

Board of Health
Special Meeting Minutes – Goals Setting
June 23, 2022

Present:

Susan Schwartz, Chair
Maureen Richichi, Vice Chair
Bea Brunkhorst
Ann Kiessling
Anita Raj

Staff Present:

Heidi Porter, Director of Health and
Human Services
Margaret Root, Recording Secretary

Others Present (In-person or by Zoom):

Bedford TV

Margot Fleischman, Select Board

The meeting was called to order at 6:37 PM. Ms. Schwartz chaired the meeting. Dr. Brunkhorst moved to open the meeting. Ms. Richichi seconded the motion. A vote of 5-0-0 opened the meeting.

Public Comment

Ms. Schwartz opened the meeting to any public comments.

As there were no public comments, Ms. Schwartz closed the public comment portion of the meeting.

Discussion and Setting of BOH Goals for FY23

Ms. Schwartz asked each BOH member to pick out the top goal topics they were interested in. Many of the topics are already in progress and may need more focus to move the issue forward. Based upon what topics members are interested in, the topic list can be narrowed down. The Health and Human Services Department is working at least a little on each topic.

Ms. Richichi commented that she is interested in firearms/gun violence as it also corresponds to domestic violence. Education and working with the Police Department regarding proper and secure firearm storage could be part of the project. Ms. Richichi also expressed interest in climate change as it is a big public health issue. Some future topics could include A/C in the schools, green space development, and shelters to help people stay cool. Lastly, Ms. Richichi is interested in substance abuse as overdosing is the third leading cause of death among youth and adolescents. Newer research regarding marijuana use in teens is showing psychological effects resulting from heavy use.

Ms. Raj expressed interest in suicide prevention and awareness, as well as mental health issues and first aid.

Dr. Kiessling is interested in the school start time project. When the issue was brought up before, school start times were only pushed back 30 minutes. Progress has been slow and she is concerned some School Committee members are against the idea. When returning from COVID-19, a survey showed many high school students didn't want to return to in-person learning as they got more

sleep doing school remotely. The CDC has data regarding sleep deprivation and how it ties to a number of health issues. Ms. Richichi agreed this was an important topic. Dr. Brunkhorst commented that other schools in the area have already moved school start times.

Dr. Brunkhorst expressed interest in exploring recreation opportunities in residential areas. She is also interested in the Youth Risk Behavior Survey and concerns regarding student mental health. Lastly, Dr. Brunkhorst expressed interest in impacts of climate change.

Ms. Schwartz also expressed interest in gun and domestic violence, as well as mental health. Ms. Schwartz was also interested in getting people outside more in recreation areas. Lastly, Ms. Schwartz suggested the BOH review at least one set of regulations each year.

In summary, BOH members were interested in gun violence, domestic violence, substance abuse, mental health with connected issues, climate change, school start times, which can be tied to the Youth Risk Behavior Survey, recreation areas, and regulation reviews.

Ms. Schwartz asked if one BOH member should take point to work on a topic with the HHS Department and Ms. Porter, or if all BOH members should be involved in each topic. Dr. Brunkhorst suggested each BOH member focus on a topic. Ms. Richichi suggested time be set aside each meeting to discuss topics before members choose a topic. This way topics could be narrowed down even more to determine goals/action items. Ms. Schwartz suggested BOH members choose to prepare information on the topics to present to the BOH. Ms. Richichi suggested the research should focus on what a local BOH could actually do. Many of these topics will take some time.

Ms. Porter suggested topics could be narrowed down to action items which could include outreach and possible speakers.

Ms. Raj commented that the person in charge of a topic could be its advocate.

Ms. Porter commented that the Department would be willing to help with the action items.

Ms. Schwartz asked which BOH members wanted to work on which topics.

Dr. Kiessling and Ms. Richichi volunteered to work on school start times. They want to work on how to push the issue, as well as collect more updated information on the subject.

Ms. Raj and Dr. Brunkhorst volunteered to work on mental health issues.

Ms. Richichi and Ms. Schwartz volunteered to work on gun and domestic violence.

Dr. Brunkhorst and Ms. Raj volunteered to work on recreational areas. Healthy Bedford is also working on this issue, so Ms. Raj suggested she attend their meetings as well.

Ms. Schwartz commented that she will look at other Health Department regulations to determine which to review after tobacco sale permit regulations are approved.

Ms. Richichi and Ms. Schwartz volunteered to work on climate change. Ms. Schwartz commented it ties in with CERT. Ms. Richichi commented that a possible project would be a public splash pad.

Ms. Schwartz also suggested determining the targeted audience. She added that presenters for any of the topics either speak for free, or maybe set up a series of presentations if the presenter requests a fee.

Dr. Kiessling asked about the amount of participation in previous forums. Ms. Porter replied that on average, 20 to 25 residents would participate on a Zoom forum. The first in-person forum had about 12 people attend, indicating more people may have felt more comfortable on Zoom. Ms. Porter suggested offering a presentation both in-person and online would get the most attendance. Ms. Porter added that some topics drew more people and regularly presented forums had fewer attendees than a single or new topic forum.

Ms. Richichi suggested the library could highlight books on certain topics. Ms. Porter suggested the topic could be highlighted for a month and then have the BOH member present information on the topic. Ms. Schwartz commented that the High School did something similar with a book reading before the author came to speak.

Ms. Richichi commented that she was interested in hearing from the media consultant working with the Shared Services grant group. Ms. Porter replied that the position would most likely be the last one filled for the group. Such a position would be important for getting the message out to residents.

Ms. Schwartz suggested that the Shared Services communities could have similar topics and presentations could be opened to residents from other communities. Ms. Porter commented that a similar set-up was done with the regional grant for a hoarding specialist. Training was offered for clutter coordinators and classes were available for hoarders to take.

Ms. Schwartz suggested a topic be chosen to highlight at the next BOH meeting. She asked the BOH members to let her know if their group would be ready to present next month. Ms. Richichi suggested school start times as the topic to get some commitment from the schools. However, school start times wouldn't be able to be changed for this coming school year as the calendar has already been approved and set.

Ms. Porter commented that in July or August she expects to discuss hotel/motel regulations with the Town Counsel. The summer intern is working on swimming pools and safety, which could be included in the pool regulations.

Ms. Schwartz asked if the BOH should look at the pool regulations next month. Ms. Porter replied that the pool regulations are set by the State, so Bedford can only make them more strict. Some communities require lifeguards at pools, which can be difficult with staffing shortages. The pool regulations can be looked at next month. Ms. Schwartz commented that it would be good to look at the pool regulations to connect the information given by the summer intern, which will also include places for swim lessons.

At 7:24 PM, Ms. Richichi moved to adjourn the meeting of June 23rd, 2022. Ms. Raj seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

Documents and Exhibits Used During this Meeting

FY23 Goals Discussion List

The next scheduled meetings of the Board of Health are July 18th, August 15th, September 19th, October 17th, November 7th, and December 12th.

Susan Schwartz, Chair

Beatrice Brunkhorst

Maureen Richichi, Vice Chair

Ann Kiessling

Anita Raj