



Town of Ashland, Office of the Board of Health

Ashland Board of Health Meeting (Zoom Only)
Meeting Minutes
February 17, 2026

Ed Burman, Chair
John Byrnes, Vice Chair
Rajit Gupta, Health Agent/Director

David Kinsman, Clerk
Barbra Sekesogundu Simon, Member
Maurice Krasner, Member

Board Members Present

Ed Burman, Jay Byrnes, David Kinsman, Maurice Krasner (remote), and Barbra Sekesogundu Simon (remote).

Others Present

Rajit Gupta, Health Director
Laura Clifford, Administrative Assistant

Call Meeting to Order

Chair, Ed Burman, called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

Citizen's Participation.

None.

21 Main Street, Unit 201, Ongoing Housing Code Violations

KJ Deghmane, Owner of YIF Management and Development, and Property Manager for 21 Main Street, was present via Zoom for the meeting.

Mr. Gupta explained that in early January the Health Department received a complaint from the occupant, that they had a non-working stove due to a fire in the apartment. Mr. Gupta verified with the Ashland Fire Department that there was a fire there and that the gas stove was tagged by the Fire Department. During the inspection other issues were discovered as well; on January 6th an Order to Correct letter was issued. There is a toddler living in the apartment, it has been a month and a half, and we still do not have compliance. Three citations have been issued (dated 1/29/2026, 2/2/2026, and 2/4/2026), for \$100, \$200 and \$300.

Mr. Deghmane stated that the fire that transpired in the unit was due to negligence by the tenant, but regardless, they ordered a new stove; he stated that delivery was behind due to holidays. Because it is a gas stove, they were required to have a plumber pull a gas permit. Mr. Deghmane

stated that they have multiple emails asking for an inspection but were told to call the Plumbing Inspector between 7:00 AM – 8:00 AM to schedule a plumbing inspection, which he stated is outside of their business hours. Mr. Deghmane stated that when they were able to get an appointment, they met the Plumbing Inspector there, but the tenant did not allow access. Mr. Deghmane discussed the three citations they received; stating he would be agreeable to paying the first citation but would like clemency on the second and third citations.

Mr. Gupta clarified that he was not aware of any communications with the Building Department; Mr. Deghmane stated he has many emails, Mr. Gupta stated he was not included in the emails to the Building Department, that is a separate Department, he should have been copied on those emails. Mr. Deghmane said he doesn't understand why they haven't been able to schedule the inspection with the Plumbing Inspector, and will be disputing the fines because he feels they did not have the ability to coordinate inspections properly. Mr. Deghmane stated that the tenant has not paid rent and is "playing the system".

Mr. Gupta confirmed the fines total \$600. Mr. Burman asked that Mr. Deghmane forward the emails to the Board of Health's email (boardofhealth@ashlandmass.com), and asked that Mr. Gupta speak with the Plumbing Inspector, and speak with the tenant regarding access.

Mr. Burman suggested a motion, that once they have all the emails, that they will waive these fines, with the understanding that there has been some miscommunication between multiple Departments within the Town.

Motion: Mr. Kinsman moved the motion, and Ms. Sekesogundu-Simon seconded the motion.

Vote: 5-0-0. The motion was approved by rollcall vote.

Mr. Burman said once they have the emails they will waive the fines. Mr. Deghmane inquired as to what time the Building Department opens; Mr. Gupta said he cannot speak for another Department. Mr. Gupta noted receiving another complaint at 21 Main Street.

Chestnut Place Apartments, Update from Willow Bridge

Stacy Lovell, from Willow Bridge/Chestnut Place Apartments, gave an update on the status of Chestnut Place Apartments since the previous Board Meeting. Ms. Lovell stated that Unit 19A-03 is still refusing access for more treatment; Mr. Gupta confirmed that Unit 20-35 has been inspected and is all set. Ms. Lovell stated that Unit 8-37 has refused treatments but agreed to allow access next week for another treatment.

Mr. Gupta stated the sanitation has improved but there is still a way to go; specifically, the debris around the dumpster. Mr. Burman stated he is glad they are making progress; he suggested Ms. Lovell let us know if they are having trouble gaining access to the units, Mr. Gupta may be able to help with that.

Exterior Grease Trap Waiver, NY Pizza, 1 West Union Street

Khaled Adam, owner of NY Pizza, was in attendance for the meeting. Mr. Gupta explained this is a change in ownership; an exterior grease trap waiver was in place for the previous business (Pizza Bella). Mr. Gupta noted there is an existing exterior grease trap servicing the two neighboring

businesses on the property, but this business is not attached. Mr. Gupta recommended approval of the exterior grease trap waiver, conditional to regular cleaning and maintenance of the interior grease trap to ensure grease is not getting into the public waterways. Mr. Adam confirmed they are contracted with a company to pick up the grease in a timely manner; Mr. Gupta noted that the frequency of pickups will depend on the amount of grease generated, and can be discussed with the Food Inspector. Mr. Adam stated they plan to open by mid-March.

Motion: Mr. Kinsman motioned to approve the exterior grease trap waiver for New York Pizza at 1 West Union Street. The motion was seconded by Mr. Byrnes.

Vote: 5-0-0. Motion approved by rollcall vote.

Exterior Grease Trap Waiver, Killa Pizza, 9 Homer Avenue

Davi Ribeiro, owner of Killa Pizza, was present for the meeting. Mr. Gupta explained this is a similar situation, there has been a change of ownership. An exterior grease trap waiver had been given to the previous business (Pizza Mine), and Mr. Gupta recommended approval for the new business as well, conditional to regular cleaning and maintenance. Mr. Ribeiro is hoping to open as soon as possible; they have a final building inspection scheduled for March 5th, that his contractor is trying to move up so they can open sooner.

Motion: Mr. Kinsman motioned to approve the exterior grease trap waiver for Killa Pizza at 9 Homer Avenue. The motion was seconded by Mr. Byrnes.

Vote: 5-0-0. Motion approved by rollcall vote.

Kratom, Continue Discussion.

Mr. Byrnes confirmed that Members received all of the information sent out. Mr. Byrnes shared with the Board a discussion he had with Rep. Jack Lewis regarding where the legislation currently stands in the State (House Bill #4394). The previous bill was a total ban on Kratom products, it was re-written to be more of a regulation than a ban, as this Board had discussed, which included the regulation of Kratom products, banning of the synthetic products, and including age restrictions. The next State hearing for House Bill #4394 is March 26, 2026. Mr. Byrnes noted that based on the previous Board discussion, the Board had agreed to take a proactive approach. Mr. Byrnes has reviewed various material, including the current House Bill, the Kratom Consumer Protection Act, and other community's ordinances, and has drafted a Regulation of Kratom Products to start the discussion.

Key provisions include:

- Purchaser must be over the age of 21
- Must have a photo ID
- Labeling of the product
- Ingredients and serving sizes must be listed
- Limits on the amount of 7-hydroxymitragynine that can be contained in the product (7% - comes from the Kratom Consumer Protection Act, 2% - is a number scientists are studying, or 1 mg. per serving).
- Banning of Kratom alkaloids, anything extracted, any adulterants or synthetics in the product
- Must have child-proof packaging

- Must be kept behind the store counter
- Enforcement is through the Ashland Board of Health, according to State DPH standards

This regulation would be in alignment with the State House Bill.

Mr. Kinsman inquired as to Clause 4, Section 9, Enforcement – Standards for Testing Kratom Products. How the Town can ensure items are properly labeled, and what the recourse would be if something is mislabeled? Mr. Byrnes stated that many contract the analysis out and get certifications through third-parties.

Mr. Gupta stated it cannot be added to food; we cannot surpass or bypass what the Food Code dictates; the Food Code is very strict when it comes to additives, such as CBD gummies, which are prohibited in Massachusetts. Mr. Byrnes asked about local cannabis shops; Mr. Gupta noted that Ashland does not have any of these shops; communities that do have them may allow it. Mr. Byrnes inquired as to how the House Bill can go forward if it is not allowed in food, because it is technically a food. Mr. Gupta noted that there has been instances when it has gotten consumed by children. Both agreed the Board will need to look further into this.

Mr. Kinsman discussed how it is determined, if both the consumer and retailer are deceived, and higher levels of 7-hydroxy are sold; whether it would only be discovered by an adverse reaction. Mr. Byrnes asked that we find some clarity on this. Mr. Krasner appreciates all of Mr. Byrnes' work on this draft regulation, and feels it is important that the Board ban or restrict the 7-hydroxymitragynine, and it is important to distinguish between this and the natural Kratom leaf.

Mr. Burman suggested this remain on the Board's agenda, to continue the discussion. All information, including the draft regulation, will be made available to the public on the Town of Ashland/Health Department webpage.

Board Member's Agenda: David Kinsman, Decisions at Every Turn.

Mr. Kinsman reported that he attended his first Decisions at Every Turn meeting as the Board liaison on January 21st. There were many in attendance, including Mr. Gupta and the High School principal, and Berlin Awach. It was a lengthy agenda and included discussion of youth programming such as the lunch engagement, where there is an open table at lunch where kids can get information. Berlin discussed the Youth Prevention Council, she is working with them to come up with projects as a way to get information to the students. There was a section around training and building capacity within the group, and methods on getting information to parents. There was a good deal of brainstorming amongst the group to come up with new ideas. There was a discussion on the Sticker Shock campaign, and how to strengthen that; this program works with Ashland Police and local retailers to educate and control youth access to alcohol. The next meeting is March 18th, there is also an ad-hoc meeting: Talk, They Hear You, scheduled for February 25th that he will be attending.

Health Director's Agenda:

- Food Establishments: Giovanni's 67, Killa Pizza, NY Pizza, Connect Church.
Mr. Gupta explained that we have received an application from the new owner of 16 West Union Street, formerly Murphy's. We are waiting for information on the new pizza oven hood they are installing. Killa Pizza's pre-opening inspection went fine, there were no issues. NY Pizza is taking over for Pizza Bella, the new owner is renovating and hopes to open soon. Connect Church did not renew their Food Permit application, and has not had a Permit since January 1st. They have applied, but are still missing a document.
- Second MRC / Stop the Bleed Training, Town Hall, March 18, 2026, 6:00 – 8:00 PM.
Our Public Health Nurse, Anne Fitzgerald, hosted a successful Stop the Bleed Training and is planning a second for March 18th.
- MRC Shelter Training (in planning process), April 2026.
Mr. Gupta reported that they are planning a shelter training with our MRC and will include ten towns; we are looking at a space in Natick, and will include multiple Departments.
- Boston Marathon / Ashland Course Planning Meeting, January 30, 2026.
Mr. Gupta reported attending a Boston Marathon Planning Meeting with the Ashland Police and other Town Departments; if there are any Board Members interested in attending the Boston Marathon to set up the shelters, they should let him know. Mr. Byrnes has attended in the past, but is unable to attend this year.
- Citizens Academy, March 12, 2026.
Mr. Gupta explained that this will be the third Citizen's Academy he has attended and presented at, it takes place on March 12th.
- Tobacco Educational Visits / 17 Tobacco Vendors.
Our Tobacco Control Team conducted the training for all 17 tobacco vendors in Town.
- Housing Cases: 49 Cherry Street, 321 Leland Farm Road.
49 Cherry Street is the housing case we picked up in August 2025, we have finally got compliance. We received a pest control report last week and did an inspection a couple weeks ago with Building and Fire, they have a list of things they need to do for the Building Department to bring the building into compliance. 321 Leland Farm Road is another housing case we picked up; an Order to Correct letter went out on Friday.
- Disease Investigations; Update.
Mr. Gupta reported there is one TB case we are working on. Last week they investigated a Salmonella case that was referred by Framingham.

Mr. Byrnes explained the process of attending the Boston Marathon and what they typically do; the hours are usually from 6:00 AM to 1:00 PM. Mr. Gupta explained that they setup two shelters, one at the High School, one at the Middle School; he will take one, a Board Member will take the other, and they request 4-6 Members of the American Red Cross. They will host anyone injured or dehydrated until more help arrives.

Mr. Kinsman inquired as to the MRC Shelter Training; Mr. Gupta explained that shelters are setup during extreme heat events; this training will also review how to handle conflicts within shelters, people who have pets or special needs, and how to deal with people with criminal backgrounds.

The Stop the Bleed training is available to MRC Members, as well as Members of the Board of Health. Mr. Gupta discussed SAPHE 2.0 that recommends certain trainings for Board of Health Members, as well as requirements for Board of Health officials. Funds are available for these trainings, including MAHB trainings, if any Board Member are interested.

Consent Agenda:

- Review and Approve FY2026 YTD Budget Reports.
- Meeting Minutes, January 20, 2026.

Motion: Mr. Byrnes motioned to approve the consent agenda, which was seconded by Mr. Kinsman.

Vote: 5-0-0. The motion was approved by rollcall vote.

Next Meeting Date: March 3, 2026.

The next meeting will be planned for March 3, 2026.

Adjournment

Motion: Mr. Byrnes motioned to adjourn the Board of Health meeting; Mr. Kinsman seconded the motion.

Vote: 5-0-0. The motion was approved by rollcall vote.

The meeting adjourned at 7:03 PM.

ASHLAND BOARD OF HEALTH
DOCUMENTS REVIEWED AT THE 2/17/2026 MEETING
(All items stored in the Board of Health files unless otherwise noted)

1. Exterior Grease Trap Waiver – Request Letter, NY Pizza
2. Exterior Grease Trap Waiver – Request Letter, Killa Pizza
3. Kratom Draft Regulation and Documents
4. FY2026 Budget Documents
5. Draft Meeting Minutes, January 20, 2026