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New England Convenience Store & Energy Marketers Association

Bellingham — Document Notes

12 DOCUMENTS · PUBLIC RECORDS PRODUCTION · REAL TRUTH MA · RETRIEVED SEPTEMBER 22, 2026

The substantive documents in Bellingham's production, in the order the events occurred: what each one is, what it says, and a link to the file. The complete production is in the document library on the main Bellingham page.

Bellingham put the measure to Town Meeting rather than adopting it by Board of Health regulation, and Town Meeting rejected it. The production also contains the campaign finance filings for a committee formed to support the article.

Nothing is characterized or interpreted. Where a document is ambiguous, it is quoted and left ambiguous.

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1 Bellingham writes to Brookline

Email and reply · January 9 and 10, 2025 · Dylan Labonte, Health Agent, Town of Bellingham, to Brookline's public health mailbox; reply from Sigalle Reiss, Director, Brookline Public Health & Human Services

> "My board members and I heard about your recent tobacco ban barring anyone born after January 1, 2000, from purchasing tobacco and nicotine products from retailers in your municipality."

The first contact in this production runs from Bellingham outward, to Brookline's generic public health address. Reiss replies with a guide of sample regulations, adds Maureen Buzby of Melrose to the thread, and writes: "Both of us are involved with a local ad-hoc group that can help testify at Board meeting/hearings and help answer any questions." The attached guide is produced as a separate file whose entire contents read "Document is unavailable."

2 The regional program offers help

Email · January 10, 2025 · Maureen Buzby, Regional Tobacco Prevention Program Manager, City of Melrose, to Sigalle Reiss and Dylan Labonte

> "Six communities in my region adopted NFG this past year. And I've worked with partners in some of the others who adopted in 2024. We now have a total of twelve — Brookline as a by-law in 2020 and the most recent eleven as a BOH reg."

Buzby writes the day after Labonte's first message, counting twelve adopting communities as of that date, naming Newton as considering a city ordinance, and offering "a wonderful group of committed advocates who have a wealth of knowledge — legal, health, process, etc."

3 The Board votes to put it on the warrant

Email chain · January 22, 2025 · Buzby to Labonte and Reiss, copied to Mark Gottlieb and Katharine Silbaugh

> “I’ve copied a couple of the MA NFG Team members here as they may be able to help with your request which is above my pay grade. Seriously, they have the appropriate credentials to be of assistance with any legal documents.”

Labonte reports his Board voted that night to put the measure on the spring Town Meeting warrant, and asks for an editable copy of Brookline’s bylaw. Buzby brings in two more people and writes that “[o]ur team will be meeting Monday evening.” The phrase “MA NFG Team” appears here, with no indication who belongs to it. No minutes of the January 21 Board meeting are in the production.

4 A smokers’ rights group writes to nine town officials

Email · March 4, 2025 · Stephen Helfer, Cambridge Citizens for Smokers’ Rights, to nine Bellingham addresses

> “Massachusetts adults 21 & over are judged capable of making their own decisions regarding alcohol & marijuana—both intoxicants. Arte they not competent to make their own decisions regarding tobacco & nicotine products, neither of which impair judgment or interfere with motor skills such as driving?”

Sent nearly three months before the vote; the typographical error is in the original. The same correspondent appears in the Amherst, Ashland, Dover, Hopkinton, Manchester-by-the-Sea and Yarmouth records.

5 A ballot question committee registers

Office of Campaign and Political Finance form CPF M101 BQ · signed May 21, 2025 · a scanned form; the field entries below are read from the page image

The form, emailed to the town clerk the same day, registers a committee named “Nicotine Free Generation” seven days before Town Meeting. Its stated purpose is “Nicotine Free Generation,” the question named “Town Meeting Article 19,” the box marked “support.” Kenneth Elstein of Belchertown, a member of that town’s Board of Health, is listed as both chairman and treasurer; the other officer fields are blank.

6 Bellingham asks two outside officials to attend Town Meeting

Email · May 22, 2025 · Dylan Labonte to Sigalle Reiss, copied to Maureen Buzby

> “I know it’s a big ask, but if either of you are available Wednesday May 28th at 7:30pm, it would be a huge help to have you in attendance to assist us with difficult questions or comments.”

Six days before the vote. Labonte writes that the town is “a bit concerned about the town meeting because we don’t know what questions to expect from our residents,” and that “we’ve been relying on our town counsel to help guide us throughout the process.” He attaches the proposed bylaw and an Article 19 slide deck.

7 A suggested change to the birth date, and an offer of experts

Email · May 22, 2025 · Maureen Buzby to Dylan Labonte, copied to Sigalle Reiss

> “I would suggest, if you can at this time, that you change the suggested birthdate restriction to 1/1/2005 so that your regulation will not prohibit anyone who is already 21 on the effective date from purchasing tobacco products.”

Buzby offers “subject matter experts (law school professors, physicians, and others)” to field questions and proposes forwarding the meeting details so others can attend. She reports Hopkinton adopted the policy the previous week with a 2005 cutoff. Bellingham’s article kept January 1, 2004.

8 A two-minute script and how the speaking is divided

Email forward · May 23, 2025 · Maureen Buzby to Rick Gilberti of the Bellingham health department; the forwarded original is dated March 20, 2025

> “When our “NFG Team” plans for a public hearing we divvy up topics as there is usually a time limit for each speaker. I usually do the reminder about the industry’s marketing tactics. Someone else will describe the policy itself. Another will talk about medical conditions caused or exacerbated by smoking. And so on.”

The forwarded message was written for Somerville’s hearing and sent by Buzby to herself. The attachment is produced alongside it: a prepared statement beginning “Thank you for the opportunity to speak tonight. I’m Maureen Buzby, Mystic Valley Tobacco Prevention Program Manager. I live in Melrose.” The title in the script differs from the one in her email signature.

9 The postcard, and the notice that it had already been mailed

Email · May 23, 2025 · Ken Elstein, Member, Belchertown Board of Health, to Dylan Labonte, copied to Maureen Buzby

> “FYI: The attached postcard has been mailed to a large proportion of likely Town Meeting attendees. It may answer some possible questions in advance.”

Elstein tells Bellingham’s health agent the mailing has already gone out, and asks in the same message for the proposed bylaw: “I have been unable to find it online.” The email does not mention that he had registered a ballot question committee two days earlier. Labonte replied with the bylaw, adding that “its too late for me to make any alterations to the bylaw now.”

10 The postcard itself

Campaign mailer · undated; transmitted May 23, 2025 · a scanned image; the wording below is read from the page

> “At what age do you want YOUR kids to smoke or vape? How about NEVER!”

The card is headed “Come to Town Meeting & Vote to Amend Tobacco Bylaw (Article 19)” and carries eight numbered points; the quoted line is the fourth. Others state the policy is “Approved by Massachusetts Supreme Court” and “Already adopted by 16 municipalities with over 500,000 people in Massachusetts,” and point readers to a Public Health Advocacy Institute web page. No sponsor, committee name or “paid for by” line appears on it.

11 The certified Town Meeting record

Certified town meeting record · meeting May 28, 2025; certification May 29, 2025 · Amy Bartelloni, Interim Town Clerk

> “Motion failed required majority vote. Vote: 70 Yes/110 No.”

Article 19, “General Bylaw Amendment — Tobacco Control,” was submitted by the Board of Health and moved by Richard C. Gilberti. The record states the Finance Committee took no action and the Board of Health recommended it 3–0. 199 voters attended. Article 19 is the only article shown as failing.

12 The committee’s dissolution report

Office of Campaign and Political Finance form CPF M 102 · period May 21 to June 10, 2025 · Kenneth Elstein, Committee Treasurer · a scanned form; the figures below are read from the page image

> “Line 2: Total receipts this period (page 3, line 12) $ 780.21 … Line 4: Total expenditures this period (page 5, line 15) $ 780.21 … Line 5: Ending Balance (line 3 minus line 4) $ 0.00”

One receipt and two expenditures. The single contributor is Kenneth Elstein of Belchertown, occupation “Retired,” the same person as the treasurer. The expenditures are $720.72 to Click2Mail of Arlington, Virginia for postcards and $59.49 to a Staples in Needham for flyers, both dated before the contribution.