



Town of Ashland, Office of the Board of Health

Ashland Board of Health Meeting (Zoom Only)
Meeting Minutes
March 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.

Citizens Participation

William Regan (a remote participant) thanked the Board for looking at Kratom, he is a proponent of the natural leaf product, but not of the 7-OH product. Mr. Regan stated that the natural leaf product has helped him refrain from alcohol use, and has helped with his chronic back pain.

Shannon Lee (a remote participant) stated that she is afraid of the consequences if Kratom were to be banned, as a healthcare worker she suffered from chronic lower back pain, she now uses natural leaf Kratom which she stated has helped with the pain. Ms. Lee hopes natural leaf Kratom will be regulated and that 7-OH will be banned, as they have in other communities.

Melody Woolf (a remote participant) stated she has just returned from a symposium on Kratom at the University of Florida, there were legislators and scientists in attendance. As a 12-year daily Kratom consumer, she was asked to speak at an HHS/FDA press conference; she spoke of the benefits of it, and the importance of distinguishing it from 7-OH, which she is in support of banning. Ms. Woolf discussed the difference using Kratom has made to her quality of life.

Jennifer Gillis (a remote participant) voiced her support of Kratom natural leaf product; she was a chronic pain patient for many years until discovering Kratom, which she stated has given her a second chance at life. Ms. Gillis is in favor of appropriate measures including regulations requiring age restrictions and proper labeling, but feels the key is differentiating the natural leaf Kratom from 7-OH.

Misty Brown (a remote participant) spoke about her use of various prescription painkillers for many years due to a degenerative disc disease; she stated that after being cut off from pain management, she was only able to heal after discovering Kratom. Ms. Brown also expressed the importance of differentiating natural leaf Kratom and 7-OH.

Shane Macio (a remote participant) stated that he is a licensed medical professional and is in favor of regulation of natural leaf Kratom; he also expressed support of creating regulations for the natural leaf Kratom, and the distinction of that and 7-OH.

Mr. Burman thanked everyone for their comments.

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

Mr. Kinsman noted there is a Decisions At Every Turn meeting scheduled for tomorrow night, he will report back to the Board at the next meeting.

Health Director's Report:

- **Food Establishments: Giovanni's 67, NY Pizza.**
Giovanni's 67 (formerly Murphy's): Owners are still working on renovations; we are still waiting for information on the new hood they will be installing. They hope to open soon.
NY Pizza (formerly Pizza Bella): Tom Curran has done a pre-operational inspection, and there were just a couple of issues that needed to be addressed; Tom will be going back on Friday for a follow-up.
- **Second MRC / Stop the Bleed Training, Town Hall, March 18, 2026, 6:00 – 8:00 PM.**
There are 12 people signed up for this training from 6:00 – 8:00 PM tomorrow night, Anne Fitzgerald will be the trainer.
- **MRC Shelter Training, April 1, 2026.**
An email has been forwarded to the Board in Natick regarding this training that will be held on April 1st.
- **March 17, 2026 MassDEP/MHOA Title 5 Seminar, Holyoke, MA**
Mr. Gupta reported attending a seminar today in Holyoke, a wide range of topics was discussed.
- **Boston Marathon, April 20, 2026.**
Mr. Gupta noted that he will not be here for this year's Boston Marathon; Anne Fitzgerald will be taking the lead. If one or two Board Members can attend, he would appreciate it.
- **Citizens Academy, Recap, March 11, 2026.**
Mr. Gupta reported that he, along with the Conservation Agent and Sustainability Coordinator, presented at Citizens Academy, he overviewed the Board of Health functions to the 15 Citizens Academy participants.
- **Housing Cases: Chestnut Place Apartments, 321 Leland Farm Road, 21 Main Street, Unit 201, 21 Main Street, Unit 204.**
Chestnut Place Apartments: Mr. Gupta reported that sanitation is on and off at Chestnut Place; we have had good inspections after a meeting, but as noted in his email from Friday, we have

picked up a case involving an Ashland student whose Chromebook was returned to IT infested with dead insects. An Order to Correct letter has been issued.

321 Leland Farm Road: All items except for one have been addressed.

21 Main Street, Unit 201: This case has been closed, they have paid the \$600 fine.

21 Main Street, Unit 204: Mr. Gupta reported that he spoke with the tenant who mentioned that maintenance has scheduled a time to come in to repair the washer and dryer. The tenant stated she has not been living at the unit due to having no heat or hot water, this is the same complaint that was reported last October, in this same unit. Mr. Gupta asked the tenant if she wanted to schedule an inspection but he has not heard back. Mr. Byrnes confirmed that he spoke to the tenant a number of weeks ago, which he summarized in an email to the Board. Mr. Byrnes explained that the tenant reached out to him again today, to let him know there has been no movement from the management; she included screenshots from the management.

Mr. Burman clarified that the Board cannot waive fines, they can only waive fees; he noted the fines in the matter of 21 Main Street, Unit 201, have been paid.

Mr. Gupta noted that in regards to 21 Main Street, Unit 204, not having heat and hot water is an imminent threat and requires a 24-hour response, but she needs to agree to an inspection, that is the first step, he will try reaching out to her again.

- **Rodent Complaints.**

Mr. Gupta reported receiving three rodent complaints, which is likely due to the warmer weather. There is a complaint at Cherry Street, Cirrus Apartments, and another at the corner of Chestnut and Brook Streets.

- **Disease Investigations; Update.**

Mr. Gupta explained they have been working on a communicable disease investigation, one is still under quarantine, others have been cleared.

Consent Agenda:

- Review and Approve FY2026 YTD Budget Reports.
- Meeting Minutes, February 17, 2026.

Motion: Mr. Byrnes motioned to approve the Consent Agenda, the motion was seconded by Ms. Sekesogundu Simon.

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

Future Agenda Items – Continue Kratom Discussion

The Board agreed to continue the Kratom discussion at the next meeting; Mr. Byrnes thanked everyone who attended tonight's meeting. Mr. Byrnes explained that he has made some updates to the draft regulation that can be found on the Board of Health webpage, it is similar to the one being considered by the State. The revised draft will be sent to the Board Members for their review.

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 6:28 PM.

ASHLAND BOARD OF HEALTH
DOCUMENTS REVIEWED AT THE 3/17/2026 MEETING
(All items stored in the Board of Health files unless otherwise noted)

1. FY2026 Budget Documents
2. Draft Meeting Minutes, February 17, 2026