



# Franklin Regional Council of Governments

## Meeting: Cooperative Public Health Service Oversight Board 3/24/22

Ashfield- Caroline White

Bernardston- Jean Page

Buckland- Terry Estes

Charlemont- Doug Telling

Colrain- absent

Conway- absent

Deerfield- absent

Erving- Jeff McAndrews

Gill- absent

Hawley- absent

Heath- Barbara Gordon

Leyden- Beth Kudzeba

Monroe- absent

Northfield- regrets

Rowe- Maggie Rice, Chair

Shelburne- regrets

**Staff Attendance:** Randy Crochier, Lisa Danek Burke, Meg Ryan, Kurt Schellenberg, Phoebe Walker, Maureen O'Reilly

### Intros and Town Updates:

**Ashfield**, Quiet in Ashfield. **Bernardston** also fairly quiet, rescinded the mask mandate, discussed the Neighborhood Renewal Program with the Police Chief requesting to be on the lookout for properties and to discuss with the Fire Chief. **Charlemont** - A few housing issues going and dealing with noncompliance with a permit. **Buckland** - Received word on an abandoned property that may finally have some action after two decades, the Board rescinded their mask mandate moving to a recommendation. **Erving** - Have a few abandoned properties, a tenant building where the owner is requesting a hearing, failed septic issue going through litigation, lifted their mask mandate, and are reviewing health district and possibly transfer the health agent to a town employee of one of the member towns. **Heath** - Still has a mask mandate, voted two weeks ago to rescind part of mandate to become a recommendation but maintain it in the Town Building - Sawyer Hall - presented to Selectboard, and subsequently re-voted to keep mask mandate for all buildings. Heath has received a lot of PPE from state program and has thermometers available if anyone has a need. **Leyden** - Rescinded mask mandate. **Rowe**: rescinded mask mandate for all town buildings except School and Library. All unvaccinated people must wear masks in all buildings. Looking at some upcoming construction at their transfer station.

**Minutes for February meeting:** moved by Barbara Gordon, seconded by Doug Telling. Request to add Rowe back in – minutes passed unanimously.

### **Public Health Nursing Report:**

- Walk-in Wellness Clinic Status Update/Nursing Outreach – current schedule of nurse visits was presented by Meg Ryan. The nurses are handing out antigen tests at these clinics and working to connect residents with services from the YMCA and Life Path, as well as their usual health condition consultation. Meg asked members to think about how to get the word out to people that nurses are in town. Reach out to Meg or Lisa with suggestions.
- Age Friendly update: Survey is closed! Now what? - Survey closed 3/11. Over 1900 responses. Paper copies are being entered. It will take 1-2 months to process the data with help from FRCOG's Nick Hathaway, Evaluation Coordinator for the Partnership For Youth, Mae Tanner, MPH student and member of the Charlemont BOH, and Lizzie Alwan from UMaSS. As the data is processed focus groups will be convened and interviews conducted to reach different underrepresented groups. An in depth report will be developed and used to drive the next phase. Meg also discussed a number of upcoming events where she will present on dementia topics.
- Testing Access - Stop the Spread is Closing on 3/31. Locally PCR testing is available in Deerfield MWF 10a-1p and at local pharmacies. A link was presented for any town that wants to set up a testing site in their town. Take home tests donated by MADPH are available at FRCOG or from one of the Nurses or Health Agents. Testing information is also available on the FRCOG website.
- COVID variants – Lisa White gave an update on the COVID BA.2 Omicron Subvariant in Massachusetts, from State Epi Katie Brown on 3/22 - state's surveillance indicates BA.2 is likely >50 % of cases, it is highly contagious but d/n seem to cause more severe disease and it is unpredictable if and how significantly will increase.
- Covid currently - Maureen provided a summary of current cases (51 cases across the CPHS district, Deerfield excluded) from March 1 -24 and the regional numbers are continuing to trend downward. Percent positivity has dropped from 2.27% to 1.64% over the past month in Franklin County.

**Communicating Public Health Messages to your Town's Residents** - Maureen provided an update of a new project to gain/update our understanding of vulnerable populations and reach residents - Asked BOH members to consider how we can reach your residents

- Maureen asked BOH members to consider existing channels (town website/FB, newsletters, etc) and how residents get their information. Using these two, BOH to consider how to feasibly reach their residents.
- One vulnerable population identified across towns is elderly who do not use the internet. Specifically asked towns to consider these residents in outreach.
- FRCOG will create content (300-500 word blurbs) for newsletters on topics and each will have an accompanying flyer. Content topics like ticks/rabies/arbovirus awareness, well/septic upkeep, age-friendly topics
- Goal is to have topics ready for towns around May (in May newsletters, etc)
- Asked BOH for input on topics and how they want to reach their residents. Suggestion to include tech help options for older adults.

**Public Health Excellence Workplan:** Phoebe described the work that is required as part of the \$285K annual grant. This includes attending regular meetings, getting training, going through an assessment of our ability to meet the current state standards, developing a workplan and meeting a new state standard for local public health performance.



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Lengthy discussion of the challenges of serving as board of health members and how we could better support them in their roles. Many members noted that they have not seen the red BOH binders we created a few years ago. There was interest in creating a standard BOH Job Description and a way to communicate with each other online easily.

## **Health Agents Report:**

- Randy reported that changes to the private well policy is on hold for now, further analysis and discussion is needed before any recommendations are made and the pending work with a new state bill establishing a state standard well regulation.
- The proposed changes to fee schedule (provided with the agenda) were presented by Randy and Lisa. Mainly housekeeping items to clarify certain fees, eliminate permits not used, and increasing the standard cost of staff to \$100/hour to cover travel and staff salary and benefits. These changes are being brought to the Board because of updated understanding of how much time it takes to do the work of each of the permits. Members expressed concern about doubling the temporary food permit to 100. Randy reported this is lower than other communities. Discussion of the new tobacco state law with a mandatory \$1000 fine.
- Other Health Agent updates - Inspections picking up as we enter construction season, continuing to issue annual permits as applications are submitted, including Temporary Lodging Sites, food establishments, and septic installers & haulers. Recently visited 7 properties with Assistant AG Maya Kazmierczak Assistant Attorney General, 3 in Buckland and 4 in Gill. Beginning to receive permit applications for recreational camps for children. Health Agents and Nurses have been doing some in person trainings.
- Upcoming ServSafe Class - being offered in Bernardston in April. Currently close to 30 signed up.
- Mosquito Opt Out discussion – Beth asked for an update on how to opt out.

**FEE SCHEDULE:** Motion to accept the Fees Schedule by Doug Telling, Seconded by Terry Estes, passed unanimously, with one abstention from Barbara Gordon.