DOVER BOARD OF HEALTH
MEETING MINUTES
January 13, 2025
6:30 PM via Zoom

1. Call to order, roll call: Start time: 6:31 p.m.

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

   Also Present: Ardi Rrapi

2. Citizen comments: N/A
3. Next meeting: February 3, 2024
4. Approval and acceptance of minutes:
   - December 2, 2024

   Member Kruskall made a MOTION to approve the minutes from the December 2 meeting. Member Quackenbush seconded the MOTION.

   All members voted in favor to pass the motion.

5. 88 Pine Street Well Variance

Director Belmonte references the well variance for the 88 Pine Street project, previously discussed on December 2. Due to the well's proximity to nearby wetlands and the property's driveway, Ardi Rrapi and his team have proposed a plan positioning the well 14 feet from the wetlands, instead of the required 25 feet. Belmonte notes that Ardi has adhered to notification protocols by informing abutters through letters and a newspaper notice. He states that this meeting provides the Board with an opportunity to formally decide on the variance and expresses his support, emphasizing that it ensures a safe supply of running water for the property owner. However, he clarifies that the Board's approval would be conditional on the Conservation Commission's review, scheduled for January 23, 2025.

Member Quackenbush made a MOTION to approve the well variance for 88 Pine Street, contingent on the approval from the Conservation Commission. Member Kruskall seconded the MOTION.

All members voted in favor to pass the motion.

6. Waste Hauler Renewals

Director Belmonte highlights the requirement in the Trash Hauler Regulations that renewals must be formally approved by the Board during a public meeting. He confirms that all companies listed (Attachment 1) have submitted the necessary materials for renewal and have been issued their permits. Member Kruskall inquires about any complaints against waste hauler companies, to which Director Belmonte responds that there have been none. Chair Petersen asks if there has been any change in the number of haulers, and Director Belmonte states that the number has remained consistent. Both Director Belmonte and Member Kruskall note that E.L. Harvey handles the majority of waste pickups in Dover.

Member Quackenbush made a MOTION to approve all permits. Chair Kay Petersen seconded the MOTION.
All members voted in favor to pass the motion.

7. Septic Hauler Renewals

Director Belmonte explains that all septic hauler and installer renewals align with the calendar year, resulting in a new list for the current period. While Board approval is not required for these renewals, Belmonte sought to involve the Board in the process. Director Belmonte shares the list of Haulers and Installers that have submitted appropriate paperwork and have been issued permit renewals. Chair Petersen inquires if there has been any significant changes to the list, and Belmonte confirms it remains consistent year to year. In response to Member Quackenbush's inquiry about market share, Belmonte notes that Scott Septic handles most installations, while Atkinson Engineering conducts the majority of Title 5 inspections in Dover. Chair Petersen notes that applying for a permit is not a cinch; Director Belmonte agrees, emphasizing that new companies must pass an exam and provide all required documentation and fees before obtaining a license or permit.

8. Board of Health Fees

Director Belmonte reports that as part of the Shared Public Health Services Agreement, he recently participated in a study comparing Dover Board of Health fees to those of other municipalities. Following a series of meetings, it was determined that Dover's fees are relatively lower than other towns. He asks the Board if they feel a change in the current fee schedule is appropriate.

Member Quackenbush inquires about the extent of the disparity, and Belmonte explains that while not all fees differ significantly, septic fees are several hundred dollars lower than in other towns, whereas food fees are comparable. Chair Petersen references a discussion she had with the program consultant regarding the resources required for certain services, including the time invested in activities covered by the fee schedule. Belmonte elaborates on other considerations for calculating new fees, such as employee salaries relative to permit fees, fringe benefit percentages, and the time required to complete specific tasks.

Member Kruskall asks if the study analyzed which segments of the fee-paying population—private citizens versus contractors, developers, and builders—incur the fees. Belmonte responds that this level of detail was not included, and the Board does not have access to that information.

Chair Petersen asks Director Belmonte if he has a spreadsheet he can share with the Board to help make sense of the findings, Director Belmonte confirms (Attachment 2). Petersen expresses support for aligning fees with the actual cost of providing services to homeowners, contractors, and business owners. She emphasizes the importance of neither undercharging nor overcharging for services, seeing this as an ideal opportunity to recalibrate fees.

Member Kruskall addresses the potential argument of citizens claiming their taxes already pay for these services, and they would not want to be additionally burdened. Chair Petersen notes that historically the agents have been paid through a revolving fund into which the fees go; but that is no longer the case.

Director Belmonte shares his screen to illustrate the spreadsheet to show the current fees, what the fee "should be," and the difference between the two costs. Chair Petersen asks about how certain costs are determined, Director Belmonte explains that the spreadsheet accounts for factors such as salaries, budget details, and vacation time. Member Kruskall points out that a number of services have a very high percentage delta, and acknowledges Belmonte's considerable time spent on site reviews, supporting the need for a revised fee schedule.

Member Quackenbush recalls contracted workers previously conducting well and septic inspections and asks if fees varied depending on the type of system or situation. Belmonte explains that a portion of each permit fee historically went directly to the health agent, but it's unclear how permit costs were calculated. Currently, permit revenue goes to the town without being allocated by percentages. Quackenbush asks if there is anything that deters the Board from changing the fee structure, such as Board of Selectmen approval or a town meeting. Belmonte believes the Board has the authority to make these changes independently. Quackenbush also asks if Belmonte knows the number of inspections charged in the past year. Belmonte confirms that he logs these inspections in his calendar.

Member Kruskall asks whether the information in the town report aligns with the details Director Belmonte shared with the Board. Belmonte explains that his goal for the town report was clarity, addressing the overly complex wording of previous reports to make them more accessible to the public. Kruskall expresses interest in understanding the potential revenue impact if the most common fees were adjusted, noting this analysis could help determine appropriate fee changes. Chair Petersen emphasizes the problems associated with leaving fees unchanged, pointing out that as costs to deliver services increase, stagnant fees exacerbate the problem.

Chair Petersen proposes that each Board member review the spreadsheet before the next meeting to have a productive discussion. In the meantime, she and Director Belmonte will research deadlines and proper steps to changing the fees. Chair Petersen notes that once the public health nurse is on board, the Board will establish a fee schedule for vaccinations, rather than outsourcing to another company. This will bring a new category of fees to the Board of Health, and the revolving account will have to be amended.

9. Budget Approval FY26

Director Belmonte reports that the FY26 budget has been finalized and requires formal Board approval. He highlights a 7% budget increase, due to employee raises, the addition of a public health nurse, materials for the nurse, and planned wage increases for the upcoming year. Belmonte explains that the $50,000 previously allocated to the professional services line over the past three years will be moved to the permanent staff line to support the public health nurse position.

Chair Petersen notes that the request for funding a vaccine refrigerator has been eliminated, as Sherborn has agreed to share their vaccine refrigeration setup for the current year.

Member Quackenbush made a MOTION to approve the FY26 Budget Request as presented. Member Kruskall seconded the MOTION.

All members voted in favor to pass the motion.

10. Radon Detectors

Member Kruskall proposes a service in which Dover lends radon detectors to citizens who wish to test for radon within their homes. He suggests that having borrowable radon detectors available at the Board of Health office would encourage residents to check for radon, highlighting the convenience compared to purchasing one. Chair Petersen and Member Quackenbush ask about the cost of a radon detector, and while Kruskall is unsure, he believes they are relatively inexpensive. He stresses the added ease for residents if they can borrow one instead of buying their own.

Chair Petersen asks about the maintenance of the detector upon lending it to different citizens, Member Kruskall states that research has been conducted on the instrument to ensure its reliability. Chair Petersen emphasizes the importance of the Board of Health providing a tool that is accurate and dependable for homeowners to use.

Director Belmonte states that Mass DPH offers a free program that allows citizens to test for radon in their homes, and he feels this may be an effective alternative if the Board is interested in promoting radon awareness. Chair Petersen adds this would be a good item for a banner, newsletter, and webpage item. Member Quackenbush notes that the DPH offers free radon testing from November through March (during heating season). Chair Petersen questions why the program is seasonal, Quackenbush speculates it is because it prevents outside air from influencing the readings.

Director Belmonte and all Board members conclude that providing information and raising awareness about radon testing would be beneficial.

11. <u>Endgame Tobacco Discussion</u>

Chair Petersen introduces the topic of "Endgame Tobacco," referencing Needham's recent adoption of a bylaw in December that prohibits tobacco sales to individuals born after a certain date, effectively creating a nicotine-free generation. She recalls her former colleague, Anthony Ishak, who was involved in drafting the nation's first bylaw restricting tobacco sales to younger populations, noting that similar initiatives are gaining traction in other municipalities. Petersen asks whether the Board would benefit from inviting someone involved in the bylaw to present at a future meeting or if they prefer to discuss the topic internally. She clarifies that no decisions will be made at this meeting and invites feedback from the Board.

Member Kruskall emphasizes that if the Board proceeds, it must ensure the consideration of any new bylaw is well-publicized to avoid it being overlooked by residents. Member Quackenbush highlights the compelling results from Needham, which showed a 50% reduction in high school smoking. While uncertain about the smoking prevalence at Dover-Sherborn High School, he believes reducing tobacco sales to younger people would have a positive impact. Chair Petersen mentions a reported 22% tobacco use rate among Dover's youth but acknowledges uncertainty about the data's source.

Petersen suggests collaborating with the public health nurse, once hired, as well as local school nurses, to approach the matter comprehensively. She proposes waiting until the nurse is on board before arranging further discussions. Member Quackenbush supports inviting Anthony Ishak to present his findings at a future meeting, seeing this as valuable for informing any decisions on the issue.

12. Old Business

N/A

13. Adjournment

Member Quackenbush made a MOTION to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Member Kruskall. The meeting adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

Documents and Exhibits Used During this Meeting:
Draft Meeting Minutes of December 2, 2024
Attachment 1: List- Trash Hauler Companies - dated January 2025
Attachment 2: Dover MHOA Permit Fee Calculator - dated December 2024
88 Pine St Abutter Notification - dated January 2025
88 Pine St Variance Request BOH - dated November 2024
88 Pine Well Variance Plan - dated September 2024
BOH Fee Schedule-2023 - dated November 2023
FY26 Budget Materials Packet - dated January 2025

Respectfully submitted,

Administrative Asst. Suzanne Hilts