

Board of Health

Meeting Minutes

January 10, 2024

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Members Present: Kelly Lamas, Chair; Adrienne DeSantis, Secretary; Antonio Tavares, Member

Also Present: Paulina Matusik

Meeting was called to order at 5:02 PM by Ms. Lamas and Pledge of Allegiance was performed.

Monthly Business:

Ms. DeSantis signed the meeting minutes from December 19, 2023. Ms. DeSantis made a motion to approve the meeting minutes for December 19, 2023. Seconded by Ms. Lamas. All in favor 3-0.

Ms. Matusik updated the BOH regarding the Syringe Service Program. She spoke with Liz (Tapestry Health Director) at the end of December. Tapestry will not have a mobile unit in town right now but can start services via the mobile unit on an as needed basis for services. The state approved this service through Tapestry but did not give them additional funding to hire staff. It was explained any resident of Ludlow can call and/or text 413-270-3277 for all of the services that the Tapestry Community offers which includes: cervical and breast cancer screening, birth control and emergency contraception, gender affirming hormone therapy, overdose prevention education, food access and nutrition education, mobile health delivery, 24/7 breast feeding support, STI, HIV and Hepatitis C testing, Narcan training and access, safe sex supplies, medication, abortion and pregnancy testing, Syringe services (includes disposal and clean needles).

Ms. Matusik discussed with Liz having a point of contact to include in the meetings with the Police, Fire and schools to have a representative that can meet quarterly with the team, so services are not duplicated.

Ms. Matusik updated the BOH on the Intermunicipal Agreement (IMA), noting that 75% of the towns have signed this agreement that include Ludlow, Palmer, and Warren. We are still waiting for West Brookfield to sign the agreement; we can still move forward because 50% is needed and we have 75%.

Visitations:

Ms. Lamas welcomed Dr. Frank Tiano, Kristen Bunten, Detective Lieutenant Kornacki and Chief Daniel Valadas to come up to discuss the award that was received. Ms. Bunten explained the Ascent award is a government partnership that was presented to the Town of Ludlow – 2023, from CHD (Center for Human Development), they are our partner for behavior health services for the Ludlow catchment area. She also stated that Detective Lieutenant Kornacki, Ms. Matusik and herself were present to accept the award.

Detective Lieutenant Kornacki explained how the partnership with CHD that began in January 2023 has impacted everyone in a short amount of time. For the Ludlow Police department, it started with a couple of meetings with CHD and has grown into monthly meetings with Jeffrey Lavoie (Fire

Department), Kristen Bunten (School Nurse), Paulina Matusik (Health Director for the Board of Health) and Detective Lieutenant Kornacki. He discussed that working with Ms. Bunten through the schools is exceptional and is the kind of partner that the police department needs because she will smooth things as it relates to communication with the schools. He also noted that Ms. Matusik is instrumental in creating the bond for the whole team and knows how to connect people. And having a connection with all these departments is essential to provide great services to this community.

Ms. Bunten expressed that both the CHD and this team hold each other accountable, and problem solve when there are gaps. The CHD leadership and this group have been committed to the monthly meetings. This group has taken this a step further with their own internal meetings by bringing the resources of the health, school, police and fire departments together.

Ms. Matusik began by thanking this team and noted that Chief Daniel Valadas was the one that referred CHD to her, with Ms. Bunten following up, Ms. Matusik doesn't feel that any of this would have been possible without Dr. Frank Tiano and Chief Daniel Valadas.

Ms. Lamas asked if there are follow-up questions from the board?

Ms. DeSantis asked "What will the services be for the town of Ludlow, and will there be offices opening here in town?"

There is a crisis facility in Chicopee, and it was also noted for Mental Health Services, The Town of Ludlow had retained a clinician since September 2023, for two days a week, the clinician will take crisis calls. There has been an average of 30 referrals a month from 911, the Police and Fire departments which does not include the schools. The schools have a district case manager/social worker who does nothing but provide wrap around services for families in crisis and need. She is part of the internal team and works with the clinician to make sure that someone has reached out to the families in crisis to provide services.

In January of 2023, Massachusetts reorganized how they are providing Mental Health Services across the Commonwealth and how CHD was assigned to us. The location in Chicopee does provide some walk-in services, on site stabilization unit, clinicians, and when there is a crisis in the school or the Fire, Police or Health departments need someone to come out – an emergency phone call is made, and CHD will send a team out to help. Chief Daniel Valadas stated, "for a statewide provider to recognize this team, it's a testament to the professionals that tells me this collaboration works and these are unique people."

Ms. Lamas asked "You have been together for a year in partnership and collaboration, what are your goals for this next year and how do you see it growing?"

Ms. Matusik let the board know that right now they are in the process of creating standard procedures for both teams. The teams are working towards expanding further services which could be more than mental health, substance use and at risk. She also explained that everything discussed in these meetings is confidential and anyone that is brought in signs a confidentiality agreement.

Dr. Tiano added that it is so vital to have these connections because the students they work with in the schools are the same families that both the Police and Health departments are working with. All three departments are focusing on prevention and education.

Ms. Bunten then added that even though there is only 3-4 months' worth of data right now because this is so new. How does this move forward, is it less repeat calls to EMS for assistance or finding that families and kids are getting into services? This is what they are looking forward to.

Ms. Lamas stated from her perspective, she was giving thought on how to leverage other staff within the health department to expand the relationships. With new shared services coming, the health department can help to build more services, to collaborate and expand the collaboration.

Melissa McArdle, the owner of Antrim Cosmetic tattooing is requesting the BOH lower the establishment fee of \$500. Ms. Matusik shared Ms. McArdle's email with the board to review.

Ms. Lamas asked how many Body Art establishments are in the town, how many times are they inspected and the length of the inspection?

Ms. Matusik explained that there are five Body Art establishments, they are inspected one to two times a year and the length of the inspection is at least an hour and sometimes longer depending on the questions.

Mr. Tavares feels that the fee should be the same for everyone.

Ms. McArdle explained that her colleagues in surrounding areas pay \$100 to \$300 for their establishment fees. She also noted that because the fee is due by the end of the year, it is difficult.

Ms. Matusik explained that cities and towns are different. Cities have a mayor, or they have a different form of government that elects these prices. Boards consider staffing and time. Where cities have a little bit more and towns may have a little bit less, which could be the reason.

Ms. Lamas wanted to know how the establishment fee was established and the history behind it?

Ms. Matusik tried to research the meeting notes and there was no information as to why the fee was originally \$1000 and reduced to \$500 on October 8, 2019.

Ms. DeSantis commented that the fee is the highest price of the permits regarding the health department and wanted to know if it encompasses more time, more investigation?

Ms. Matusik did research on the Mass General Laws and the Board of Health regulations, noting that she could not find a set fee and stated it is up to the board to decide what that fee is.

Ms. DeSantis asked if all the establishments had paid the fee. Going forward we can look at that as far as maybe adjusting the fee because it is glaring that it is the highest one, unless there is an argument from the health inspector that it is needed, timewise, to justify the fee and look at this for the coming year.

Ms. Matusik noted that she has spoken to Mr. Fontaine regarding the fee and suggested that if everyone wanted him to come to the next meeting, they could table this for now until the board is able to speak with Mr. Fontaine and think about the fee.

Ms. Lamas wanted to know what goes into a practitioners licensing and how does she maintain education?

Ms. McArdle explained that the Town of Ludlow requires the Bloodborne, CPR and A&P licensing. Every year the Bloodborne and CPR are renewed. She takes continuing education courses to keep up with new skills that arise because their field is ever evolving.

Ms. DeSantis wanted to know if there is a requirement to have a certain amount of continuing education?

Ms. McArdle explained that they have 200 hours of apprenticeship that includes practice, hands on, shadowing hours and working on clients.

Mr. Tavares likes the idea of speaking with Mr. Fontaine at the next meeting. He also noted that the fee was reduced from \$1,000 to \$500 in 2019 and stated that generally fees go up every year. It was also discussed that the other four establishments have not complained about the establishment fee.

Ms. McArdle stated that the reduction of the fee in 2019 was needed. When you look around to the other towns and cities, it is understood that everything is individual and tailored to each town and city. The fee is a lot higher than everyone else's. Being the sole owner and working on the financials is difficult especially at the end of the year because paying the establishment fee (\$500) and the practitioners' fee (\$100) comes to \$600 every year.

Mr. Tavares wanted to know if the establishment fee would be easier to pay if the fee was split into two payments, 6 months apart (\$250 due by January 1st and \$250 Due by June 1st).

Ms. McArdle stated that it would still be the \$500.

Ms. Lamas was also in favor of tabling this for now.

Ms. Matusik explained to Ms. McArdle that she will keep in touch with the decision of the board.

Actions/Correspondence:

Ms. Matusik shared the results of the Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) results for 2023. The purpose of the survey was to identify the key needs of the community, support and inform the implementation of future services, and an urgent need to Ludlow specific.

The priority areas are mental health, rodent control, substance misuse, domestic violence and healthy eating and nutrition. These stood out because they are noted as continuous issues, a lot of these issues grants can be applied for, and these focused areas will help with future grants.

Generally, grants need data to support evidence-based reasons as to why the money is needed.

1. What is your relationship to the Ludlow Community?
 - a. I live in Ludlow - 279
 - b. I work in Ludlow - 3
 - c. Both - 40
 - d. None of the above - 0

2. Have you noticed any signs of rodent activity in your home or community, such as droppings, gnawed items, or nesting materials?
- a. Yes – 59%
 - b. No – 41%
3. How frequently do you encounter rodents in your surroundings?
- a. Frequently 40.6%
 - b. Almost never – 59.4%
4. What methods have you tried to control rodents in your home?
- a. None (don't have a problem) – 41%
 - b. Traps – 23.3%
5. Are you aware of where to report rodent-related issues or complaints?
- a. Yes – 28.6%
 - b. No – 71.4%
6. Would you be more likely to report rodent related issues if there was an easy-to-use anonymous reporting system in place?
- a. Yes - 70.2%
 - b. No – 20.8%
7. What do you think are the most sustainable and effective long-term solutions for reducing rodent problems in your community?
- a. Not sure, N/A, IDK – 23%
 - b. Cleaning – 14%
 - c. Traps – 1%
 - d. Cats – 1%
 - e. Other (poison, etc.) - <1%
8. What are the top priority areas in Ludlow that should be addressed in the future?
- a. Safe Roads – 49.4%
 - b. Access to parks and other green spaces – 40.4%
 - c. School safety – 38.5%
 - d. Mental health – 37.3%
 - e. Emergency preparedness – 36.6%
9. Which of the following services/programs needs improvement?
- a. Services for other adults – 41.6%
 - b. Mental health care services – 36.3%
 - c. Healthcare services (primary care, specialty care, etc.) – 36.3%
 - d. Exercise and physical activity opportunities – 32%
 - e. Services for youth – 27.6%
10. Would you like to see more outreach, resources, or programs surrounding SUBSTANCE MISUSE prevention and/or treatment?
- a. Yes – 75.2%
 - b. No – 24.8%
11. Would you like to see more outreach, resources, or programs surrounding MENTAL HEALTH?
- a. Yes – 87.3%
 - b. No – 12.7%

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12. Would you like to see more outreach, resources, or programs surrounding domestic violence?
- a. Yes – 75.2%
 - b. No – 24.8%
13. Would you like to see more outreach, resources, or programs surrounding rodent control?
- a. Yes – 61.2%
 - b. No – 38.8%
14. Would you like to see more outreach, resources, or programs surrounding nutrition and healthy eating?
- a. Yes – 67.1%
 - b. No – 32.9%
15. What health related resources and needs do you feel could be improved for the children and youth of Ludlow?
- a. Bullying prevention – 69.3%
 - b. Mental health resources – 67.4%
 - c. Physical activity – 56.2%
 - d. Substance misuse prevention – 54.3%
 - e. Cultural, social, education and enrichment activities – 47.8%
16. What health concerns do you feel are most serious for the children and youth of Ludlow?
- a. Mental Health – 21%
 - b. Drugs/Substance abuse – 17%
 - c. Bullying – 11%
 - d. N/A, not sure, don't know – 11%
 - e. Other (Nutrition, suicide physical activity) - <1%
17. What health and social issues would you like more education/resources about?
- a. Mental health – 48.8%
 - b. Emergency Preparedness – 37.9%
 - c. Alzheimer's/Dementia – 37.6%
 - d. Suicide prevention – 37%
 - e. Physical activity/exercise – 32.9%
18. Where do you get most of your health information?
- a. Doctor, nurse or other healthcare provider – 83.2%
 - b. Internet search – 50%
 - c. TV, radio, newspaper/magazine – 25.8%
19. What are some environmental health topics that bring you the most concern in Ludlow?
- a. Dangerous traffic – 69.6%
 - b. Mosquito or tick-borne diseases – 48.1%
 - c. Outdoor noise pollution from cars, trucks, buses and/or trains – 30.4%
20. How did you hear about this survey?
- a. Direct mail – 90.4%
 - b. Friend or family – 4.7%
 - c. Community organization – 3.4%
 - d. Social media (Facebook, LinkedIn, etc.) – 3.4%
 - e. Other – 3.1%

- f. My employer – 2.2%
21. Please include any comments, recommendations, resources, services, and more that you would like to share below.
- a. N/A, none, no comment, not sure – 39.1%
 - b. Lowering taxes – 6.2%
 - c. Street/traffic safety – 4.6%
 - d. Nursing 3.7%
 - e. Rodent, Mental health, Thank you/appreciation - <3%
22. Would you be interested in a future survey?
- a. Yes – 76.7%
 - b. No – 23.3%
23. What is your age?
- a. 75 years or older – 10.1 %
 - b. 65-74 years old – 27.4%
 - c. 50-64 years old – 36.9%
 - d. 40-49 years old – 13.9%
 - e. 30-39 years old – 7.3%
 - f. 25-29 years old – 3.5%
 - g. 18-24 years old – 0.9%
24. How do you identify?
- a. Female – 68.9%
 - b. Male – 27.6%
 - c. Other – percentage not gathered because it was so minimal.
25. Which race do you identify with?
- a. White/Caucasian & European was the highest.
26. Do you speak a language other than English at home? If yes, please specify what other language(s) you speak.
- a. Portugues was the highest.
27. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
- a. Less than high school -
 - b. High School Diploma or equivalent – 16.5%
 - c. Associates degree at same collage – 28.8%
 - d. Batcheler's degree – 24.1%
 - e. Graduate or Professional degree – 26.9%

Lessons learned:

- There is a need for more resources and staff in local public health. The biggest concerns are safe roads and mental health.
- Include web link, as not everyone has a smart phone.
- For "Yes" or "No" questions, there should also be a "N/A" option.
- Limiting options was helpful for data collection.
- Low participation rate.

This survey was not used with town money or hours, it was grant funded. Ms. Matusik reached out to the Police Chief to use the Dart grant to fund this survey and she also applied for an intern over the summer from the state to help with the survey.

Ms. Matusik stated that 322 residents responded to the survey out of the 6,200 residents that were mailed a postcard, noting this was the least expensive way to supply the residents with the survey for a total printing cost of \$2,329.76. Postage for the postcard is also less expensive than a regular standard envelope, with a total mailing cost of \$3,844. Ms. Matusik also explained that if a paper survey was mailed out to the residents and enclosed a return envelope, this would have doubled the printing and mailing costs. There was an option noted on the postcard for residents to come into the office for a paper copy if this was preferred.

Other Discussion:

Ms. Matusik updated the BOH on the Shared Services grant. The Health Department has received the approved amended amount of \$154,442.07 for a total of \$449,442.07 for the next three fiscal years including 2024. The grant was approved for (1) full time - Shared Services Coordinator - this will be a hybrid position, (1) full time - Health Inspector, (1) full time - Social Worker and (1) part time - Nurse. The grant also includes inspection software, iPads, computers, desk supplies, traveling, education and training that can be utilized by the staff and employees of the health department. The software has been installed and iPads have already been purchased.

Ms. Matusik discussed Health Inspector inspections. Right now, we are lower on expectations because of time off and holidays. It is the beginning of the year and Mr. Fontaine is up to date with all his inspections. She will be meeting with Mr. Fontaine on 01/12/2024 for a review and FY24 goals. Ms. Matusik noted that Mr. Fontaine was right on track last year and she has no concerns, he is doing a great job.

Ms. Lamas wanted to know regarding the inspections being on the website, is there an easy link? Ms. Matusik explained how to access the inspections on the Town website, go to government, then click on health department and there should be tabs on the side, for example: the food inspections tab will bring you to the food inspections, this will be done by month instead of by the restaurant. Ms. Matusik also updated the website with a Mental health tab which includes resources. And noted that the following week (01/17/2024) the town is having an Employee Wellness Day which will be wellness and mental health focused.

Ms. Lamas wanted to know if other municipalities have their health inspections on their website yet?

Ms. Matusik stated that some do, including East Longmeadow and Pelham District.

Ms. Lamas suggested that maybe their sites can be reviewed for disclaimers about their reports and how to interpret them.

Ms. Matusik thought that was a good idea and explained that Mr. Fontaine can review the websites.

Ms. Lamas expressed that this will be the first time the public will be seeing these inspections and is hoping that we can prepare the public with some education, maybe on social media before it comes out.

Ms. DeSantis also thought that the health department could include: "Always feel free to call the Health Department with any questions."

Ms. Matusik thought these were both great ideas.

The next Board of Health meeting will be on February 13, 2024, at 4:30 PM.

A motion was made by Ms. DeSantis to adjourn the meeting at 6:23 PM. Seconded by Mr. Tavares. All in favor 3-0.

Respectfully submitted,



Adrienne DeSantis

Secretary