



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES DEPARTMENT

KATJANA BALLANTYNE
MAYOR

KARIN CARROLL
DIRECTOR OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

MINUTES
BOARD OF HEALTH
February 20, 2025

Open Conference / Virtual (Zoom) Meeting

Members Present:

Brian Green, MD (Chair)
Margaret H Coit, Board Member
Alyssa Dubois, Board Member
Lucy Barrows, Recording Secretary
Karin Carroll, Director of Health & Human Services
Bonny Carroll, Tobacco Control Coordinator
Nicholas Antanavica, ISD

Roll Call: Brian Green

1.Meeting Call to Order: Brian Green made a motion to open the meeting at 6:03 pm. It was seconded by Alyssa Dubois. All in favor.

2.Minutes Approval: Brian Green made a motion to approve the minutes from January 19, 2025. It was seconded by Margaret H Coit. All in favor.

3.Follow Up on “Nicotine Free Generation” Legal Questions – Bonny Carroll

- a. The First Option is to impose local fines of \$300, \$600 and \$1000 for each violation or use State law fines, which impose fines of \$1000, \$2000 and \$5000 for each offense with accompanying suspension periods. Using state fines would retain the non-criminal disposition towards other violations of Somerville's unique anti-tobacco regulations currently in place and codified in the current draft. Any fine over \$300 requires a Cease-and-Desist order and not a civil ticketing order. Retailers benefit from civil ticketing because they can easily pay the fine without receiving a criminal finding on their record and have the opportunity to appeal the ticket with the District court. Civil ticketing is more labor intensive for the city but has always been a process for tobacco control until the State law imposed these high fines in 2019. Under Civil Ticketing, the City would be required to attend the hearing at the clerk magistrate's office on whether the violation occurred, though very few violators appeal the violation.
- b. The Second Option is to make Local fines the same as State fines for all violations, since few violations are specific to local law anymore. Local and State suspension periods would be

equivalent as well. The Board enforces compliance in public health, not punishment, and historically only fines for the State violation instead of in addition to the Local violation.

- c. The new proposals in this draft include the Nicotine Free Generation, restricting the nicotine content in oral pouches and restricting the sale of oral pouches to adult-only retail tobacco stores. Oral pouches were not included in the State definition of tobacco products. The FDA approved two oral pouch products, but they could not make the claim that they will reduce risk.
- d. The Board has chosen to present the graduated structure for local fines for tobacco violations next week to the community hearing. The Board also chooses to restrict nicotine pouches to adult only stores and refrain from limiting the nicotine content of oral pouches.

4. Update from ISD – Nicholas Antanavica

- a. ISD is creating a report with Somerstat to see an analysis of the different approaches taken over past years for food education and general property management with food retailers. Additionally, ISD would like to analyze the proactive building enforcement approach before winter.
- b. ISD is preparing for outdoor dining to commence on April 1st with DPW. The revised fees adopted at the last meeting will be approved in time.
- c. Renewal license notices will be issued in April and due at the end of June for short-term rentals covering health regulations and safe use of buildings. The State has adopted short term rentals as a code type and ISD is working to set up a new electronic variance process to make paperwork more efficient.
- d. A joint rodent control program is being developed with the schools.
- e. Snow tickets have been issued. Additionally, there is heightened regulation on sump pumps that are dumping water into the roadways and causing black ice.

5. Updates from HHS – Karin Carroll

- a. Warming centers continue to operate at capacity most nights.
- b. The HHS Nursing Team is continuing to hold vaccine clinics for COVID and flu, with over 700 vaccines administered. A regional vaccine nurse with Cambridge has been launched through the Public Health Excellence Grant, as well as a joint community health worker.
- c. Prevention distributed 240 doses of Narcan between October and December 2024, including prevention backpacks.
- d. Food Access has continued its Needs Assessment to bridge the funding gap since the ending of ARPA grants.
- e. Community Health Workers have increased in case load from 18 individuals in January 2024 to 76 individuals in December 2024. Currently there are efforts to expand into faith-based community centers to facilitate wraparound services such as SNAP and MassHealth enrollment.
- f. 18 students participated in the school-year youth jobs program under Youth Services department.
- g. Somerbaby completed 25 visits in Q4 of 2024.
- h. 385 referrals were made via Somerville Hub Connect.
- i. Tick monitoring and bird flu monitoring are of concern to the Board.

6. Next Meeting: March 20 ,2025

Meeting Adjourn: Brian Green moves to adjourn the meeting at 7:23 PM. Margaret Coit seconded. All in favor.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lucy Barrows

Board of Health Recording Secretary