

**Board of Health
Meeting Minutes
February 6, 2023**

Present:

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

Staff Present:

Heidi Porter, Director of Health and
Human Services
Katharine Dagle, Assistant Health Director
Julie Genova, Public Health Nurse
Danielle Williams, Interim Recording Secretary
Chris Bang

Others Present (In-person or by Zoom):

Bedford TV

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM. Ms. Schwartz chaired the meeting.

Public Comment

Ms. Schwartz opened the meeting to any public comments however public comment was closed as no one from public attended the meeting.

Chris Bang, Community Social Worker - Presentation on social service and mental health supports in Bedford.

Mr. Bang started by noting that Youth & Family Services (YFS) has a couple of contracted services that are offered. First being Eliot Community Human Services that offers mental health counseling in the Town Center. Residents are not charged a co-pay and lack of insurance is not a barrier for starting therapy. If someone does not have insurance, they get referred to YFS to get assistance with enrolling in MassHealth or to explore the health insurance options. If someone is undocumented or unable to get health insurance, then YFS has slots to help those individuals get access to mental health care. Jennifer Morazes is the full-time clinician and currently has about 26 kids on her case load. Lynne Chapas is the other therapist and mainly see adults. Patients are able to see her in person and by telehealth. YFS also has a contract with William James College (WJC) Interface Service which is a great program to help Bedford Community members with mental health support. There is a mental health line available Monday through Friday from 9am – 5pm where graduate level students perform an intake which takes about 15-20 minutes. Related information is collected starting with issues that callers are dealing with or any preferences they may have for a potential therapist such as gender or location and then callers are matched to a therapist within their database based on availability. As of November, about 25 Bedford residents had utilized this service this fiscal year. YFS works closely with these clinicians to provide complete patient services. YFS offers case management and social worker support services. The services include the Food Bank, the Department of Transitional Services (DTA) Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and other resources and programs that can help. A new program for this year that is available is from Advocates Community Counseling which will be offering a community-based health center and services are available from Monday through Friday from 8am – 8pm and weekends from 9am – 5pm. Walk-ins are available and a “No Wrong Door” policy is effective. The center located in Waltham will provide one-stop services for the Bedford community. They offer groups, individual counseling, crisis stabilization and triage services. YFS is still learning about

this program, which just opened in January, and learning more about their processes and the ways that residents can and will be connected to services.

Ms. Raj noted that the State has realized that there is an issue with access to mental health services; however, movement on this matter has moved very slowly. The Advocates program is a big piece to addressing the gap in access to services. Residents will be able to get their mental health issues dealt with at the Advocates center as opposed to going to the Emergency Room.

Ms. Richichi questioned how YFS will advertise this program and how residents will know how to contact Advocates since YFS is not open over weekends.

Mr. Bang stated that he is still waiting to see how Advocates will want the program advertised but YFS will put this information on the website and provide materials once they are received.

Ms. Porter added that the School Superintendent put out a blurb about WJC Interface in his newsletter last week and will do the same for the Advocates program.

Mr. Bang continued to state that the biggest issues that he has been experiencing over the past couple of months are issues with utilities and rent. He has been connecting residents to resources and programs to assist with funds to help cover costs and balances to avoid shut-offs and evictions. There are still eviction protections in place and he has been educating residents on and assisting them with applying for Residential Assistance for Family in Transition (RAFT) in addition to informing residents with food insecurity about the Bedford Food Bank. YFS has been working with the schools to provide food bags and information for parents to get connected with SNAP. Mr. Bang indicated that he has heard talk on the state level of increasing SNAP benefits with state funds to supplement that loss of current federal COVID benefits that will be reduced in March, but nothing concrete as of yet. YFS has a 67-70% acceptance rate of success in getting residents onto the SNAP program.

Dr. Kiessling asked how many applications have been submitted for that acceptance rate of 67-70%.

Mr. Bang noted that last year there were 60-70 SNAP applications (households) submitted through the Bedford program.

Ms. Porter added that outreach has also been done through the Food Bank regarding the SNAP program.

Mr. Bang stated that YFS offers winter services. Community Teamworks Inc. (CTI) in Lowell administers the Fuel Assistance program and YFS is an intake site to help residents complete the application form and with gathering the required documentation to ensure the application is complete. The other winter service provided is winter coats for residents. YFS has a great inventory of kid size coats and has been able to expand that to include adult sizes from the help of Cradle to Crayons. They have a warehouse in Newton and YFS can place an order on their website for coats and diapers also. Donations for coats have also been provided by Bedford residents and The Neighbor Brigade . The Rotary Club also provided a grant to purchase coats. YFS did a coat distribution during a Food Bank drive-through distribution and gave out about 60 coats during this event.

Ms. Porter added that coats, along with hats and gloves, are available to residents to come and select without an appointment during normal business hours.

Ms. Richichi noted that the YFS website is now more user friendly and resources are easier to find.

Ms. Raj inquired about the Youth Social Worker position.

Ms. Porter answered that Mallory Fuller has started and is the new Youth Services Coordinator and works with children under 18 and their families. Mr. Bang works with residents over the age of 18 and Danika Castle (COA) works with residents 60+. The Police Department (PD) also has a Social Worker that works with them.

Dr. Kiessling asked Mr. Bang about youth substance abuse in Bedford.

Mr. Bang noted that substance abuse is tracked through the At-Risk Meetings, a collaboration of many town departments and supporting agencies. YFS has had many direct referrals for assistance and many come from family members or friends of the effected party. Narcan is available in the office. The bathrooms in Town Center, as well as Town Hall and Library, have flyers announcing the substance abuse hotline, which is a hotline that residents can call and talk to a live person who can give them resources and referrals for treatment. The PD tracks the overdose deaths.

Ms. Porter added that Bedford has received funding for the Dinner and Discussion program. Two dinner and discussions events have already been held and the next one is scheduled for mid-March.

Mr. Bang indicated that the idea around the Dinner and Discussions is to pair mental health education with a meal and an opportunity to address social isolation. Child care and transportation to the event is provided along with dinner.

Ms. Porter added that a Food Bank Volunteer Coordinator position has been posted and that person will be handling the overall program where Mallory will work with youth coordination. She added that hiring for the open regional position for marketing and health education support has been delayed. The Health Director from Sudbury resigned, which is where the Regional Great Meadows Public Health Collaborative coordinator resides. The Town of Sudbury will not allow the open position within Great Meadows to be posted until the Director position is filled. Great Meadows is looking for that position to be filled by someone with a medical background such as an RN. She stated that the other public health nurses that we work with as part of that group prepare outreach such as infographics and educational materials for distribution. A septic safe brochure was just generated and will be distributed to residents who have septic on their property additionally a flyer related to the gun violence prevention was prepared. The regional group is launching a mental health campaign of their own.

BOH Minutes - Review and Vote

The meeting minutes from January 11, 2023 were reviewed and amended as requested. Ms. Richichi moved to approve the minutes as amended; Ms. Raj seconded the motion. A vote of 5-0-0 approved the meeting minutes from January 11, 2023

COVID-19 Response – Data Evaluation, Mitigation Review and BOH Discussion

Ms. Porter reviewed the COVID-19 data and noted numbers continue to decline. Bedford is still a medium risk community level. Waste water numbers are below where we were when peak started.

Dr. Brunkhorst asked if the coloring on the dashboard can be adjusted (red to orange) for the risk level. The ICU numbers show 78 currently which seems to be headed in the right direction.

Ms. Schwartz state that COVID-19 home test kits are still available for residents.

Reports – BOH Liaisons and HD Staff

Ms. Dagle stated that eight routine food establishment inspections, four re-inspections and two complaint inspections were completed in January. Four complaints related to housing and food were received and are being investigated. Housing complaints have been on the rise. A Body Art Establishment and Practitioner application was received for a location on Great Road. This is the first one ever received. Bedford was awarded two grants for the NEHA-FDA Retail Flexible Funding Model Grant Program. The grants will assist with the Department's goal of compliance with the Standards and enhance food inspectional services provided to the public including training for Health Staff and Food Establishments regarding food safety. The grant for Standards was \$5,000 and for training was \$7,500. The focus will be on HACCP principles, uniform inspection program and foodborne illness response.

Ms. Porter added that if a tenant has an open housing case with the local board of health, eviction proceedings cannot move forward.

Ms. Dagle included that often the social workers will come along for the inspection to offer resources and support.

Dr. Brunkhorst inquired about the funding for the Tobacco Control Inspection person.

Ms. Dagle noted that the tobacco control grant program will be ending at the end of this fiscal year. Wilmington, who is the grant leader, is not planning on re-applying for the grant since they are joining another grant program leaving Bedford, Concord and Lexington unfunded.

Ms. Porter added that Bedford is working with the state to see if we can join other regions that have Tobacco Collaborations. Bedford does not meet the requirements for applying for grants directly. The regional public health inspector could potentially do inspections if needed; however, the Department does not really want to use her services for that type of inspection.

Ms. Genova reported that the COVID-19 cases are coming down. The Influenza number came down from 48 in December to 4 for January. Ms. Genova attended a number of MA DHP webinars; instructed a CPR skills session for a CERT member and conducted several blood pressure clinics. Ms. Genova's personal CPR certification is in the renewal process. She attended the January Regional Nurse meetings and the Public Health Nurse Chapter Meeting which featured a Stop the Bleed presentation. She also attended the Emergency Preparedness meeting for the Region, which supports Bedford.

Dr. Brunkhorst inquired about the number of vaccines for Flu and COVID and asked if the numbers could be broken down to show adult and pediatric vaccinations.

Ms. Genova noted that she wasn't sure how detailed the COVID vaccination numbers could be broken down into but she would work on it. Current count for Flu & COVID is about 1500 from September through December 2022.

Ms. Richichi asked who the Town Physician was.

Ms. Genova responded it was Dr. David Gellar and Ms. Porter noted that Bedford does not have a contract with him however he is the physician that signs the standing orders for the Town. There is no Town Physician.

Ms. Richichi asked if the Ms. Genova's report should be amended as she refers to the town physician.

Dr. Kiessling asked Ms. Genova what the symptoms of anaplasmosis are.

Ms. Genova responded that symptoms can be fever, joint pain, fatigue to name a few.

Dr. Kiessling asked if when someone goes to the doctor's office and they decide to test for anaplasmosis, is that a better than testing for Lyme.

Ms. Genova responded that typically a panel test is used and that anaplasmosis is treated the same as Lyme (doxycycline).

Ms. Schwartz reported that she heard from the American Heart Association that the number of inquiries for CPR and AED training were going up and wondered if people were reaching out to local health departments to ask where training can be provided.

Dr. Kiessling asked about the AEDs in the Town.

Ms. Porter noted that the Town has 16 AEDs throughout locations within the town and that their locations are posted on the website. Ms. Porter also noted that there was a movement in Australia a few years ago to allow for people to do a heat map, that allows people or locations that have an AED to report it. The concern is ensuring that the reporters are providing accurate listings and the AEDs are being maintained. She added that the Town has a contract with Life Supports Services who provides annual inspections and maintenance.

Ms. Porter stated that the Health Department has been working with the Town Archivist, Ashley Large, to ensure that the Record Retention Schedule is being followed. Records are often kept longer than is required. Ms. Large is seeking to help with space issues around stored files. Ms. Large is also helping to update the Health Department/Board of Health retention schedule that is very vague. Mallory Fuller the new Social Services Coordinator has been brought on board and has taken over management of the youth volunteers for the Food Bank and is working to establish a mentorship program through that program since she has experience with that work. Ms. Porter touched on the Advocates mental health programming as Mr. Bang discussed earlier and give that none of the communities in the Great Meadows Collaborative have a substance abuse prevention coalition, the Collaborative is exploring the possibility of establishing a substance use prevention coalition with grant funding.

Ms. Porter attended the Finance Committee to support the BOH Budget and the Select Board Budget. Ms. Porter also attended the Bedford Public School Leadership team meeting and inquired as to how they can best be supported by HHS and what their needs are. Bedford is now a part of a different medical reserve Corps (MRC), the Central Middlesex MRC, which is federally recognized. Ms. Porter and Ms. Dagle met with the apartment complex managers in town so that they are aware of the Health Department services and regulations and to be proactive versus reactive on regulatory issues. Also, she offered opportunities for BP clinics or Flu clinics at the apartment complexes.

Ms. Richichi and Ms. Porter stated that the Gun Violence Prevention forum is happening March 1st at BHS and one of the partner MGH physicians will be on hand to present and the PD is also planning to present during this forum. A town wide mailing is going out about the campaign, announcing the event and other aspects of the campaign. The campaign has about twenty endorsements.

Dr. Kiessling inquired about an update related to the school start times.

Ms. Richichi has been trying to get an update however has not heard back from Ann Guay as of yet.

Ms. Schwartz noted that she attended the YFS Committee and the COA Board meetings. The COA Board noted that Minuteman Senior Services is going to offering some more programs for care givers.

Ms. Porter added that Minuteman Senior Services will be bringing back the Senior lunches.

Open Discussion

Dr. Kiessling asked about the past minutes and agendas on the website and why there is only two years' worth now posted which she states is unusual. She stated that Lexington has all of their minutes and agendas since 1888. Most common is 2015.

Ms. Porter noted that the new website contractor, Civic Plus, only pulled in the last two years of minutes and agendas from the previous website.

Ms. Raj moved to adjourn the meeting of February 6th, 2023. Dr. Brunkhorst seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a unanimous vote 5-0-0.

Documents and Exhibits Used During this Meeting

BOH Draft Minutes – 1/11/23

COVID-19 Data – Last 2 Months

Director's Report

Assistant Health Director's Update

Public Health Nurse Update

The next scheduled meeting of the Board of Health is March 6, 2023.



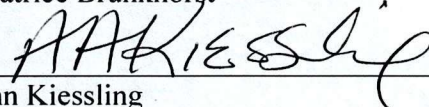
Susan Schwartz, Chair



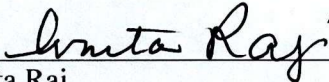
Maureen Richichi, Vice Chair



Beatrice Brunkhorst



Ann Kiessling



Anita Raj