

**Newburyport Board of Health Public Meeting
January 22, 2015**

Date of Approval: May 21, 2015

Attendees:

Chairperson of the Board: Dr. Robin Blair

Board Member: Dr. Susan Beluk

Board Member: Patricia Lawrence

City Health Director: Robert Bracey

Energy & Recycle Coordinator: Molly Ettenborough

Note Taker: Patricia McAlarney

Call to Order: 7:00 PM – Dr. Blair called the meeting to order.

Reading of the Minutes:

- Motion made by Patricia Lawrence to approve the minutes of the November 20, 2014 Board of Health meeting; seconded by Dr. Susan Beluk. All members voted to approve. Minutes were accepted.
- Motion made by Patricia Lawrence to approve the minutes of the December 23, 2014 Board of Health meeting; seconded by Dr. Susan Beluk. All members voted to approve. Minutes were accepted.

Comments by the Chairperson:

- Board Members were encouraged to attend the City Council Meeting on Monday, January 26, 2014 at 7 pm during which the City will be presented with a designation as a Heart Safe Community. Public Health Nurse, Pam Palombo has worked diligently over the past year to implement programs which would satisfy the criteria for this designation (i.e. completing CPR education classes, confirming presence/location of AED's, etc.)
- The City Council is considering whether the fluoride question should be put on the ballot. Two Councilors approached Dr. Blair and stated that it would be helpful if the Board would provide a statement as to whether they support inclusion of the fluoride question on the ballot. Patricia Lawrence stated that more education of the public is necessary before presenting the question for vote and that the question is too involved to be presented as a simple yes/no question. Dr. Blair and Sue Beluk indicated that they believe that if the question is to be included on the ballot that in the months preceding the vote there would be presentations, dissemination of literature, etc. to help educate the public. The information presented to support removal of public meeting that was held on November 20, 2014 The Board agreed that the Board's stance on the fluoride issue at the present time will be Based on the information that has been provided not feel comfortable supporting the withdrawal of fluoride in the City water. The Board would like to see some data specific to Newburyport related to current frequency of dental visits and rate of dental caries. If fluoride is removed, there needs to be a system in place to track any changes to the current rates. Also, the

Board questioned what measure will be taken to ensure that children receive fluoride and in the proper dosage if it is removed from the water source? The Board noted that they do feel that if fluoride continues to be included in the water supply, it should not be obtained from China and it should be provided at the lower end of the dosage scale.

Update from Energy, Recycle & Sustainability Coordinator – Molly Ettenborough:

- **Ban on Plastic Bags** - Information concerning the ban was disseminated to residents along with the census and to retailers in a letter. If smaller retailers have a supply of the bags that are banned, they will be allowed to use up their stock (as long as they are used up within a reasonable amount of time.) Today Councilor O'Brien and Councilor Cronin submitted an order to be added to the agenda for Monday night's Council Meeting that would postpone the ban until December 1, 2015. Molly met with a local company, Packaging Specialties, which distributes plastic bags. They suggested that the thickness of the banned bags be reduced. The regulation currently bans bags less than 3mm thick with integrated handles. Molly stated that she intends to discuss this possibility with the Councilors and also suggest that they consider excluding smaller retail stores from the ban. The City of Newton recently passed a plastic bag ban similar to Newburyport's but excluded retailers that are under 3500 square feet. Molly explained to the Board that retailers are already adapting and becoming more innovative in response to the ban on very thin bags with integrated handles. CVS has developed a new bag that has attached, rather than integrated, handles that they plan to bring before the City Council for approval. There was discussion among Board Members concerning issues arising from restaurants that use thin plastic containers for hot take-out foods because the plastic begins to melt to the food. It was suggested that perhaps there is a group (schools, Board of Health, Public Health) that may research the relationship between use of plastics and human health.
- Molly asked the Board for guidance regarding how to proceed with adding Regulations that pertain to whether private roads would qualify for City services, specifically trash and recycle pick-up. The Board agreed that Molly should draft the regulations and have them reviewed by Kopelman and Page and then submit them to the Board for approval and inclusion in the City's Rules & Regulations in the Solid Waste section. Patricia Lawrence reminded the Board that they had planned to review the regulations that disallow dwellings with more than seven rental units from having City trash pick-up noting that it may not be fair to withhold City services based on the fact that the units were rentals since taxes are still collected by the City for each of these units. Discussion ensued regarding whether large apartment/condominium complexes should be handled more as a business or corporation and; therefore, could be considered and handled differently than residential buildings. Molly noted that one solution to this issue would be to adopt a "Pay As You Throw" program.

- Landfill – Dr. Beluk questioned the status of the landfill. Ms Ettenborough stated that this issue fall's under the Mayor's Office.
- Christmas Tree Disposal – Ms. Ettenborough noted that many of the trees collected from residents were able to be brought to the Newbury bonfire. Trees that were not part of the bonfire were incinerated.

Cigarette Butt Recycling Program – A photo of a Butt Recycling container that is currently in use in Salem was shown to the Board. Dr. Blair stated that Director Bracey is looking into this program and the Mayor's Office has expressed interest in it. Mr. Bracey will have additional information for the Board to review for the next meeting. It was noted that since there is already a cigarette butt collection device at some locations in the City, perhaps we could gather information about the use and effectiveness of these devices to help in deciding about the Butt Recyclers. The cost of purchasing and maintaining the Butt Recyclers was discussed and a suggestion was made that perhaps the Tobacco Permit Fee could be raised to help offset the cost of the Program. Patricia Lawrence noted that many cigarette butts are disposed of into the storm drains and questioned whether a tighter grid that could collect butts and prevent them from entering the sewer and the river could be put in place.

Review of Tobacco Applications – Fourteen Tobacco Permit Renewal Applications were presented to the Board for their consideration and approval. In the past, the Board has not reviewed the applications since the review and approval process was handled by Health Department Staff. Patricia Lawrence noted that the Board had decided previously that at the time of renewal, the Board would consider the applications, taking into account any violations that the establishments may have received related to the sale of tobacco. The Board agreed that the 14 applications submitted could be approved.

Environmental Concern – Dr. Beluk suggested that perhaps the Board could take on a project of educating the public concerning the amount of chemicals that are used by households (fertilizers, Miracle Grow, etc.) and the effect these chemicals have on the environment. Patricia Lawrence suggested that the Director Bracey or the Public Health Nurse could ask someone from the Environmental Protection Agency to come and speak on this topic.

Staff Reports were provided to the Board for review.

Dr. Susan Beluk – Dr. Blair expressed to Dr. Beluk the Board's thanks for her many years of service as a Board Member and stated that she will be greatly missed. Dr. Beluk explained that she hopes to remain involved in a different capacity; perhaps working with the Public Health Nurse on community health issues. Dr. Beluk shared some of the highlights from her tenure on the Board. She explained that she joined the Board when Lisa Mead was the Mayor and, at the time, didn't fully understand all that was involved with the Board of Health. Over the years the Board has taken on some important and, sometimes, challenging issues including the following: Title V,

relocation of the skate park to a safer location, banning smoking in City restaurants, City landfill, and handling turnover of Department Heads. Dr. Beluk specifically noted that she feels that Director Bracey demonstrates great leadership and that we have a top notch Department. The success of the community and the restaurants are a testament to the Board doing the background work establishing food inspectors and setting and maintaining standards and educating the community. Their work has brought the community to a higher standing within the state. She was impressed with the growth of the scope of the Health Department in covering public health, animal control, recycling, mosquito control, restaurants, housing codes, snow shoveling, and emergency preparedness. She felt that the Board has been very diplomatic in holding the safety of the community first and have always considered themselves as a voice of the people. Dr. Blair and Patricia Lawrence expressed their appreciation for Dr. Beluk's years of service to the Board. Patricia Lawrence noted that Dr. Beluk's experience and wisdom was especially helpful to her when she first joined the Board. She stated that she is grateful for everything Dr. Beluk has done and for the leadership she has shown; and that she is glad that Dr. Beluk intends to stay involved in City public health issues.

Meeting adjourned at 8:41 pm.