

Hopkinton — Document Notes

14 DOCUMENTS · PUBLIC RECORDS PRODUCTION · REAL TRUTH MA · RETRIEVED SEPTEMBER 15, 2026

The substantive documents in Hopkinton’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 Hopkinton page.

Hopkinton’s production is almost entirely one mailbox: 116 of the 118 response files are printed email threads from the Health Director’s account. The adopted regulation, the minutes and the hearing notice are not among them.

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

1 A foundation grant for a tobacco initiative

Grant award letter · June 4, 2018 · Martin D. Cohen, President, MetroWest Health Foundation, to Shaun McAuliffe, Hopkinton Health Department

“I am pleased to inform you that the Board of Trustees of the MetroWest Health Foundation has approved a grant of \$18,682.00 to the Hopkinton Health Department for the Hopkinton Tobacco Initiative project.”

The earliest document in the production, six years before the rest. The grant runs twelve months from June 1, 2018 and responds to a proposal dated March 22, 2018. Neither the proposal nor the grant agreement is produced.

2 The first mention of the policy

Email thread · May 28, 2024 · Shaun McAuliffe, Health Director, Town of Hopkinton, and Parivallal Thillaigovindan, Tobacco Control Program Manager, MetroWest District, Framingham Public Health Department

“We may proceed to pass a regulation prohibiting the sale of products to anyone below a certain age similar to what Belmont and several other communities have passed.”

Raised by Hopkinton’s own health director in a thread about a routine compliance check. Thillaigovindan replies: “I am glad that you are interested to adopt NFG policy in Hopkinton. I was about to discuss with all the Health Directors in our collaborative in the upcoming Annual meeting,” and names six communities that had then adopted it.

3 Asking for the model regulation

Email thread · February 13, 2025 · Shaun McAuliffe and Parivallal Thillaigovindan

“I’m preparing to draft my NFG regulation. Is there a most recent draft regulation that I should start with/reference?”

Thillaigovindan replies within the hour: “Please find attached the latest model Tobacco Sales Reg with NFG policy, for your reference.” The attachment named, a Word file dated January 6, 2025, is not produced. No Hopkinton-specific draft appears in this production.

4 Preparing for the April Board meeting

Email thread · April 4–7, 2025 · Maureen Buzby, Regional Tobacco Prevention Program, Melrose, and Shaun McAuliffe

“I could give you 10 to 15 minutes if that works for you (possibly more). Pari hasn’t presented.”

McAuliffe offers the speaking slot and writes, before the April 14 meeting, “We intend to proceed to a hearing. That isn’t a question.” Buzby names the opponents she expects — a trade association executive, a smokers’ rights group, possibly a national retailers’ association — and summarizes each one’s arguments. Her postscript: “If the Board decides to move to the next step — a Public Hearing — we have youth who would be able to testify.”

5 “They are not residents of Hopkinton”

Email thread, 23 messages · April 12–14, 2025 · opened by Stephen Helfer, Cambridge Citizens for Smokers’ Rights; participants include the Health Director, the Board of Health Chair, the Select Board Chair and the Tobacco Control Director of the Massachusetts Municipal Association

“I would not answer these form letters if I were you. They are not residents of Hopkinton.”

The quoted advice is from Select Board Chair Brian J. Herr, about the mail arriving in opposition. In the same thread the Health Director writes “It is starting. Lobbyists and big tobacco are to be expected at most of our future meetings”; “I’m going to line up as many parents that have addicted kids that I can. Game on”; and “The Commonwealth has assigned NFG staff and reps from the MMA to insulate us through the remainder of the process.” Buzby writes: “We really don’t want to open the door to presentations by the opposition.”

6 NECSEMA’s letter, and the reply to it

Email thread · April 14, 2025 · Peter A. Brennan, Executive Director, New England Convenience Store & Energy Marketers Association, to nine town addresses

“Our goal is to help educate decisionmakers on all aspects of this policy before a decision to consider it has been determined.”

Brennan’s letter was omitted from the first send; the Health Director replied “No letter attached,” and it was resent that evening. The attachment is not produced separately. He also writes that the town had “received multiple emails this morning” and was awaiting one from a retailer. NECSEMA funded the records requests behind this site.

7 Confirming the Board voted to proceed

Email thread · April 15, 2025 · Maureen Buzby and Shaun McAuliffe

“Did the Board end up voting to hold a public hearing? I didn’t hear a motion, and it sounded like they were moving on to the next item of business.”

Buzby attended the April 14 meeting in person and asks afterwards what the Board decided. McAuliffe replies: “The Board voted to proceed. We are looking to secure a date.” No motion or tally is recorded here, and no minutes of that meeting appear in the production. Buzby offers subject-matter experts and notes: “I don’t have any Hopkinton connections, unfortunately.”

8 Fixing the hearing date

Email thread, nine messages in three hours · April 16, 2025 · Nidia LaRoche, Hopkinton Health Department, to Board members

“Please submit your availability ASAP so I would be able to coordinate with HCAM and advertise the hearing. We are trying to have the Hearing before Dr. J leaves, if possible.”

Four dates were offered; the Board settled on May 14, doubling the hearing up with an already-scheduled meeting — “Can we double up on May 14? (NFG Hearing after the BOH meeting).” It was set to begin at 6:45 p.m.

9 Testimony templates for residents and youth

Email thread · May 6, 2025 · Shaun McAuliffe to Erin Bartolini

“See attached for the Coalition letter and then templates for a community member and youth. I have other example letters that were sent to me if you are looking for a particular perspective (like healthcare, legislator, etc.).”

Three attachments are named — a coalition letter of support, a testimony template and a youth template — and none is produced. Next day, in a separate thread, the Health Director sends the testimony template to a state senator’s office, asking “Is this something that the Senator would / could endorse?”; the office declined, on the ground that she “should not weigh in on discussions involving municipal boards that affect residents of that municipality.”

10 The morning after the vote

Email · May 15, 2025 · Shaun McAuliffe to health officials in five neighboring municipalities

“Last night our Board voted to adopt the NFG regulation and restrict the sale of oral products to adult only establishments. We had over 30 physicians, public health officials and substance abuse counselors speak on behalf of the regulation and provide us support through the process. We have an attorney offering pro-bono legal support (they defended Brookline).”

Circulated to Ashland, Hudson and other MetroWest health departments the morning after the hearing. He adds: “Members from this group reside in each of your communities and are more than willing to assist. I’m happy to direct all of them to you if you would like.” No vote tally or names of voting members appear. A companion message states the regulations take effect July 1, 2025.

11 A form letter in opposition

Email · June 4, 2025 · one of 39 files in this production carrying the same subject line

“It applies different laws to two groups of adults treating them differently from one another for the purchase and use of the same products despite both being 21 years of age or older.”

Thirty-nine files carry the subject “Say NO to Nicotine Free Generation (NFG) Regulations,” each with the same four bulleted arguments. Nine were sent through a single third-party delivery domain and others reference an advocacy platform; sender addresses carry numeric suffixes. This one gives a residential address in Needham. The same bullets appear in Milton’s, Dover’s and Mansfield’s productions.

12 A retailer learns what the regulation does

Email thread · July 16, 2025 · Neel Patel of Country Farm and Shaun McAuliffe

“I did not receive verbiage this would remove nicotine product from the shelf as soon as now. This was suppose to effect groups after 2005 from buying products.”

A permit holder writes two weeks after the effective date. McAuliffe explains both parts of the regulation and adds: “The tobacco lobbyists stated that they were going to meet with the retailers in town. They were going to bring you to the hearing to speak... That said, they didn’t even attend the hearing.” He says he will forward the regulation separately; it is not produced.

13 “I can speak to Rajit and find some kids”

Email thread · September 2–3, 2025 · Maureen Buzby and Shaun McAuliffe, then McAuliffe to two Hopkinton youth-services staff

“Do you have friends/colleagues in Ashland? We’ll be doing a public hearing there 9/16. Would be great to have some youth. Short notice but I just have to ask.”

Buzby asks Hopkinton’s health director to find young people to testify at another town’s hearing; he replies “I can speak to Rajit and find some kids,” then asks colleagues whether a joint program with Ashland still exists. The reply: “We have no joint program... Our kids who could testify graduated.” The exchange is not in Ashland’s own production; the supplemental request to Ashland asks for it by name.

14 Compiling contacts for towns that have adopted

Email thread · October 2, 2025 · Maureen Buzby to Shaun McAuliffe

“One of the meeting organizers has asked that we provide a contact name and contact information for each of the municipalities that have already adopted NFG in the event that a meeting attendee would like to speak to someone who already has experience implementing this policy”

Prepared for a workshop at the Massachusetts Health Officers Association conference in November 2025. The forwarded text lists the municipalities that had then adopted. McAuliffe replies: “Certainly! Let’s go get more and spread the word.”

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