

HAMILTON BOARD OF HEALTH

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 8, 2011

Members Present: Lindle Willnow, Susan Wilfahrt, Karen Zagorski and Health Agent Leslie Whelan and Public Health Nurse Kim Paskalis.

Meeting Opened: 7:35 p.m. at Hamilton Town Hall

Update – Emergency Shelter Planning & Flu Vaccine Clinics

Public Health Nurse Kim Paskalis updated the board about activities she is performing for the Town including disease surveillance and investigation. Urgent cases in Town include measles, one of the few in the state, as well as brucellosis (resident contracted bacterial infection while hunting wild boar), rare and unusual in Massachusetts. Active investigation is no longer required on Hepatitis C and Lyme disease. Paskalis also gets notice when there is a positive for influenza. All cases in Hamilton have been resolved.

The bulk of the work being done by Paskalis along with Health Agent Leslie Whelan is on emergency planning and preparedness including establishing relationships and defining direction. Meetings have been held with police and fire personnel along with Town Manager Michael Lombardo. Discussion was on how the Town is required to have a comprehensive emergency management plan. The health department is involved in the process and responsible for the sheltering plan.

Paskalis noted that the understanding with the Emergency Management Director, Fire Chief Phil Stevens, is that the health department personnel are responsible for operation of a shelter. Stevens is responsible for identifying trigger events that would initiate the need for a shelter. Under his direction the health department personnel would open, run and supervise staff and volunteers in a shelter.

The health department is also developing a training program in collaboration with the regional North Shore Cape Ann planning group for training of volunteers. Across the state all communities are getting shelter plans in place since the Red Cross has identified it cannot provide sheltering needs for the entire state.

The nurses from the regional group have collaborated on the measles outbreak. At the meeting with Town officials two weeks ago Paskalis mentioned that the nurses have initiated a proposal to inoculate first responders since they are considered health care workers. Many of these personnel do not have the required two doses of measles, mumps and rubella vaccine. Board member Susan Wilfahrt said this would be a second dose as an adult.

Paskalis said last fall it was determined that all health care workers should have proof of an immunity to a titer (this is expensive) or have two doses of the vaccine. She added that it has been assumed that anyone born prior to 1957 was probably immune since they were probably exposed and experienced the disease. That is no longer the case for health care workers and they are required to have two doses of the vaccine.

With the recent increase in measles cases, nationally and in Massachusetts, the response suggested by the nurses was individuals would be vaccinated if Towns purchased the vaccine. Paskalis could vaccinate anyone in Hamilton if there is interest. Wilfahrt said the first responders could get this from their primary care offices unless they don't have coverage. Paskalis said a lot of the public safety personnel wouldn't take the initiative to get vaccinated. In addition, the nurses are developing a press release on the public health issue and local press has been receptive to publicizing the information.

Paskalis mentioned that she and Whelan have been meeting with the regional representative who is reviewing plans that can be used. They will be working with Wenham in the fall to do flu clinics. The clinics are used as tools to practice emergency plans and keep volunteers active. Paskalis is also working as the public health nurse for Wenham.

She has also met with the regional school district nurses to discuss the school nursing perspective relative to partnering with the sheltering plans (i.e., outbreak of pertussis cases impacting school district).

Paskalis also described webinar training she does focused on whole community planning for individuals in need of additional assistance. In most communities this group could constitute half of the population (i.e., children, senior citizens, disabilities, ambulatory or mental health issues). She noted that Dr. Hugh Taylor is the medical director.

Paskalis noted that there was a meeting with Board member Karen Zagorski to identify volunteers to staff the shelters. These individuals would be mass responders and invited to an event where information would be provided about training and screening including the CORI and SORI check process. Karin Carroll is the emergency preparedness coordinator for the region who could attend the meeting. Paskalis, Whelan and Board of Health Administrative Assistant Nancy Stevens would also attend the event.

Discussion – State Mutual Agreements, Opt in Requirement

Paskalis said there has unofficially been a mutual aid agreement amongst the public health nurses in the area. They have been assisting one another since there is not enough manpower to respond to a situation in individual health departments (i.e., assistance during clinics and pandemics as well as shared training). She said a more formal agreement is needed especially related to liability when assistance is provided in another community.

Whelan mentioned that there was another agreement just for public health for non-emergency situations as part of an effort done three years ago by the 15-member community coalition. It stalled because two communities were waiting for their municipal lawyers to review and comment. Since that time, it was learned the other 13 communities could go ahead and sign it.

She added that Hamilton's Town Counsel Donna Brewer has provided comments on the agreement. Whelan said a meeting would be scheduled for all of the communities' attorneys to review the agreement. Discussion was on defining expenses communities would be responsible for in a mutual aid situation and if there would be state or federal reimbursement. Police and fire departments have done this for years. Paskalis said it is important to have a written, agreed upon understanding.

Lindle Willnow moved that the Board of Health make a favorable recommendation for moving towards opting into the mutual aid agreement. Wilfahrt seconded motion. VOTE: Unanimous.

Whelan will notify Lombardo that the Board of Health believes the Town should move forward to opt into the mutual aid agreement.

Paskalis noted that she and Whelan are on a public education committee for Cape Ann. The draft mutual aid agreement document in the BOH meeting

packet was from that group. Wilfahrt suggested that contact information for the Hamilton and Wenham health departments and public safety organizations should be included in the document. The draft document will be adapted to the two communities. Paskalis thought Lombardo and the public safety officials were in favor of the document. Regional funds are available to produce the document. She is working with Stevens on this.

Whelan noted that the document could be circulated to every household in Hamilton along with the tax bill mailing for an estimated cost of three to four cents a piece or a total of \$50. Willnow said the document could be posted at the library and other public places in Town.

Whelan mentioned that Lombardo was in favor of the health department establishing a revolving account to receive payment from flu clinic vaccinations to pay for vaccine. She noted that state supplied vaccine is meant for children. So if the Town provided a flu clinic for residents of all ages it would be responsible for purchasing vaccine. Lombardo supports this.

In addition, the health department asked Town counsel to review a potential contract from a company that would bill Medicare for reimbursement of vaccinations provided by the Town for a 10% fee.

Also discussed with Lombardo was defining the joint flu clinics with Wenham in an official capacity. He was supportive of that and suggested bullet points be compiled and sent to Brewer who will draft an agreement. Whelan said Wenham's Board of Health Chair Gerry Donnellan is interested in collaborating with Hamilton.

Chuck Johnson – 258 Moulton Street, Septic Upgrade, Bottomless Sand Filter

Chuck Johnson presented the Board with a septic system design for 258 Moulton Street. The property is 1.2 acres with frontage on Moulton Street. He is working with the Conservation Commission on the plan related to Wetland Protection Act and local wetland buffer zones since almost the entire property is within ConCom jurisdiction.

The property has a cesspool with leaching trenches; all failed Title 5 inspection. The wetlands were staked and a survey was done that defines the property line. The design proposed would not cross an intermittent stream. Soil testing was done at the site and revealed an abandoned water service.

Johnson is suggesting that bottomless sand filter technology be used at the property that has a three-bedroom home created in 1957. He has used this technology with two treatment units in a soil absorption system for a project in Topsfield that was the first system of its kind in Massachusetts.

For the Hamilton system, Johnson estimated the cost to be approximately \$35,000, which would be a lot less than a conventional system. Johnson said the cost of septic systems has come down because the economic environment is more competitive.

Some of the components of the system include a building sewer pipe coming out of the house to a 2,000 septic tank, a filter vault and pump in second compartment to dose a second tank and filter and foam cubes are used in the trickling water system.

This type of system cleans the wastewater well and the leaching field contains especially clean sand and 3" of pea gravel. The design includes a 162 square foot filter box that is long and narrow for the wastewater to travel through the sand. It is usually located 4' to 5' above the water table.

There is a required operational maintenance agreement with this type of system that is filed with the Board along with maintenance records. Monitoring is done twice a year. State approval is needed after Town approval for this type of system. Johnson has remedial use approval for the technology. Course work for the designer and installer is mandatory.

Johnson noted that there are some local upgrade approval requests on the plan: setback to full foundation less than 20', the distance of the bottomless sand filter 6' away from the property line versus 10' and the bio-filter unit 7' from the property line versus 10'.

These variances required abutter notification and one abutter is effected. Johnson met with Whelan and later on with the neighbor who was given the plans and walked through the proposal. The abutter had no problem with the distance to property line. The plan has been given to contractors to bid.

A conventional system at the site would have been approximately 2,500 square feet and very expensive. Johnson said the bottomless sand filter technology needs pre-treatment but could be used versus conventional design. He said time-dosed systems give better treatment and results.

The bottomless sand filter technology has been approved in the state since 1996 for remedial use. None of these systems installed to date have had to replace the foam cubes that are sized for residential waste where there is biological activity.

A deed restriction will be put on the 258 Moulton Street property and the operational maintenance agreement will be included.

Willnow didn't see any issues with the system proposal. Whelan explained that the Board could approve the design and local upgrade approval but she would not issue the permit to construct until she has a copy of the operation maintenance contract. Johnson said this is spelled out in the Department of Environmental Protection approval.

Willnow moved that the Board approve the system. Wilfahrt seconded motion. VOTE: Unanimous.

Discussion was with Zagorski about her visiting the site when the installer sets up an appointment with Whelan regarding the system. Guidelines for the system are from the Department of Environmental Management, counterpart of DEP in Rhode Island and are not proprietary. More than 2,000 of these systems have been used in Rhode Island.

Discussion – Food Establishment Fee

Whelan, Stevens and Roberta Cody, restaurant inspector for the Board, are analyzing the fees based on categories (i.e., titles and types of establishments) associated with the different establishments rather than the dollar amounts. A presentation will be done on how to change the different categories when the summer season work in the health department slows down, said Whelan. For example, if the Town had a farmer's market how that establishment would be categorized.

Whelan mentioned a conversation she had with septic installer Paul Ricker today regarding repairs and the Town's least expensive fee is \$100. She thought perhaps the Town should have a lower dollar amount (\$25 to \$50) when these types of changes are proposed and she doesn't have to visit the site. However, it is important to record the work (i.e., pipe replacement) in the health department. Nancy Stevens could provide the Board with a breakdown of how much of this work occurs based on permits. The Board members suggested the fees could be

based on repair costs. Whelan will work with P. Ricker for recommendations on reductions to fees.

Review – Board of Health Minutes dated 5/3/11

Discussion about housing authorities in Massachusetts and lack of legal support for state-funded facilities if a tenant is evicted in smoke-free housing for smoking.

Willnow moved to approve the minutes as written. Zagorski seconded motion. VOTE: Unanimous.

Other business

Discussion about quality of reports from a Title 5 inspector

Whelan had received a Title 5 inspection report from an inspector whose reports have had omissions and errors on a regular basis. She has dealt with the person for years and has written him letters but his reports have not improved.

Last time she wrote a letter to the inspector, she sent a copy to DEP, which licenses Title 5 inspectors in the state. She has not heard from DEP on this recent issue with the local inspector. After reviewing the recently received report again, she emailed Claire Golden at DEP to inquire if there was going to be any follow up and if the Board of Health could take any action.

Whelan noted that in Ipswich, the Title 5 inspectors are licensed locally. So the municipality can revoke Title 5 licenses for inspectors that are not performing well. The Hamilton Board of Health could choose to adopt the option to license Title 5 inspectors locally. Willnow suggested Whelan get a copy of the policy used by Ipswich to license Title 5 inspectors locally that the Board could review.

Whelan receives reports from the aforementioned Title 5 inspector two or three times a year. The Board suggested she send another letter to this person referencing the previous letter and reiterating the need to improve to a certain standard the Title 5 inspection reports provided to Hamilton's health department.

Whelan addressed the inferior quality of the work from the Title 5 inspector and how this can impact homeowners. She gave the example of a pressure-

distributed septic system that is supposed to be cleaned periodically, there appears no maintenance has been done and that the homeowner should have been notified of the need for maintenance by the inspector. In addition there is an inspection port on this system that was not located by the Title 5 inspector. Overall, a more thorough Title 5 inspection should have been done.

Whelan is not concerned about other Title 5 inspectors. She finds one or two telephone conversations can resolve any deficiencies in other Title 5 inspectors' reports. This practice has not improved the work/reports from the individual inspector under discussion nor did her detailed letter. The inferior work and reporting from this particular Title 5 inspector has been an ongoing issue for years for Whelan also in her capacity serving as health agent in Rockport.

Willnow suggested the substandard report be sent back to the inspector with a notation it is unacceptable. The inspector should correct the report to appropriate standards and submit the updated document to Hamilton's health department.

Whelan said the inferior Title 5 inspection reports from this inspector prevent her from opining in cover letters to homeowners as to whether or not their septic systems pass inspection. This is especially important to homeowners in the process of selling their homes.

She suggested the inspector could be brought before the Board to discuss the poor quality of Title 5 inspection work and submitted reports.

The Board discussed how until Whelan hears from DEP, she'll have to return the inspection reports that are inadequate to the Title 5 inspector and insist that a more comprehensive job be done.

Meeting Adjourned:

Willnow moved at 9:01 p.m. to adjourn. Wilfahrt seconded motion. VOTE: Unanimous. The Board's next meeting is on Wednesday, July 13 at 7:30 p.m.

ATTEST:

cc: Selectmen, Planning Board, Town Clerk, Conservation