

Freetown Board of Health

Minutes of Meeting of Wednesday, October 25, 2023 at 6:00 PM

Hybrid Meeting Held at Police Station Community Room – 15 Memorial Drive and Via Zoom

Board Members present in person: Robert Jose, Margaret French, Mary Bowen

Board Members Absent: None

Attending Via Zoom: Health Agent, Keven Desmarais and Public Health Nurse, Lori Desmarais

Also present in person: Humberta St. Louis, Board of Health office Senior Clerk.

Call to order

Board of Health Chair, Robert Jose, called the meeting to order at 6:04 pm, read the preamble of the notification of the Governor's March 29, 2023, extension of the temporary provisions to the open meeting law for virtual/hybrid meetings, and indicated the Board would be operating under those guidelines.

Review and approval of previous meeting minutes: September 6, 2023 meeting

After Chair, Robert Jose's inquiry as to any questions or concerns with the minutes, motion was made by Mary Bowen and seconded by Margaret French to approve the meeting minutes.

Vote: Motion approved unanimously.

Margaret French, yes; Mary Bowen, yes; Robert Jose, yes.

Acceptance of retirement resignation of Senior Clerk, Humberta St. Louis.

Chair, Robert Jose, read letter of retirement/resignation of Senior Clerk, Humberta St. Louis, and Health Agent, Keven Desmarais, indicated he hoped the position would be filled prior to her leaving. Motion was made by Margaret French to accept the retirement/resignation, seconded by Mary Bowen.

Vote: Motion approved unanimously.

Margaret French, yes; Mary Bowen, yes; Robert Jose, yes.

Discussion and Vote on whether to recommend the hiring of a full-time clerk.

Health Agent, Keven Desmarais, indicated lack of a presence in the office prevents his going out for inspections; would like to see a full-time presence that would allow for continued office coverage. Chair, Robert Jose, indicated there is money in the budget to cover a full-time clerk. Motion to recommend hiring a full-time clerk and post position as soon as possible was made by Margaret French and seconded by Mary Bowen.

Vote: Motion approved unanimously.

Margaret French, yes; Mary Bowen, yes; Robert Jose, yes.

Health Agent Update.

Health Agent, Keven Desmarais, indicated he is at a conference out of the area and will provide his report from memory as he left his material behind in a switch of vehicles; he brought up the housing issue at 92 Chace Road, that he had emailed the Board on, that it was subsequently condemned with service rendered; that all residents/occupants have since left and the power turned off; that Board of Health has no further role concerning this housing issue until owners

move to obtain the proper permits to make the repairs/upgrades needed to pass a housing inspection; that he is in the process of completing Fall restaurant inspections with Inspector Dale Barrows concentrating on food establishments and he himself the residential school inspections, finishing up at Crystal Springs and then Whitney Academy is to be done; that the opening of the Town's first sushi restaurant has taken place in East Freetown and he anticipates a second location to open up in the Assonet area in a month or so.

As to general nuisance complaints such as noise and smell, he indicated he's thankful there have not been very many this past period; that he is currently working on a couple of housing issues but neither rise to the level as the one previously discussed.

Health Agent, Keven Desmarais, then referred to information he emailed previously to the Board Members and asked that the Board move to endorse and support the Health Agent's decision to condemn the house at 92 Chace Road. Chair, Robert Jose, indicated that since this is not on the agenda, that he did not think the Board could vote on it. Health Agent, Keven Desmarais, stated the Housing Code requires the Board be aware of the matter and apologized that it was not on the agenda, that it would be placed on the next agenda, that presently he would like the Board to indicate they are aware of the matter to which Chair, Robert Jose, indicated the full Board is present and aware of what is going on; that to do it correctly, to put it on the agenda.

Review, discussion and possible vote to move forward to adopt ServSafe requirement regulation.

Chair, Robert Jose, stated he had not been at the previous meeting, but had read the minutes and asked Health Agent, Keven Desmarais, to recap on this. Health Agent, Keven Desmarais, stated he has been speaking with many professionals and every community is having this problem with current workforce climate and loss of managers/personnel; that the Food Code simply requires a responsible person on site; that it may be a bit unrealistic to require a ServSafe-certified person on site at all times. He suggested a happy medium being what certain communities do in case of septic installers which is to administer a test; that he would have a level of comfort with administering a 15-20 question test in general food safety relative to what the job requires in establishments in the lower-risk end of food service should front-line employees at BOH inspections not be able to answer questions correctly, that he would then take measures to administer the test and then may require further training.

In further answering Chair Robert Jose's questions, Health Agent, Keven Desmarais, clarified that he suggests, as the Food Code requires, an establishment have a ServSafe-certified person and when said person is not on site, that a trained responsible person needs to be on site; that he will create the test and send out to the Board Members for review and/or suggestions; that he will be looking to have employers maintain records on training and other records such as temperatures records on file and available for review and audit.

Margaret French stated that she is in agreement with the current stance, that she thought the previous proposal to be onerous on the store owners.

Chair, Robert Jose stated Board would not vote on this at this meeting, that they would look to have a “finished product” to consider and vote on.

Public Health Nurse Update.

Public Health Nurse, Lori Desmarais, stated she has continued with blood pressure clinics at COA and Calvary Cares and had a successful flu clinic on October 3rd and also did home visits. Did some 65 total with maybe 10 or so home visits.

Town still considered at low risk for Triple E and moderate risk for West Nile and same recommendations/precautions apply until the hard frost. There have been 5 human cases of West Nile in the state but none here in Bristol County.

She indicated wanting to ask the Board about providing COVID vaccines as she has received some inquiries, including the home visits; that COVID vaccines are no longer free from the federal government; that she’s reached out to Moderna, the vaccine offered in the past, and it is \$115 per dose with a 10-dose minimum and the Medicare reimbursement rate is \$145 per dose. In answer to Chair, Robert Jose’s inquiry on storage issues, she stated that the Town does have a freezer for storing Moderna vaccine and that these are now single dose, pre-filled syringes which is more convenient; that once removed from freezer can be stored in the refrigerator for 30 days and good for months in the freezer. Chair Jose inquired of the Board Members if there were any issues or concerns with providing the vaccines and there were none and he then stated that the Board can officially vote on this at the next meeting if required, but Board has no objection to proceeding on this.

After some discussion as to how to proceed on this and suggestions made including offering flu vaccines at the same time, Public Health Nurse, Lori Desmarais stated she could reach out to the community and put in place a preregistration process for the vaccines.

Review and approval of Board of Health’s Town Annual Report submission.

Chair, Robert Jose, inquired of the Board Members if they had reviewed the proposed report, if there were any questions or concerns. There being none, he called for a motion to approve Board of Health’s submission. Motion made by Mary Bowen, seconded by Margaret French.

Vote: Motion approved unanimously.

Margaret French, yes; Mary Bowen, yes; Robert Jose, yes.

Opioid Settlement Funds – continued discussion as to possible allocation.

In response to Chair, Robert Jose’s question if anything had changed, Health Agent, Keven Desmarais, stated one major change being that now we can spend the money, that a warrant article that created the stabilization fund went through Town Meeting and the Board was given authority to spend it; that amount now being some \$15,000; that there is now approximately \$18,300 received thus far but that \$3,000 or so still needs to be certified as free cash at next annual Town Meeting. He further stated that there is still the request from Calvary Cares for some funding and that it is up to the Board how to use those funds and that it could be spent for various things such as Narcan boxes, training, direct services, website outreach, etc.

Mary Bowen inquired if the police carry Narcan with them to which Keven Desmarais replied that they do not, that Fire Department does and that the Police Chief is looking to obtain funding for training. Mary Bowen stated that the first respondents, the police, should have them.

In response to Mary Bowen's inquiry, Health Agent, Keven Desmarais, stated that he did not have numbers as to how many people Calvary Cares provides counseling to, but that some 75-100 families are served by their food pantry and he could ask the Reverend [Dias] for some numbers. Public Health Nurse, Lori Desmarais, stated that Calvary Cares held this month a suicide prevention program and has an upcoming program to reach out to Veterans. She further stated that the Healings Community Grant also has provided resources and may be able to provide some training.

Health Agent, Keven Desmarais, made a request to the Board Members to each provide a list of three things they would like to see done with the funds.

Further discussion took place as to the allocation of available funds and possible ways to spend it and Chair, Robert Jose, suggesting maybe 2/3 of the funds go to Calvary Cares and the balance go for Narcan boxes at all Town buildings.

Margaret French stated that the police do not have Narcan in the cruisers because they are not trained, that they are attempting to obtain funds since funding for training is not in their budget; that 2/3 for Calvary Cares is a big chunk and would rather see maybe something towards training for the Police as they are the ones responding to calls and that those first responders should have what they need. Health Agent, Keven Desmarais, stated that \$4,500 is the amount the Police Chief is asking for, that he will reach out to him to inquire and will provide the Board with that information.

Any other business which may properly come before the Board.

Chair, Robert Jose, inquired if there were any other business which may properly come before the Board. There were none.

Meeting Adjourned

There being no further business, motion was made by Mary Bowen, seconded by Margaret French to adjourn. **Vote: Motion approved unanimously.**

Margaret French, yes; Mary Bowen, yes; Robert Jose, yes.

Meeting was adjourned at 7:08 pm.

Documents/Exhibits at Meeting:

- Meeting Notice/Agenda.
- Minutes of Meeting of 9/6/23.
- Letter of Clerk – Retirement.
- Town Annual Report – BOH Submission

This is a True Record by me,

Attest:



Humberta St. Louis, Senior Clerk