

**Newburyport Board of Health Public Meeting  
May 21, 2015**

***Attendees:***

*Chairperson of the Board: Dr. Robin Blair*

*Board Member: Dr. Daryl Colden*

*Note Taker: Patricia McAlarney*

**Call to Order:** 7:03 PM – Dr. Blair called the meeting to order.

**Reading of the Minutes:**

- Minutes from the March 19, 2015 meeting were approved
- Minutes from the January 22, 2015 meeting were approved

**Review of Staff Reports:**

- Health Director report – reviewed, no comments
- Energy Recycle Report – reviewed
  - Organics Pilot Program – At Molly Ettenborough’s request, Patti McAlarney notified the Board that information concerning a proposed Organics Recycling Pilot Program will be sent to them by email within the next few weeks. Since the deadline for approving the program is after the next Board meeting, the Board was asked to consider rescheduling the next meeting to Thursday, June 11. Dr. Blair and Dr. Colden agreed to the change of date.
- Public Health Nurse – reviewed, no comments
- Animal Control Officer – reviewed, no comments

**Public Comment**

- Dave McFarland, 20 57<sup>th</sup> Street, commented on the exceptional work performed by the Animal Control Officer in locating a dog that had bitten a child at Plum Island thereby avoiding the necessity of having the child undergo a series of rabies vaccinations.

**Inn Street Fountain - Andy Port, Director of Planning and Development:**

The Director of Planning and Development, Andy Port, attended the meeting and requested that the Board approve plans for the Inn Street Fountain. Mr. Port informed the Board that he has spent considerable time with the Downtown Group, Mayor’s Office, Historic Commission and the Health Director working to restore the Inn Street Fountain which was shut down approximately five years ago after water testing revealed that the water did not meet sanitary standards. At a previous meeting, the Board of Health approved a variance for the monitoring of the fountain because it is not a ‘full-fledged pool’ that would require lifeguards. The Health Director, Bob Bracey requested and has now reviewed construction plans for the Fountain which depicts the water flow through cartridges and UV sanitizer etc. The proposed plan

ensures that water used by fountain is constantly filtered with UV and cartridges and is re-filtered before reuse. Monitoring of the fountain will be done by a certified pool company in addition to an automatic pool monitor. It is Mr. Port's understanding that Mr. Bracey has already submitted to the Board his recommendation for approval of the plans. Upon approval by the Board of Health, the plans will be forwarded to state.

Dr. Colden made a motion made to accept the revised plans for the fountain project; Dr. Blair seconded the motion. Votes to approve: Dr. Colden and Dr. Blair. Votes to oppose – none.

Motion passed.

### **Public Health Community**

- \$5000 Food Grant – The Public Health Nurse in conjunction with Nancy Earls, Newburyport Learning Enrichment Center, and Ellie Davis from the YWCA have secured grants from Pilgrim Health and from The Swasey Fund to finance the Nourishing the North Shore garden project. The goal of the project is to provide local families and individuals in need with access to fresh produce grown in a community garden. The grants have provided sufficient funding to pay for the tools and materials needed to create and maintain the garden and for a Garden Manager who will oversee operations. The garden, which will be located on the grounds of the Emery Monastery in West Newbury, will be available for school groups and will utilize child and adult volunteers.
- Three new restaurants will be operating in the City: Blue Line, Dos Amigos, and a new location for Loretta.
- Public service announcements concerning mosquito and lime disease control will be published on June 1.
- Recreational Camps will be starting on June 1 – The Health Department will be reviewing applications to ensure proper protocol and procedures.
- Testing of Marine Water began yesterday in preparation for the holiday weekend. Results have been received and all beaches passed.
- This weekend is SpringFest – Food vendors will be subject to monitoring and inspection by the City Food Inspectors.

Flouride – Dr. Blair explained that the state has changed the fluoride regulation standard from 1.2 ppm to .7 ppm. Previously, Newburyport had maintained a fluoride level of 1 ppm but the Water Department has asked the Board of Health to approve a reduction to .7 ppm.

Dr. Blair invited public comment on the fluoride issue:

Ari Herzog – Mr. Herzog stated that he wished to make two points: First, the fluoride level is federally regulated by Health and Human Services; it is not a state regulation. Second, if the City reduces the amount of fluoride used then there should be a corresponding cost savings. He has requested that a cost comparison be undertaken by the Water Department to determine the impact of the .3 ppm reduction. Mr. Herzog also asked if the Board of Health would be ensuring that it is .7 mg that is being added to the City water supply. Dr. Blair indicated that he has already spoken with Tom Smolski and was assured that the amount of fluoride additive would be consistently accurate.

David McFarland, 20 57<sup>th</sup> Street – Mr. McFarland indicated that he is concerned about the addition of any amount of fluoride to the water supply. He stated that fluoride is the only medicine that is put into water without dosage since the amount ingested depends on how much water an individual consumes. Toxic materials, like lead for example, have been reduced continuously by the United States government. Even products that are labeled as ‘lead free’ such as solder, contain 8 percent lead. The fluoride used in Newburyport’s water supply comes from China and it is not being controlled or regulated. Fluoride has been found to contain many heavy metals such as arsenic and many other unknowns. Mr. McFarland contended that the exact composition of the fluoride is not known and this fact has caused an ongoing argument for years. He stated that fluoride is a hazardous waste that comes from the most polluted country, and that one reason fluoride is allowed to be used is that it is a chemical that can’t be disposed of so they dilute it by running it through soil...and through human bodies. He questioned why doctors and dentists support adding fluoride to water. Dr. Blair reminded those in attendance that the Board has already voted to support the continued addition of fluoride to the City water; tonight’s vote is to approve or reject a reduction of the amount of fluoride that will be added to the water supply.

Dr. Dan – Dr. Dan stated that he lauds the City for lowering the level of fluoride to .7 ppm to be added to the water. He wanted to inform the Board that in his practice of 2000 patients he has 20 patients that have shown signs of dental fluorosis and also present with thyroid issues or have had hip replacements; he is taking photographs of these cases and when he has gathered the data he “will be submitting the results to some important people.” This will provide some feedback on where there might be some serious damage with people who have been exposed. He said that he feels that there is a likely correlation between severe dental fluorosis and hypothyroidism, skeletal problems and brain issues such as ADD. He compared his findings to the study from England showed a 9 percent increase in fluoride with hypothyroidism. Dr. Dan also recommends that the City Water Department workers (especially those that exhibit signs of arthritis) should be tested and monitored to identify any symptoms associated with their exposure to fluoride since there have been no precautions taken in the workplace (masks, etc.) He also stated that he would like to see written procedures that are in place by the Water Department to ensure that the amount of fluoride additive is consistently maintained, and questioned whether the inflow of water is tested for fluoride amounts prior to the addition of fluoride.

Dr. Blair stated that the Board's decisions are not etched in stone and the Board will review legitimate scientific studies as they are presented.

Dr. Colden noted that decisions can only be based on the volume of quality medical/dental data and research that is available at any given time. The Board of Health is open minded as to what happens in the future but decisions must be based on scientific research.

Andrew Titner, Boxford MA – Mr. Titner informed the Board that he established an ad hoc organization called, "Health Roundhouse" that has worked for the past year and a half on the issue of water fluoridation in many communities. The organization has worked diligently behind the scenes and has submitted a letter to the Institute of Medicine with an incredible amount of research based on valid science opposing the addition of fluoride to water supplies. Dr. Blair confirmed that the Board had received a copy of this letter. Mr. Titner noted that the letter was sent just after Erin Brokovich came out against fluoride based on a 2006 study that found that fluoride was very damaging and should be lowered.

Dr. Colden presented the question of exactly why the federal government recommended decreasing the rate of fluoride; noting that the recommendation doesn't necessarily prove that the addition of fluoride to the water supply is harmful. Dr. Blair stated that his understanding is that the federal government realized that the results of preventing tooth decay using a fluoride additive rate of 1 ppm were equally achievable at a rate of .7 ppm.

Ari Herzog – Suggested that some of the questions regarding why the fluoride rate was lowered to .7 ppm may be answered in the April 27 memo produced by Health, Human Services which stated that the recommendation was based upon information and comments collected over the past four or five years from various doctors and dentists from across the country. The memo also discusses fluorosis, skeletal issues, etc. and was distributed the same day that the US Public Health Service sent a similar notice to all public health agencies. Mr. Herzog also noted that he has spoken with someone from the MWRA and found that they are obtaining their sodium fluoride from a mine in North Carolina. He wonders whether Newburyport can purchase fluoride from North Carolina, as well. Perhaps the cost savings from the reduction would help pay to research the possibility of purchasing from different vendors. He stated that the sodium fluoride from the US vendor may be better regulated than what we receive from China.

Dr. Colden moved to accept the reduction in fluoride level to the current federal standard level of .7 ppm. Seconded by Dr. Blair. In favor: Dr Colden and Dr Blair. No votes of opposition. Motion passed.

Next meeting to be rescheduled for June 11 so that the pilot program may be voted upon

Meeting adjourned at 7:52 pm.