

DOVER BOARD OF HEALTH
MINUTES
February 3, 2025
6:30 PM via Zoom

1. Call to order, roll call: Start time: 6:30 p.m.

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

Also Present: Anthony Ishak, Maureen Buzby, Kate Silbaugh, Justine Uritam, John
Benson, Brian O'Connor

2. Citizen comments:

Justine Uritam opens the citizen comment period by thanking the Board for their volunteer efforts during the COVID-19 pandemic. She notes discussions with Director Belmonte regarding water contamination concerns related to private wells near the town garage and the large garage under construction at 20 Haven Street.

Brian O'Connor, a resident of 19 Haven Street, attends the meeting to understand the process and express concerns about the 20 Haven Street garage. After consulting with Belmonte and engineers, he formally requested the Board of Health review potential impacts on his drinking water. He also questions the incomplete plot plan for 20 Haven Street, stating it lacks sufficient details for a full project assessment. He seeks clarity before any permits are issued.

John Benson, who lives next door to 20 Haven Street, voices concerns about the garage being owned by an LLC and used for car storage. He notes a standard review is important because it establishes that the owner is a corporate entity. His private well is within ten feet of the property line, adjacent to a planned 14-foot blacktop driveway. He requests reducing the driveway width to ten feet and using a more protective material. Additionally, he seeks advice on suitable vegetation to safeguard groundwater quality.

Justine Uritam and her neighbors request to be on the next Board of Health agenda to discuss the 20 Haven Street project. Uritam believes the Board should require a 100-foot distance between any project's private wells and abutting property lines. She is concerned about Dover's commercialization and the impact on private wells and the water supply. Uritam urges the Board of Health to attend the upcoming Planning Board meeting and oversee changes in the full site plan

review.

Director Belmonte summarizes that he has been able to connect individually with Justine, Brian, and John regarding this situation, and thanks them for each voicing their concerns. Going forward, communication regarding this project should be directed through Director Belmonte, and he will address concerns to the best of his ability. He concludes that while he has received the application for this project, it has not yet been reviewed.

3. Next meeting: March 3, 2025

4. Approval and acceptance of minutes:

- January 13, 2025

Member Kruskall made a MOTION to approve the minutes from the January 13 meeting. Member Quackenbush seconded the MOTION.

All members voted in favor to pass the motion.

5. Endgame Tobacco Discussion

Anthony Ishak, a pharmacist working in primary care at an academic teaching hospital, joins the meeting alongside Kate Silbaugh and Maureen Buzby to inform the Board about the Nicotine Free Generation Bylaw, co-petitioned in 2020. This bylaw phases out tobacco sales based on birthdate, thus preventing new users while allowing existing consumers continued access. It aims to reduce youth addiction without forcing current users to quit abruptly. According to the CDC, 90-95% of tobacco users start before age 18, despite the legal purchasing age of 21. Ishak highlights that many insurers in Massachusetts provide cessation products at no cost.

Since Brookline implemented the bylaw in 2021, six retailers challenged it up to the highest court in Massachusetts. As of March 2024, all appeals have been exhausted, suggesting the bylaw could become statewide law. Ishak recalls that three weeks prior to this meeting, the State House proposed a bill, hoping more municipalities will support and vote for the bylaw, driving momentum for legislative action. He notes that 13 municipalities have since voted in favor, with Newton and Pelham filing resolutions and Somerville expected to follow.

Anthony adds that this bylaw impacts individuals who are not yet in a position to decide but later lose that choice due to addiction. He emphasizes that quitting can take multiple attempts, and most people who avoid tobacco past age 25 do not start later. He cites the financial burden of smoking,

estimating a lifetime smoker may spend \$5.1 million, including \$240,000 out-of-pocket for tobacco, with additional costs due to health care and lost savings.

Anthony summarizes the effect on retailers, stating many have adjusted their business models without immediate financial loss. He clarifies that towns only profit from tobacco sales through permit fees, as all taxes go to the state. He notes that the average Massachusetts household spends \$1,100 annually on tobacco-related health care.

Chair Petersen and Member Quackenbush ask about Brookline's education efforts for youth and retailers. Anthony mentions the Department of Health and Human Services' role in signage, compliance checks, and education campaigns. While he has personally visited schools to educate students, much of the youth education is integrated into the school system. He notes that since the bylaw's implementation, tobacco consumption methods have shifted from vaping to products like Zyn. He believes ongoing education and youth engagement are crucial to the campaign's success.

Chair Petersen asks for more information on Zyn. Anthony describes it as a nicotine pouch sold in small tins. Chair Petersen questions whether Zyn reduces cigarette smoking rates, noting such products can create a false perception of progress in tobacco control. Anthony invites Kate Silbaugh to elaborate, given her expertise.

Kate explains that non-combustible products like Zyn and vapes remain debated in tobacco control, but the Nicotine Free Generation Bylaw does not engage in this debate. She stresses that the policy benefits individuals who have not yet used nicotine products, meaning no transition between products occurs. She recalls when the legal tobacco purchasing age was raised from 18 to 21, a shift initiated by municipalities before expanding statewide and federally. She cites Needham's success, noting that raising the age to 21 led to a 50% decline in youth tobacco use within a few years.

Maureen Buzby expands on the education component of the bylaw, stating that six of the seven communities she works with have adopted it. She highlights the impact of public hearings, where youth shared personal struggles with tobacco addiction. Retailers were also invited to participate. She explains that Zyn is a brand name for nicotine pouches, which contain between 3-9mg of nicotine per pouch, while newer brands contain up to 18mg—comparable to the 24mg found in an entire pack of cigarettes. She emphasizes that nicotine pouches are often more potent, cheaper, and more discreet than traditional tobacco products. Maureen notes an increase in Zyn sales, leading to a \$9 billion profit for its manufacturer, significantly impacting traditional cigarette sales.

Chair Petersen asks about pushback. Maureen describes encountering opposition when delivering notices for public hearings. Flyers with QR codes linked to anti-bylaw petitions, tariff flyers were placed on store countertops, and robo-emails were sent to local officials. Retailers, distributors, and trade associations participated in hearings, sometimes joined by customers. She notes that while discussions remained respectful, opposition was well-funded. However, strong support came from health professionals, school officials, parents, former smokers, and youth.

Kate Silbaugh adds that evidence shows the bylaw does not significantly harm retailers, as they retain existing customers while phasing out future sales. She points to the industry's strong opposition as an indication of the policy's potential impact. Unlike flavor bans that immediately remove products, this regulation gradually eliminates tobacco access for new users. She highlights the growing municipal adoption of the policy over the past six months.

Anthony reiterates that the policy exclusively targets tobacco and nicotine products without health benefits. Chair Petersen asks if Board members have further questions; none do, and they thank the presenters. Anthony offers to share articles for additional reference.

Chair Petersen suggests adding "endgame tobacco" to the next meeting's agenda for further discussion. Member Quackenbush proposes a public forum before moving forward, and Member Kruskall agrees, anticipating retailer interest. Chair Petersen adds that once the Public Health Nurse is onboard, her input would be valuable. The Board agrees to revisit the discussion in a future meeting.

6. Avian Influenza

Chair Petersen states that she hopes to discuss avian influenza regularly. She summarizes the Department of Public Health's press release regarding a wild flock of birds in Plymouth, MA, which likely died from avian influenza. She feels that the DPH guidance would be useful for the website. She reiterates that the problem is most persistent with wild birds and notes that while other states have had affected cattle, Massachusetts has not. Humans in Massachusetts have not been affected; however, different types of influenza can develop quickly across species, which requires close monitoring. Chair Petersen mentions influenza surveillance sites across Massachusetts named ILI Net (influenza-like illness net), which are voluntary sites that agree to have patients screened for ILI. Specimens collected from these sites are sent to the state lab and tested for illnesses such as

avian influenza. She inquires whether the Board complies with posting information on the website concerning bird flu.

Member Kruskall agrees that information on the website would be beneficial. He poses the question if this is an item worthy of a banner informing residents on proper handling of deceased birds. He suggests identifying those who might be called to remove dead birds in a professional fashion, as well as the message for residents to refrain from trying to remove them themselves. Chair Petersen agrees a banner would be a great idea, she asks if mentioning avian influenza and attaching a QR code leading to the DPH's guidance would be useful. Member Kruskall inquires whether it is important enough to raise the level of consciousness regarding it to more than a link.

Member Kruskall states that 65 people nationally have contracted HBAI like illness, the vast majority being farm workers. Chair Petersen refers to Katie Brown who mentioned concerns with outdoor domestic cats coming in contact with infected birds. Member Kruskall adds that the average domestic outdoor cat kills an average of 250 birds per year.

Member Quackenbush suggests submitting information to be published in Hometown Weekly newspaper, Member Kruskall and Chair Petersen find this to be another useful outlet for spreading information. Chair Petersen summarizes that a website item, banner, newspaper ad, Facebook post, and a newsletter mention would be useful modes of communication to inform the public about avian influenza.

7. Public Health Nurse Update

Member Kruskall invites the Board to discuss the workload of the Public Health Nurse due to the requests of the Board to work on specific projects. He hopes to establish a way of prioritizing certain tasks so that the nurse can work accordingly.

Chair Petersen suggests the Board share their prioritized projects they wish to have addressed by the Public Health Nurse with Director Belmonte, acknowledging that Director Belmonte would be responsible for divvying up the nurse's workload. Director Belmonte adds that within the nurse's training schedule, he has arranged for her to meet with each Board member individually to discuss prospective projects. He hopes to give each Board member an opportunity to discuss projects with her, while also keeping the Board in sync so as not to overwhelm her workload. He feels that the Board sharing their project ideas with one another would help determine which projects should be

prioritized. Chair Petersen notes that she would like to see the list once it has been created, so each Member is aware of each other's ideas.

Member Quackenbush adds that he is in favor of Director Belmonte being the first person for Gael to report to. Chair Petersen and Member Kruskall agree that sharing their list of ideas with Director Belmonte and allowing him to create a list of priorities for the nurse would be useful.

8. Old Business

N/A

9. Adjournment

Member Quackenbush made a MOTION to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Chair Petersen. The meeting adjourned at 7:35 p.m.

Documents and Exhibits Used During this Meeting:

Draft Meeting Minutes of January 13, 2025

CDC Youth and Tobacco Use - dated October 2024

Respectfully submitted,

Administrative Asst. Suzanne Hilts