

DOVER BOARD OF HEALTH
MEETING MINUTES
September 8, 2025
10:00 AM via Zoom

1. Call to order, roll call: Start time: 10:01 a.m.

Present: Chair Kay Petersen, Member Stephen Kruskall, Member John Quackenbush, Health Director Jason Belmonte, Public Health Nurse Gael Varsa, Administrative Assistant Suzanne Hilts, Administrative Assistant Sophia Kriegsman

Also Present: John Jeffries, Jim Palmer, Amey Moot

2. Citizen comments:

John Jeffries joins the Board to discuss Meeting House Hill and the issue of contaminated soil being removed from town property abutting their neighborhood. He expresses concern that two immediate abutters with young children were not notified promptly, and states that the lack of communication from the Board of Health is troubling. He questions when the Board was first notified of the contaminated soil and how the Board acts to notify nearby abutters. He notes that abutters with children experienced an upsetting situation by being notified later than the Board may have been. He also asks if there is any additional information that he should be aware of. Chair Petersen thanked him and reminded him that we could not answer his questions or deliberate on the topic since it was not on the agenda. She recommended that he follow-up with the Health Director after the meeting.

3. Next meeting: October 6, 2025

4. Approval and acceptance of minutes:

- May 12, 2025
- August 19, 2025

Member Quackenbush made a MOTION to approve the minutes from the May 12 meeting. Member Kruskall seconded the MOTION.

All members voted in favor to pass the motion.

Member Quackenbush made a MOTION to approve the minutes from the August 19

meeting. Member Kruskall seconded the MOTION.

All members voted in favor to pass the motion.

5. Deer Management Program Update

Jim Palmer reports that the hunting season for 2026 will commence shortly, with the ongoing goal of reducing tick-borne illness. He reports that during the 2024 hunting season, 52 hunters were enrolled, with 49 participating. Based on survey data, hunters go out into the field an average of three days, and that 13 deer were culled over the year (7 does and 6 bucks). The buck-to-doe ratio remains consistent at 50/50 in recent years. For the 2025 season, approximately 50 hunters are anticipated to participate, with the possibility of three additional residents. Mr. Palmer notes that among the hunters there is one female participant, and about 20% are law enforcement officers, including three from Dover. He emphasizes the benefit of their involvement.

Mr. Palmer states that no complaints were received during the 2024 season, and that overall complaints have remained minimal over the years. He cites positive feedback from hunters involved in the deer management program, and notes that illegal hunting activity in Dover has been monitored in an effort to end that unsponsored activity. He notes that some hunters have expressed interest in expanding hunting opportunities, such as adding Sunday hunting and additional parcels of land. He states this cannot be granted by the program; however, there is interest in obtaining more parcels. He also received additional feedback requesting to limit non-hunting activity on assigned parcels during hunting day, such as dog walking, hikers, and bikers, which can impact deer movement. He states that explicit signage prohibiting these activities on these properties exists, but enforcement remains unclear. Mr. Palmer notes that Blue Hill Reservation's transition from shotgun to archery hunting reduced the number of deer by more than half. He shares the original article from the Boston Globe which shows the history of the program.

Member Quackenbush asks about the acreage involved in the program, the deer population, and the program's advertisement. Mr. Palmer responds that roughly 1,000 acres are used, including Noanet Woodlands and Powisset Farm. He explains that due to the mild winter, more fawns have survived. He shares that Mass Wildlife estimates 30 deer per square mile in Dover,

emphasizing that these numbers are approximate and that culling 13-20 deer a year does not significantly reduce the local deer population.

Mr. Palmer also notes that there is no advertisement for this program, but has over 100 inquiries throughout the year to apply for the program, and the core group of about 50 hunters mostly return each season. He states that advertising would increase applications without sufficient land to accommodate the additional hunters.

Chair Kay Petersen inquires about records of deer-vehicle collisions in town. Mr. Palmer replies that this information is no longer regularly recorded, but may be available through the police chief. Member Kruskall recalls that recent prior data notes approximately 39 collisions annually, and Mr. Palmer states that some years it was as high as 70.

Amey Moot, president of the DCLT board, inquires about requests to hunt on her own property, noting that she believes her property is within the hunting program's territory, but she is unsure. She adds that Snows Hill does not seem feasible to be a part of the program due to heavy pedestrian use during the early morning hours. Mr. Palmer confirms that the Greg property is still part of the program and expresses interest in the land off Springdale Avenue, including the Army Corps of Engineers land, which permits hunting and could provide better access. He added that no issues have been raised regarding current program properties that also host recreational use. In response to Ms. Moot's question about land requirements, Mr. Palmer states that there is no minimum acreage, but hunting must remain at least 500 feet from dwellings and 150 feet from roads.

Chair Petersen suggests having a setup at Dover Days and sending letters to property owners whose land could support the program. She also asks about hunters sharing land. Mr. Palmer agrees that a letter campaign is a great idea and notes that hunting areas are typically shared by 2-10 hunters at a time without significant problems.

6. Public Health Nurse Report

Public Health Nurse Gael Varsa notes an uptick in Lyme disease cases, reporting that as of August 2025, there are 30 cases, as well as one case of babesiosis and two cases of

anaplasmosis. She adds that some of these tick exposures occur outside of Dover while residents are travelling.

Nurse Varsa reports that she, Director Belmonte, and Chair Peterson recently met with the schools regarding tick and mosquito safety during sports practices. She states that Sherborn is considered a high-risk town for West Nile Virus and speculates that Dover may also be considered high risk soon. She notes that during the many away games for Dover-Sherborn teams, the risk may be somewhat lower.

Member Kruskall observes that many people who use Dover's recreational land are not town residents and may be less aware of the risks of Lyme disease and other tick-borne diseases. He adds that there may not be a way to collect numbers for those cases. Nurse Varsa confirms that she only receives reports for Dover residents and explains that she asks residents about recent travel during case investigations. Chair Petersen asks about situations when a resident is out of state, and Nurse Varsa responds that she is still responsible to follow up if they are a Dover resident.

Nurse Varsa shares MAVEN data showing that influenza cases continue to rise in 2025. She notes that the Needham flu clinic held the previous weekend administered over 100 vaccines, many of them walk-ins. She states she will also participate in another Needham clinic and in the Dover clinic. Member Kruskall asks if Dover's pharmacist is licensed to administer vaccinations. Nurse Varsa confirms, adding that she will confirm following the meeting.

Member Kruskall comments that influenza reporting appears to be improving. Chair Petersen asks about his reasoning, and Member Kruskall clarifies that this is only a possibility. Nurse Varsa adds that free COVID-19 kits are no longer available at the Board of Health office, which may affect how often residents are tested for both COVID-19 and Influenza. She explains that without easy access to home test kits, fewer residents may be tested or report results through their primary care providers, which in turn could influence the accuracy of reported case numbers.

Nurse Varsa also reports that a resident responded to the AED initiative implemented in Dover, expressing interest in partnering with the Board of Health to further promote the program.

7. Shared Services Update

Director Belmonte reports that Shared Services has lost both the assistant Shared Services manager and the Shared Health Agent. He adds that Medfield and Sherborn have filled their open Health Administrator positions. He notes that creating a shared medical director has been an initiative for the group, and that he is involved in the interview process for the Shared Health Agent position. He also states that Medfield has hired a part-time Public Health Nurse.

Member Kruskall questions the value Shared Services contributes to the Dover Board of Health. Director Belmonte responds that overall, Shared Services is a useful tool for the Board of Health, but with so many unfilled positions, support is limited in some areas. He explains that Shared Services is built out over time and that Dover is working towards the long-term benefits it is intended to provide. He echoes Chair Petersen's comment that Shared Services is especially valuable for Public Health Nurses.

Chair Petersen suggests that there are not many qualified environmental health agents available to fill these roles. Director Belmonte agrees, noting that many positions remain unfilled due to the lack of qualified applicants.

8. Flu Clinic and COVID-19 Vaccine Discussion

Director Belmonte states that on October 3rd, the Dover Board of Health is hosting the flu clinic at the Dover Town House, as the previous venue is under construction. He notes that curbside vaccinations are available for those unable to come inside. Regarding COVID-19 vaccinations, he states that it is unclear whether these will be available and covered for residents.

9. Camp Hearing Follow-Up

Member Kruskall expresses his desire for a written agreement requiring Camp Grossman to comply with Board of Health advisements and actionable items, including bringing in an outside advisor to guide the camp through improvements requested by the Board. Director Belmonte asks whether the board would like Camp Grossman to join a hearing sooner rather than later, and the Board unanimously agrees.

Chair Petersen suggests inviting Camp Grossman to return in November to discuss strategies for overall improvement. Director Belmonte notes that, since the camp has just ended, meeting during the off-season may be less effective than scheduling closer to the next camp season, around January 2026. Nurse Varsa recalls that a parent who spoke at the hearing noted her application being completed in December, and believes that a meeting prior to the new calendar year would be preferable. The Board concludes that Camp Grossman will be invited to meet with the Board in November.

10. Schedule Date for Tobacco Hearing

Director Belmonte asks the Board to select a date for a possible tobacco hearing. He notes developments at the state level, where a bill is being pursued to advance this initiative.

Member Quackenbush states that he wants to move ahead with pursuing this initiative. Chair Petersen echoes this opinion and expresses interest in holding a hearing and taking a vote during the same session.

Member Kruskall states that he prefers postponing the hearing until the state makes a decision. He adds that in discussions with residents, he has not observed interest in the Board moving forward with this regulation. Chair Petersen responds that the state's progress, and the pace at which it advances, is unclear.

Public Health Nurse Varsa notes that this topic was raised during the recent school meeting, where participants expressed support for the regulation. Member Kruskall asks about the survey regarding nicotine use in middle schools. Nurse Varsa confirms that this survey was shared at the meeting. Member Kruskall also expresses interest in the Board becoming more involved in alcohol use prevention among students. Chair Petersen encourages him to gather information for the Board if he wishes to pursue this further.

Director Belmonte states that the Town Counsel has not yet responded to his inquiry on the wording of the proposed regulation. Member Kruskall states that proposing a hearing and a vote on the same date would be unusual. Director Belmonte responds that, according to the Town Counsel, this would be permitted. Chair Petersen supports receiving feedback from the Town Counsel prior to scheduling a hearing date.

The Board concludes that the date for the hearing will be confirmed at a later meeting.

11. Job Classification and Compensation Study

Director Belmonte states that Town Administration and Human Resources conduct a study every few years to review job descriptions and salaries, ensuring they are accurate and fair in comparison with other nearby communities.

He notes that all Board members have been provided with their most current job descriptions to review. Once feedback has been received, Director Belmonte will review the documents before submitting the final job descriptions to HR. He adds that the deadline for submission is in late September.

12. Requests to Modify Deed Restrictions

Director Belmonte notes that many deed restrictions from years past limit properties based on outdated regulations. He cites 53 Powisset Street as an example, where the property owner requested to build an accessory dwelling unit (ADU), but is limited by an old deed restriction. Upon review of the plans and applications, he finds no factors that should prevent the owner from constructing the ADU. He therefore recommends voiding the existing deed restriction and asks for the Board's approval.

Director Belmonte further notes that the current process for finalizing deed restrictions requires the Board of Health Chair's signature, which can delay approval. He requests the Board's authorization for his signature to be the final stamp of approval for the Board of Health office.

Member Kruskall asks whether it is possible to pull existing deed restrictions that relate specifically to ADUs. Director Belmonte replies that this is not feasible, as existing covenants cannot be filtered for particular items. Member Kruskall requests that a report of modified deed restrictions be shared with the Board, and Director Belmonte agrees. In response to Member Kruskall's concern about removing deed restrictions, Director Belmonte clarifies that deed restrictions are required under penalty of Massachusetts Laws for certain projects, such as Innovative Alternative Systems, and will not be removed from the Board of Health's process.

Member Quackenbush made a MOTION to grant Director Belmonte authority to sign-off on deed restrictions, as long as modifications are shared with the Board.

Member Kruskall seconded the MOTION.

All members voted in favor to pass the motion.

13. Old Business

Member Kruskall inquires about progress on water quality issues in Town. Director Belmonte states that public water is not under the purview of the Board of Health. Member Kruskall then asks if the Board wishes to discuss the soil contamination issue near Meeting House Hill Road. Director Belmonte responds that it may not be appropriate to discuss this further following the direction given during the citizen comment period.

14. Adjournment

Member Kruskall made a MOTION to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Chair Petersen. The meeting adjourned at 12:12 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Sophia Kriegsman