of Selectmen Representative. R. Panofsky reported on attending monthly board meetings for GATRA. Soon he expects to become more active exploring senior transportation issues and options.
5. Old business.
 - a) Opioid settlement funds. Work to develop a policy and practice is still going on. The task group is waiting for feedback from the Board of Selectmen.
 - b) Smoking Recommendation. R. Panofsky reported on contacts with Town Counsel; we can activate their assistance after further clarifying the scope of our intentions. One issue is whether to work for

a Board of Selectmen policy or a regulation through the Board of Health; BOH regulations have more strict enforcement. The Board discussed a more specific definition of our intentions for the Town property smoking ban.

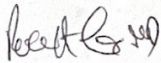
- There is consensus that a Selectmen-enacted policy is appropriate. If future circumstances indicate a need for targeted enforcement, we could ask the BOH to intervene later.
 - Considerable discussion ensued of ways to define which town properties are to be covered— various definitions of including all natural areas and conservancy lands vs. those with service buildings; and of extending to property lines or making zones around buildings. R. Panofsky moved to seek a policy banning smoking on all lands without exception and up to their borders; B. Thayer seconded. The motion carried with two Nay votes. The Nay voters wanted it recorded their preference was to indicate a zone like 50 feet around the buildings.
 - Included are smoking of all forms of tobacco and also of marijuana and vaping.
 - The purposes are to help ensure people's health and also prevent fires.
 - Discussion presumes that smoking will be permitted in personal vehicles, but we should seek clarity from town counsel. We will also inquire about any rights employees may have in this matter. We will also seek information on posting and on possible issues at property lines.
 - R. Lambe and R. Panofsky will meet with assigned Town Counsel as soon as practical.
- c) Emergency Preparedness. G. Hamel reported on a meeting of health emergency managers at Sturdy Hospital. Among the issues covered are limitations to access to vaccinations and concerns at the low levels of continuing vaccination. We need to remain alert to issues and find ways to push awareness. The Public Health Nurse website continues to provide information.

6. New Business. R. Panofsky mentioned that committees and boards, including ours, were asked to review any applicable sections of Town Bylaws with regard to a set of questions for the current eCode360 updating project. Members cannot think of any such places, that would not be already covered by the existing boards like the Board of Health and in reviews by town officers.

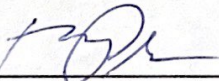
Next meeting will be January 11, 2023.

At 8:28 pm G. Zimmer moved adjournment, K. Ciociola seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Richard Panofsky, Clerk



Robert Lambe, Chair



Richard Panofsky, Clerk