

DOVER BOARD OF HEALTH
MINUTES DRAFT
May 12, 2025
6:30 PM via Zoom

1. Call to order, roll call: Start time: 6:32 p.m.

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

Also Present: Stephen Helfer, Alex Weatherall, Jonathan

2. Citizen comments: N/A

3. Next meeting: September 8, 2025

4. Approval and acceptance of minutes:

- April 7, 2025

Member Kruskall made a MOTION to approve the minutes from the April 7 meeting. Member Quackenbush seconded the MOTION.

All members voted in favor to pass the motion.

5. Endgame Tobacco Continued Discussion

Stephen Helfer joins the Board in representation of Cambridge Citizens for Smokers' Rights, a non-profit organization. He opposes the Nicotine Free Generation (NFG) Regulation, calling it a stealth prohibition similar to early 20th-century tobacco bans. He argues it aims for total tobacco and nicotine prohibition, citing a proponent who describes it as “a slow burn for people not paying attention.” Helfer references data showing youth disinterest in tobacco/nicotine, with youth smoking at a 25-year low and vaping at a 10-year low. He notes that in Massachusetts, adults can legally choose intoxicants like alcohol and marijuana, while nicotine—non-intoxicating—can enhance cognition and motor skills. He highlights that many tobacco retailers are immigrants of color, and the regulation would harm their businesses. Helfer finds the policy overly restrictive, limiting adult autonomy, and urges the Board not to pass it.

Jonathan, an advocate for mental health, joins the Board in opposition to the NFG regulation. As a smoker himself, he favors the use of tobacco and finds it to be an important factor in an honest worker. He finds coffee and cigarettes to be the best rally cry for recovery. He feels that if this

regulation takes away people's rights to smoke and/or have a smoke break, it is discriminatory and unfair. He asks the Board not to pass this regulation's proposal.

Alex Weatherall joins the Board as the owner of the Sherborn Market. He states his perspective as an owner of a gas station/convenience store near Dover, finding the NFG regulation to be performative. 131 days from May 11, 2025, his sales of cigarettes have reduced by 3.85 packs a day. He feels the regulations that are already in place have been effective, and consumption of nicotine-containing products is dropping without the implementation of the NFG regulation. He highlights the contrast between 2015 and 2025, noting that purchases of cigarettes are down by over 20 packs a day. He finds the industry forces people out of businesses; the annual rise in price of cigarettes itself has led to a decline in sales. In response to Chair Petersen's question about 2024–2025 nicotine pouch sales, Alex says it's hard to assess. He points to the rising popularity of Zyn, a Philip Morris International product, first popular in Europe and now in the U.S., mainly among tradesmen trying to quit smoking. He struggles to keep it in stock due to the Massachusetts ban on flavored nicotine, explaining that with only two legal SKUs, it's impractical for the company to prioritize shipments to the state, contributing to lower Zyn sales at the Sherborn Market.

Health Director Belmonte encourages the Board to choose a path forward: hold a feedback-focused formal hearing, potentially followed by an amendment approval hearing; conduct a single hearing that includes a vote; or drop the topic entirely if the Board decides not to pursue it.

Member Kruskall proposes a MOTION for the Board to drop the NFG regulation entirely, due to a lack of representation from Dover residents. He feels it would be appropriate for the State to move forward with this regulation, if it is something they show interest in.

Member Quackenbush sees a formal hearing as an opportunity to gauge Dover residents' views on the NFG regulation. He stresses the importance of promoting the event to encourage participation, suggesting an ad in *Hometown Weekly*. While acknowledging Member Kruskall's concerns, he believes more resident feedback is needed. Member Kruskall recalls prior conversations with residents who opposed the regulation. Director Belmonte notes that *Hometown Weekly* typically runs ads for two weeks and confirms he would post a notice if the Board chooses to proceed. He also emphasizes the importance of hearing from Dover schools, the Board of Selectmen, and tobacco license holders to ensure broad stakeholder input at the hearing.

Chair Petersen echoes Member Quackenbush's support for moving the NFG regulation to a public hearing, expressing interest in hearing from more town residents. Member Quackenbush acknowledges Jonathan's request for the Board to support Member Kruskall's motion but reiterates his preference for gathering broader input through an open hearing.

Director Belmonte asks Chair Petersen and Member Quackenbush whether they prefer a feedback-focused formal hearing, potentially followed by an amendment approval hearing, or conduct a single hearing that includes a vote. Member Quackenbush acknowledges the minor changes in the draft circulated by Director Belmonte and expresses a preference for a single hearing where the draft is presented and voted on. Chair Petersen agrees, emphasizing the importance of moving forward and reaching a decision on whether to adopt the regulation.

Member Quackenbush made a MOTION to approve the proposed amendments, contingent on the approval from Town Council and the Board of Selectmen, to then be presented in an open hearing. Chair Petersen seconded the MOTION.

The motion passed 2:1, Member Kruskall opposed the motion.

6. BOH Webpage Updates

Director Belmonte informs the Board that there are three draft write-ups for potential webpage updates and requests their input on each. Administrative Assistant Suzanne Hilts presents the first write-up, focused on vermiculite insulation's link to asbestos, which she and Member Kruskall worked on. Chair Petersen asks if the Board of Health webpage currently includes other information on asbestos; Director Belmonte replies that it does not. Chair Petersen suggests creating a broader write-up to inform residents about asbestos in the home, beyond just vermiculite insulation. Member Kruskall supports adding more information but feels the current vermiculite write-up is sufficient for now. Member Quackenbush agrees on the value of expanding asbestos-related content.

The second write-up, focused on tick safety, is shared with the Board. Admin Suzanne Hilts explains that it was developed from the existing PDF on tick safety and expanded with content from an article provided by Member Quackenbush. She points out the additional text and presents an accompanying infographic containing the same information. Member Kruskall asks whether the write-up includes guidance on preventative doses of doxycycline and if a banner could be added during peak tick season. Hilts confirms that doxycycline information is included. Member

Quackenbush suggests adding a revision date to the document and otherwise approves of the content. Chair Petersen asks if both the infographic and full text would appear on the website; Member Quackenbush recommends combining them by placing the graphic at the top of the PDF and the text at the bottom.

Public Health Nurse Gael Varsa shares updates from MAVEN, reporting numerous repeat tick bite cases in Sherborn. Member Quackenbush asks if there's data on where these bites are occurring; Nurse Varsa responds that many are happening in backyards, as well as during outdoor activities like hiking and yard work. Chair Petersen asks whether affected individuals were wearing permethrin-treated clothing. Nurse Varsa says it's not a question she currently asks but can begin including it. Chair Petersen explains her interest, highlighting the effectiveness of permethrin-treated clothing despite its limited use. Member Kruskall agrees, noting a noticeable difference when he wears it in his backyard. Chair Petersen shares an experience where a tick found on a dog was placed on a piece of fabric treated by permethrin, the tick died within three minutes.

Member Kruskall shares his concern for people visiting from outside of Dover, who have less information about ticks and potentially return home unaware of what they may have incurred during their visit. He feels it is the responsibility of the Board to inform residents as well as visitors of Dover. Nurse Varsa asks about signage at Caryl Park, Member Kruskall replies that there previously was a small metal sign near the tennis courts, but has not seen any other signage. Chair Petersen states her interest in displaying a sign at Caryl Park with a QR code linking to the Board of Health webpage. Member Quackenbush asks if Parks and Recreation does any spraying for ticks. Member Kruskall states these sprays are, unfortunately, not effective. Member Kruskall notes that he would like the new Board of Health intern to conduct a study similar to the study conducted ~15 years ago in conjunction with Sam Telford at UMass, which gave an indication about the tick population, their whereabouts, and the types of diseases they carried. Chair Petersen suggests the intern work on the details of a wider tick campaign, as well as information pertaining to asbestos.

The third DPH write-up is shared with the Board. Public Health Nurse Gael Varsa finds it helpful, given the upcoming travel season, especially for its international travel recommendations. She has shared it with Public School nurses and the Dover Mothers' Association to raise awareness about travel to countries with lower vaccination rates. Member Quackenbush supports posting the graphic promptly. Chair Petersen expresses concern that vaccinated individuals may be unclear about next steps, and Quackenbush suggests editing the PDF to reduce confusion.

All members voice their support to upload the three write-ups once corrections have been made.

7. Shared Services Update

Director Belmonte reports recent staffing changes in the Shared Services among Dover, Sherborn, Needham, and Medfield. Both the Assistant Manager and Shared Health Agent have left their roles, prompting him to resume food inspections. He notes additional changes in Sherborn and that Medfield is seeking to expand its Health Department, describing the situation as a period of staff shortages.

8. Summer Meetings

The Board concludes that meetings will resume in September, following the current meeting.

9. Public Health Nurse Report

Public Health Nurse Gael Varsa reports positive feedback from the hands-free CPR demonstration at the Dover Health Fair. She notes upcoming CPR training for employees in June 2025, with three morning sessions and one afternoon session planned for the 30 interested staff. AED training will be included, using mannequins provided by LifeSupport, the training provider.

Nurse Varsa updates the Board on progress uploading AEDs to the PulsePoint AED app, helping residents locate emergency response systems. She notes its value, as coaches and teams from nearby towns have found the information helpful. School AEDs are not yet uploaded, as she still needs to schedule an appointment. Member Kruskall notes the Community Center will need AEDs. Director Belmonte agrees, saying they'll need a quote and emphasizing that more AEDs in Dover is a positive step.

Nurse Varsa shares a travel clinic resource in Natick, prompted by a rabies case in Sherborn and limited vaccine access—the nearest option at the time being in Somerville. Member Kruskall recalls rabies vaccine availability at Framingham Union and mentions a travel clinic once run by Newton-Wellesley. Nurse Varsa, with an upcoming meeting at Newton-Wellesley Community Services, hopes to learn more about their offerings. She expresses uncertainty about the logistics of vaccine appointments in the Emergency Room. Kruskall clarifies that walk-ins are accepted and considers ER visits appropriate for rabies cases. Varsa questions the practicality of bringing children

into the ER, suggesting travel clinics may be a more family-friendly option. Kruskall stresses the urgency and recalls ordering rabies vaccines during his time in the ER.

Member Quackenbush raises the question of whether the Board should include travel clinic information on the webpage. Nurse Varsa supports this idea, adding that the question does arise frequently, and it would be beneficial to include convenient, local travel clinic information.

Nurse Varsa reports a recent meeting with a Community Relations worker at Beth Israel Needham about programs. She explains that Dover is no longer in their hospitalization catchment area, which was redrawn after Norwood Hospital closed. Member Kruskall notes this should be addressed if it hinders Dover residents' access to care. Varsa assures the Board that Beth Israel recognizes Dover residents still receive necessary services. In response to Chair Petersen's request for clarification, she explains the closure shifted the communities the hospital typically serves. Petersen suggests it would be helpful to learn whether access is shaped more by patient behavior than hospital decisions. Varsa mentions an upcoming meeting with Newton-Wellesley Hospital to learn about their offerings for Dover. Kruskall stresses the need to understand why Dover is excluded, given how many residents use Beth Israel services.

Nurse Varsa notes she regularly shares information with the Council on Aging and has found Beth Israel Needham's programs on night driving and balance particularly helpful. She looks forward to learning about Newton-Wellesley's offerings, especially in pediatric mental health.

Chair Petersen supports maintaining information on the Board of Health webpage, provided it is regularly updated. She acknowledges Admin Suzanne Hilts' ongoing efforts to check that links remain accurate and relevant.

Nurse Varsa states she will be reaching out to local churches to introduce herself and see if there are any people who would benefit from meeting with her.

10. Old Business

Member Kruskall expressed disappointment at Town Meeting over the lack of mention that the Board's funds were used to support implementing online permitting, though he acknowledges it was unintentional. Chair Petersen says the Town must first confirm funding before publicizing it. Kruskall adds that once official, the Board of Health should receive credit. When Petersen asks about the timeline, Director Belmonte estimates online permitting will launch in about a year,

noting an adjustment period will follow.

Member Kruskall highlights the town's water supply is fragile, with only one well currently active for the Colonial and Eversource systems; the others face issues. Chair Petersen asks who is monitoring this. Kruskall says he's open to the Board taking it on. Member Quackenbush inquires about options; Kruskall mentions the MWRA, which sources water from Westwood via Hartford Street. Petersen asks if a water task force exists—Kruskall hopes so but suggests the Board should oversee the issue. Quackenbush notes the Board of Selectmen might need to handle it due to budget constraints. Petersen asks about DEP involvement; Kruskall is unsure but hopes they're aware. Petersen suggests DEP may not act since the problem is potential, not active. The Board agrees to investigate the town's water situation further.

11. Adjournment

Member Quackenbush made a MOTION to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Member Kruskall. The meeting adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

Documents and Exhibits Used During this Meeting:

Draft Meeting Minutes of April 7, 2025

Draft of Vermiculite Messaging - dated April 2025

Draft of Updated Tick Safety Information - dated April 2025

Draft of DPH Travel Safety

Respectfully submitted,

Suzanne Hilts