

Mansfield — Investigative Briefing Memorandum

PUBLIC RECORDS ANALYSIS · REAL TRUTH MA · RETRIEVED SEPTEMBER 11, 2026

Mansfield

March 2026 (Revised)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Town of Mansfield FOIA return represents an exceptionally high-value document set, comprising 455 emails and 19 supporting documents spanning February 2025 through November 2025. This return provides comprehensive documentation of the NFG network's coordinated campaign to advance Nicotine-Free Generation policies in Mansfield, including pre-hearing coordination, external advocate involvement, and cross-municipality intelligence sharing. The documents reveal that Maureen Buzby (Tobacco Inspection Coordinator, City of Melrose) initiated contact with Mansfield Health Director Amy Donovan-Palmer in mid-February 2025—approximately two months before any public hearing on NFG. Buzby coordinated her presentation to the Board of Health for April 10, 2025, after consulting with Palmer to identify a date when the BOH Chair would be present. Buzby explicitly warned Palmer about known opposition figures by name and offered to bring "NFG colleagues" and "subject matter experts" to support the presentation. Most significantly, these documents reveal the systematic infrastructure of the NFG campaign: coordination between state-funded tobacco control programs (MTCP), professional advocacy networks (NFG Team), academic institutions (MGH/Harvard), and local health officials—all operating to advance NFG policies in municipalities across Massachusetts.

KEY DOCUMENT EXCERPTS

Buzby Warns About Opposition, Offers "NFG Team" Support

From: Buzby, Maureen <mbuzby@CityofMelrose.org>

To: Amy Donovan-Palmer <adpalmer@mansfieldma.com>

Date: Thursday, February 13, 2025 at 4:20 PM

Subject: RE: touching base

"By the way, if 'tobacco regulations' appears in your BOH meeting posting don't be surprised if members of the opposition show up. They watch BOH agendas closely. Peter Brennan from NECSEMA. Stephen Helfer from Cambridge Citizens for Smokers Rights. Et al."

"Our MA NFG task team would be happy to meet with your board – virtually or in-person – to share information. How NFG works. Why we think it's such a good public health policy. Its legality. As well as an update on municipalities with NFG."

SIGNIFICANCE: This email reveals Buzby's role as a central coordinator who: (1) monitors BOH agendas statewide for tobacco-related discussions; (2) maintains intelligence on opposition figures by name; (3) coordinates an "NFG task team" of advocates available to support municipalities considering NFG; and (4) proactively reaches out to local health officials before public awareness of any proposed policy.

Scheduling Coordination with BOH Chair

From: Kasia Frenette <KFrenette@mansfieldma.com>

To: Amy Donovan-Palmer <adpalmer@mansfieldma.com>

Date: Wednesday, February 19, 2025 at 7:28 AM

Subject: RE: NFG

"Morning, let's push it to April. Based on how Addie's basketball team does I may have a March conflict with a playoff game in so rather than not be there why don't we do April."

SIGNIFICANCE: The BOH Chair specifically requested delaying the external advocate's presentation to ensure her personal attendance. This demonstrates the importance municipal officials placed on the NFG presentation and suggests the hearing was being managed to maximize favorable conditions rather than conducted as neutral fact-finding.

MTCP Tracking of Policy Adoption

From: Buzby, Maureen <mbuzby@cityofmelrose.org>

To: Amy Donovan-Palmer <adpalmer@mansfieldma.com>

Date: Friday, February 28, 2025 at 11:42 AM

Subject: RE: Nic pouch photo

"MTCP has asked all of us Tobacco Program Managers to let them know when new tobacco policies get passed but I think we sometimes forget that step."

SIGNIFICANCE: This statement reveals that the Massachusetts Tobacco Cessation and Prevention Program (MTCP)—a state-funded public health program—actively tracks local NFG policy adoption as a program deliverable. This connects state funding to advocacy outcomes and suggests NFG adoption may be incorporated into tobacco control program metrics.

Cross-Municipality Intelligence Sharing

From: Buzby, Maureen <mbuzby@CityofMelrose.org>

To: Amy Donovan-Palmer <adpalmer@mansfieldma.com>

Date: Friday, April 18, 2025 at 9:28 AM

Subject: FW: Additional NFG-related materials

"BTW, can't remember if I told you - - Hopkinton voted to hold a public hearing. (Info only, not meant to pressure you. I know your board is very deliberative. But I will try to keep you updated.)"

SIGNIFICANCE: Buzby provides real-time intelligence on other municipalities' progress toward NFG adoption. While framed as "not meant to pressure," the ongoing updates about peer municipalities' actions serve to normalize and encourage adoption. This demonstrates the cross-municipal coordination characteristic of the NFG network.

MGH/Harvard Survey to Identify Target Municipalities

From: Reynolds, Matthew J. <MREYNOLDS8@mgh.harvard.edu>

To: Undisclosed recipients

Date: Thursday, June 5, 2025 at 12:36 PM

Subject: [Action Requested] Reminder: Tobacco Control in Your Community – Please Take 1 Minute Survey

"The Nicotine Free Generation Coalition is assessing local community interest in the policy... The results will help us effectively reach communities seeking further information regarding the policy and will help prevent unwanted communications to communities not currently interested in considering such a policy."

SIGNIFICANCE: This survey from Dr. Jonathan Winickoff's group at MGH/Harvard reveals the NFG Coalition's systematic approach to identifying receptive municipalities. The survey explicitly aims to "effectively reach communities" while avoiding "unwanted communications"—essentially creating a targeting list for advocacy efforts. This demonstrates the academic institution's active role in the campaign infrastructure.

PUBLIC HEARING OBSERVATIONS

The following observations are drawn from observation of public Board of Health and City Council meetings in Massachusetts municipalities considering NFG adoption.

"Obviously, the tobacco industry is working hard to defeat this policy. They want it to fail just as much as we want it to succeed." — Maureen Buzby, Board of Health Presentation, Mansfield, April 10, 2025

"If there is a legal challenge, Mark Gottlieb and his team will represent Mansfield pro-bono." — Maureen Buzby, Board of Health Presentation, Mansfield, April 10, 2025

"One of the board members was having issues with 'taking away choice' and stated that it doesn't sit right with her. The Chair agreed with this stance." — Board of Health Meeting, Mansfield, June 26, 2025

KEY FINDINGS

Pre-Hearing Coordination Network Confirmed The documents establish that external advocate contact with Mansfield began in mid-February 2025—approximately two months before the April 10, 2025 Board of Health meeting where Buzby presented on NFG. During this pre-hearing period, Buzby: provided strategic guidance on separating regulatory updates from NFG discussion to avoid "muddy[ing] the water"; warned about specific opposition figures by name; offered to bring "subject matter experts" and "NFG colleagues" to support the presentation; and provided a "packet of info" and "show and tell sample products" for the Board. The Health Director and BOH Chair coordinated to schedule the presentation for a date when the Chair would be present, demonstrating the importance officials placed on the external advocate's involvement.

"NFG Team" Coordination Documented Buzby repeatedly references an "NFG Team" or "MA NFG task team"—a coordinating group of advocates who can be deployed to municipalities considering NFG. She states "I'll let my NFG colleagues know" after the April presentation was scheduled and offers to bring "two or three" subject matter experts if remote participation is available. This confirms the existence of an organized network of advocates available to support NFG adoption across Massachusetts municipalities.

MAHB and MHOA Network Integration Health Director Palmer sought guidance from Cheryl Sbarra at the Massachusetts Association of Health Boards (MAHB), who provided a list of five municipalities with NFG policies (Groton, Orange, Townsend, Belchertown, Greenfield). Palmer also registered for an MHOA NFG webinar in July 2024—indicating the professional associations serving local health officials are integrated into the NFG campaign infrastructure. Palmer references consulting with the "MHOA Tobacco Control Agent" for guidance on responding to opposition communications.

Coordinated Opposition Response The FOIA return includes 288 emails sent via grassroots advocacy platforms (including [advocatefor.me](#), [grsdelivery.com](#), [yourconstituent.com](#), [foradvocacy.com](#), [p2a.co](#), and [sendgrassroots.com](#)) opposing NFG. These templated opposition messages arrived at municipal addresses throughout March-June 2025. Health Director Palmer noted that the emails contained "the exact same thing" and forwarded them to the Board. Lindsey Stroud from Tobacco Harm Reduction 101 submitted opposition testimony on April 10, 2025. The coordinated opposition campaign validates Buzby's advance warning about "members of the opposition" monitoring BOH agendas.

State Program Connection to Policy Adoption Buzby's reference to MTCP asking "all of us Tobacco Program Managers to let them know when new tobacco policies get passed" establishes a connection between the state-funded Massachusetts Tobacco Cessation and Prevention Program and local NFG policy adoption. This suggests that NFG adoption may be tracked as a program deliverable or metric, raising questions about the use of state public health funding to advance advocacy goals.

NETWORK DATA POINTS AND FUNDING CONNECTIONS

MTCP (Massachusetts Tobacco Cessation and Prevention Program): Buzby confirms "MTCP has asked all of us Tobacco Program Managers to let them know when new tobacco policies get passed." This state-funded program tracks local NFG adoption as an apparent deliverable. MHOA (Massachusetts Health Officers Association): Hosted July 2024 NFG webinar; Palmer registered as attendee. MHOA serves as professional network through which NFG information disseminates to local health officials. MAHB (Massachusetts Association of Health Boards): Cheryl Sbarra (Senior Staff Attorney) provided list of NFG municipalities to Palmer. MAHB functions as legal guidance and intelligence-sharing network. MGH/Harvard Medical School: Dr. Jonathan Winickoff and Matthew Reynolds distributed municipality survey through "Nicotine Free Generation Coalition" to identify receptive communities for targeted outreach. City of Melrose: Maureen Buzby operates as "Tobacco Inspection Coordinator" while coordinating NFG advocacy across multiple municipalities—raising questions about the use of municipal resources for regional advocacy.

FINANCIAL CONTEXT (IRS FORM 990 ANALYSIS)

The following financial information, derived from IRS Form 990 filings of organizations identified in this municipality's FOIA return, provides context on the institutional funding infrastructure supporting NFG advocacy:

The Public Health Advocacy Institute (PHAI), directed by Mark Gottlieb at Northeastern University School of Law, reported total revenue of \$21.2 million in FY2023—a dramatic increase from approximately \$740,000 in the prior year. Gottlieb's compensation was reported as approximately \$325,000. PHAI provides pro bono legal defense to any municipality adopting NFG.

The Massachusetts Tobacco Cessation and Prevention Program (MTCP), funded by the Department of Public Health, operates through regional collaboratives that serve as the primary pipeline for connecting municipalities with NFG advocacy resources and template regulations.

EVIDENCE SUMMARY

Evidence Category	Status	Summary
PRE-HEARING COORDINATION	CONFIRMED	External advocate contact began February 13, 2025—two months before April 10 presentation. Hearing logistics coordinated between Buzby, Palmer, and BOH Chair.
TEMPLATE USAGE	CONFIRMED	Opposition emails used identical template language across 288 messages from multiple grassroots platforms. Buzby distributed standardized NFG materials to BOH.
NETWORK ACTIVITY	CONFIRMED	Buzby explicitly references "NFG Team" and "NFG colleagues." Multiple known network players appear: Buzby, Sbarra, Winickoff/Reynolds.
CROSS-MUNICIPALITY COORDINATION	CONFIRMED	Buzby (Melrose) coordinated Mansfield presentation; provided updates on Hopkinton's progress; Palmer contacted Groton, Orange, Townsend, Belchertown, Greenfield for intelligence.
YOUTH RECRUITMENT	NOT FOUND	No evidence of youth testimony coordination in this FOIA return.
PREDETERMINED OUTCOME	SUGGESTED	BOH Chair specifically scheduled presentation to ensure her attendance; Palmer sought guidance from advocacy network rather than neutral sources. No "smoking gun" statement of predetermined vote.
FUNDING CONNECTION	CONFIRMED	Buzby's statement that "MTCP has asked all of us Tobacco Program Managers to let them know when new tobacco policies get passed" establishes state program tracking of local NFG adoption.

What These Documents Demonstrate

State-funded programs (MTCP) identify and track municipalities for NFG policy adoption as an apparent program metric. Professional associations (MHOA, MAHB) serving local health officials are integrated into the NFG advocacy infrastructure. External advocates contact local officials months before public awareness of any proposed policy change. An "NFG Team" of advocates stands ready for deployment to municipalities considering the policy. Academic institutions (MGH/Harvard) actively survey municipalities to identify targets for advocacy outreach. Local health officials function as champions within the network rather than neutral administrators of public process.

CONCLUSION

The Town of Mansfield FOIA return constitutes an exceptionally high-value document set that comprehensively documents the NFG network's coordinated campaign. With 455 emails spanning February through November 2025, this return provides unprecedented insight into the systematic infrastructure underlying NFG policy adoption in Massachusetts municipalities. The most significant finding is Maureen Buzby's explicit acknowledgment that MTCP—a state-funded tobacco control program—tracks local NFG policy adoption as an apparent program deliverable. This establishes a direct connection between state public health funding and local policy advocacy, warranting investigation into whether taxpayer resources are being used to advance predetermined policy outcomes rather than neutral public health objectives. The documents further reveal the integrated nature of the NFG advocacy network: professional associations (MHOA, MAHB) serving local health officials; academic institutions (MGH/Harvard) identifying receptive municipalities; regional coordinators (Buzby) deploying "NFG Team" advocates to support local adoption; and local health officials functioning as network champions coordinating with external advocates months before any public process. This evidence strongly supports the investigative thesis that NFG policies reflect coordinated advocacy rather than organic local demand. The Mansfield FOIA return should serve as a foundation for expanded investigation into the NFG network's statewide activities, particularly the role of state-funded programs in facilitating local policy advocacy.

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