

Ashland Board of Health  
Meeting Minutes  
April 18, 2023  
ZOOM Meeting

*Ronald Etskovitz, Chair*  
*Barbra Sekesogundu Simon, Clerk*  
*Rajit Gupta, Health Agent/Director*

*Ed Burman, Vice Chair*  
*John Byrnes, Member*  
*Bernadette Lunkuse, Member*

**Members Present Via Zoom Meeting:**

Ron Etskovitz, Barbra Sekesogundu Simon, Jay Byrnes, Bernadette Lunkuse

**Members Absent:**

Ed Burman

**Others Present:**

Rajit Gupta, Health Agent/Director  
Laura Clifford, BOH Admin. Assistant  
Victoria Wheeler, BOH Intern  
Mark Dassoni, Resident  
Nkiruka Christine Agu, Resident

**Call Meeting to Order**

Mr. Etskovitz called the meeting to order at 6:05 PM.

**Citizens Participation**

Mark Dassoni, resident, wished all a Happy Spring and acknowledged the Town's personnel for being on-hand in the event of an emergency during the Boston Marathon on Sunday. Mr. Dassoni recognized himself as being an active participant of the Board of Health meetings. Mr. Dassoni looks forward to the discussion on the Mary Mortensen Public Health Award, and noted that Mary should always be remembered for all the work that she did in the Town.

**Victoria Wheeler, Board of Health Intern, Poster Presentation**

Victoria Wheeler, Board of Health Intern, presented her Poster Project to the Board which showed the Background of the Health Department; Project Highlights, which included Blood Pressure Clinics, Childhood Vaccine Clinics, Food and Septic Inspections, Grant Writing, Attending Meetings; Lessons Learned; and Advice. Ms. Wheeler thanked the Board; she noted that she had a great experience, and learned a great deal.

Mr. Byrnes noted it was an excellent presentation and inquired about the historical data chart. Mr. Byrnes wished her well with her future endeavors.

Mr. Etskovitz stated that this was a very well-put together presentation. Mr. Etskovitz noted that with this level of preparation she will surely succeed, he wished Ms. Wheeler the best of luck.

**Body Art Regulation, Town Counsel Review**

Mr. Gupta noted we need more time to review the comments in the draft Body Art Regulations that came from Town Counsel's office; he noted we will discuss during the next meeting.

### **Change in Fee Schedule**

Mr. Gupta discussed two changes that he would like the Board to approve which are noted on the revised Fee Schedule. The changes include adding a fee for food establishments; \$100 for major renovations, and \$50 for minor renovations, there is no charge for menu changes but we do want food establishments to let us know when this occurs. We are also increasing the fee for Residential Service Inspections from \$95 to \$125.

Mr. Byrnes inquired as to how we come up with these fees, and if they are comparable to other towns' fees. Mr. Gupta noted \$95 for a residential service inspection was a nominal fee; \$125 is more appropriate based on the time that these inspections take, and they sometimes require follow-up. There is a checklist of items on the inspection form that must be inspected.

**Motion:** Mr. Byrnes made a motion to approve the new Fees for establishment plan review changes and operations for a new facility or a major renovation; and, Service Inspections for housing with the new stated fees. Ms. Sekesogundu Simon seconded the motion.

**Vote:** 4-0. Motion approved.

### **Mary Mortensen Annual Public Health Award – Discuss potential Nominees for 2023 Award**

Mr. Etskovitz noted that he would prefer to have a full Board to decide on a nominee for the Mary Mortensen Health Award; he inquired as to whether anyone has a suggestion for the Nominee for this Award. Mr. Gupta noted that there may be a suggestion from the Town Manager; he will get back to the Board with that information.

Mr. Etskovitz noted that Jay Byrnes has done so much when it comes to the work he has done in bringing the Remote Area Medical Clinic. It is a great undertaking for this Town as well as surrounding communities; it takes a tremendous amount of time and he is doing a great job in making it happen. Mr. Etskovitz stated that although the Board does not typically nominate Board Members, Mr. Byrnes would be an awesome nominee, because of his efforts, as well as those of Ed and the others working with him.

The Board agreed to table this to the next meeting, it is a nice Award to recognize Mary's contributions to the Town, and the Board of Health, for all of those years.

### **Member, Jay Byrnes, Agenda**

- **Remote Area Medical (RAM) Clinic, August 12 & 13, 2023, Update**

Mr. Byrnes reported that they are still soliciting donations and volunteers, then sending out the word to patients; the most important update at this point is to announce that we are planning to include a childhood vaccine / COVID-19 vaccine clinic which will be held in the Loring Arena. There will also be MassHealth signup opportunities. They will be able to refer people from RAM at Keefe Tech, over to the clinic at Loring; Ed Burman will run this along with representatives from the Latino Health Insurance Program and Gratis Healthcare. This will be a good way to draw in patients. Mr. Gupta noted there are sometimes issues in transporting of childhood vaccinations, he noted that he will definitely be able to bring in people from our team, including the nurse and translators. Ms. Sekesogundu Simon offered to help, along with others that she works with. Mr. Byrnes suggested she, and any others who are interested, go to the Ram Clinic volunteer page to register (<https://volunteer.ramusa.org>); this is for volunteers who are able to work for the whole day. Those who would like to volunteer but a full day is not possible, then the vaccine clinic at Loring may be a better option.

### Health Director's Agenda:

- **Childhood/COVID Vaccination Clinics**  
There will be a childhood vaccine clinic tomorrow, as well as a COVID vaccine clinic for the first approved booster dose. We are expecting a second bivalent booster for those 65 years and older to be approved by the CDC, then DPH, within a couple weeks.
- **EPA Press Conference regarding Nyanza Funding**  
There was a press conference held on April 3, 2023; we were advised by EPA and DEP that we will be receiving a final round of federal funding for 20 sites. Mr. Etskovitz inquired as to whether this includes monitoring, or clean-up. Mr. Gupta noted it will include more mitigation vents, he will update the Board when he receives further information.  
Mr. Dassoni inquired if there has been a recent 5-year Nyanza Report released. Mr. Gupta stated he will look into this and will get back to him if there have been any recent reports.
- **Food Establishment Application for Change in Menu, Equipment, Operations, or Renovations**  
Mr. Gupta noted that we have created a new application for any food establishments that are adding any new equipment or major renovations, as discussed under Fee Schedule discussion. Mr. Etskovitz inquired as to how this will be disseminated to the food establishments. Mr. Gupta stated that it will be sent via email to all the restaurants. Mr. Byrnes inquired as to where the threshold is, regarding what menu changes need to be reported; Mr. Gupta noted if there are additional proteins added, as well as certain foods, such as shellfish, we need to be alerted to ensure they are following requirements.
- **Housing Case: Chestnut Place Apartments**  
Mr. Gupta reported that we received a housing case at Joanne Drive; we are working with management of Chestnut Place Apartments, and have sent an Order Letter.
- **Update on Tobacco Fine, Family Dollar Store**  
Mr. Gupta noted this tobacco sale fine has finally been paid by Family Dollar Corporation.
- **Nursing Grant, Metrowest Health Foundation**  
Mr. Gupta noted that Victoria Wheeler helped work on this Grant and it has been submitted. It will include an initial payment of \$20,000.
- **2023 Boston Marathon, Update**  
Mr. Gupta thanked Mr. Byrnes for volunteering to assist with Ashland's emergency shelters on Marathon Day, where they assisted one person with a minor injury.
- **Beaver Activity, Indian Brook Road**  
Mr. Gupta noted there has been some beaver activity and a Beaver Permit was issued for Indian Brook Road. They will start trapping tomorrow, it is a ten-day permit. Beavers have damaged 5-6 trees.  
Mr. Gupta noted there was a Hoarding Task Force meeting today, the Pond Street house case was discussed. We have requested that the owners put in writing what they are planning to do for repairs to be able to allow them back in to make the repairs. The Board of Health has the authority to order a demolition of the building after one year of condemnation; Mr. Gupta stated that he does not believe it is repairable, there is no heat, no water and limited electricity.  
Ms. Sekesogundu Simon inquired as to number of cases related to the new COVID variant; Mr. Gupta noted the numbers are low; most people are doing home testing. Maybe two cases per week.

### Consent Agenda:

- **Review and Approve Board of Health Draft Meeting Minutes, March 21, 2023**
- **Review YTD Budget Report FY2023**

**Motion:** Ms. Lunkuse made a motion to approve the consent agenda; the March 21, 2023 draft meeting minutes and the Year to Date Budget Report. Mr. Byrnes seconded the motion.

**Vote:** 4-0. Motion approved.

**Discuss Future Agenda Items; Next meeting dates: May 2, 2023, To be decided**

Mr. Gupta noted that the allowance of remote meetings of public meetings has been extended to March, 2025. Mr. Gupta noted that May 16th is the Town election, so we will not be able to meet on that day.

Mr. Gupta announced that GreenUp Ashland Day is on Saturday, May 6, 2023, from 9:00-12:00. Mr. Etskovitz has volunteered for this event in the past and is interested in attending this year as well.

Nkiruka Christine Agu, resident, came onto the meeting and introduced herself; she stated that she is interested in the Board of Health and will be running for a position; she inquired as to what GreenUp Ashland is about. Mr. Gupta noted it is an annual event where volunteers clean up the streets, there is also an adopt-the-street program. There is a website to learn more ([GreenUpAshland.org](http://GreenUpAshland.org)).

**Adjournment**

**Motion:** Ms. Sekesogundu Simon made a motion to adjourn. Ms. Lunkuse seconded the motion.

**Vote:** 4-0. Motion approved.

ASHLAND BOARD OF HEALTH  
DOCUMENTS REVIEWED AT THE 4/18/2023 MEETING  
(All items stored in the Board of Health files unless otherwise noted)

1. Revised Fee Schedule, dated April 18, 2023
2. New Application for Change in Menu, Equipment and Operations
3. Body Art Regulations, with Edits by Town Counsel
4. BOH Year-to-Date Budget Report, FY23
5. BOH Revolving Account, Year-to-Date Budget Report, FY23
6. Draft Minutes, March 21, 2023
7. A recording of the meeting is available at [WACATV.com](http://WACATV.com)