

**Quabbin Health District
Board of Director's Meeting
Pelham Public Library, Ramsdell Room
2 South Valley Road, Pelham
Thursday June 6, 2024 6:00 PM
Minutes**

Present: William Pula, District Chair; Jennifer McMartin, District Vice Chair; Colleen Duroshea, Jim Potter, Richard Hall, Donna Rucki, and David Gottsegan

Absent: Melissa Nazzaro, Mike Juda, Leeanne Connolly, and Kenneth Elstein

In Attendance: Andrea Crete, Director of Public Health; John Prenosil, Health Inspector; Kirsten Krieger, Public Health Nurse; Betty Barlow, Administrative Assistant; Mary-Jo Grenier, Senior Clerk; Roger Bacon, Title 5 Independent Contractor; Desiree Vennert, QHD Support Staff; Ileana Carrion, MA DPH Program Coordinator; Bill Zito, Reporter for The Reminder

B.Pula motioned to start meeting at 6:08pm and announced meeting is audio recorded for creating meeting minutes.

1. Introduction - A.Crete introduced Ileana Carrion, the Program Coordinator for the Department of Public Health in the office of Local and Regional Health. She is the liaison between the Grant Funding and Department of Public Health for the Excellence Grant, which helps support a lot of the public health initiatives and work the Quabbin Health District does.

2. Vote to update QHD Personnel Policy - A.Crete discussed the update of three new policies to the Quabbin Health District Personnel Policies handbook. The first one is dental insurance. The District has already been budgeting for dental insurance for the employees, but she would like an actual policy to be put into place that employees who work a minimum of 20 hours per week are eligible for dental insurance through the Quabbin Health District which would pay 50%. J.Potter motioned to accept the dental insurance policy, R.Hall seconded, all in favor. The second and third policies are no texting and driving while travelling on company time, as well as wearing seatbelts while on company time. Both of which are state laws, but the policies would be good reminders for employees to operate safely during work hours. The Department of Public Health would like all grantees to incorporate these two policies for those involved in shared services arrangements as part of the PHE grant contract. D.Gottsegan motioned to accept these policies; J.Potter seconded, all in favor.

3. Vote to set up a QHD Bylaw Committee - A.Crete suggested that it would be best for one person from each town to be on the Quabbin Health District Bylaw Committee, including herself. Other Board Members that are not on the committee will still have a say in matters. Her hope is that by the next District Board Meeting in October, there will be a finalized draft that will be voted on. B.Pula from Pelham, D. Rucki from Ware, and D. Gottsegan from Belchertown have volunteered to be on the committee. R.Hall motioned to accept the QHD Bylaw Committee; J.Potter seconded, all in favor.

4. Review and approve Public Health Excellence Grant FY 25 Budget - A.Crete presented a PowerPoint to inform Board Members about the many ways the Excellence Grant is being used. Funding is used to fund the Public Health Nurse, the QHD Support Staff, a Title 5 Independent Contractor, inspectional supplies, nursing supplies, training and credentialing, membership fees, advertising and promotional material, etc., totaling an estimated \$324,785.36. She informed Board Members about working with Western MA News to advertise the services the Quabbin Health District can provide to the public. She informed them that a commercial is being played on local access channels, and non-skippable ads are being played on streaming services. In addition, blast emails will be sent out once a month to get the word out there. There have been more phone calls because of the media boost, as well as more activity on the Quabbin Health District website.

Discussion on private well testing project - A.Crete informed Board members about a private well testing project that some of the FY 25 PHE Grant Funds would be used for. The Quabbin Health District would be working with Quabbin Analytical Labs to provide free testing of private wells for water quality to 20 private wells in each town. The tests will be paid for by the Excellence Grant with the goal of spreading awareness to the community to check their wells for potential hazards and to provide better health and safety. Each town's Board of Health will vote on how these tests will be distributed in their respective towns. D.Rucki voiced her concern about how the program is going to work. She was inquiring if issues were found from the testing if it would be a requirement for the homeowners to address the issues. It was discussed that it would be the homeowners' responsibility to act in fixing any issues that may be found from the results of the testing. This program is being made available as an opportunity to increase awareness to residents who have private wells about water quality. Any data collected from the reports will be presented to the individual Boards of Health to identify potential contamination concerns. D.Gottsegan was concerned about potential complaints of there not being enough free tests distributed, and if the small number of tests being conducted would give an accurate indication of any potential contamination in the community. It was discussed that perhaps waiting lists could be created for individuals who would like to be selected for the program in the future. And these tests may not provide any indications of problems on a large scale, but the results of the testing may encourage neighbors to check their wells for potential health hazards also.

A.Crete discussed her goals to get QHD staff members the credentials required to meet the guidelines for public health excellence. J.McMartin had some questions about how one obtains the credentials. There was some discussion that to obtain these credentials, one must complete and pass a series of tests to obtain the licensing and proper credentialing for each position. The Excellence Grant does pay for these trainings and tests. A.Crete also mentioned that her goal with hiring a Title 5 Independent Contractor is to lighten the load of the Health Inspector so the high risk food establishments can be inspected three times a year instead of the state required two times a year.

J.Potter motioned to approve the proposed FY 25 Excellence Grant Budget; J.McMartin seconded, all in favor.

5. Quabbin Reservoir Communities System Expansion Evaluation Discussion - B.Pula showed the Board a presentation about how the water supply from Quabbin Reservoir is distributed to cities and towns in Massachusetts. The Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA) takes the water and wholesales it to fifty-two communities, mostly in Eastern MA. The whole system is run on gravity. Electricity is made in three locations along the way from the water. The withdrawal from the Quabbin Reservoir has declined significantly over the years due to many factors. Local representatives such as Joe Comerford and Aaron Sanders are looking to get more funding for the local communities around The Quabbin. Legislation has been filed that would access a charge of 5 cents per thousand gallons withdrawn from the system. This would yield \$3.75 million dollars per year to be shared by the 12 Watershed Communities.

D.Gottsegan motioned to approve the bill to receive \$.05 per 1,000 gallons; J.McMartin seconded, all in favor.

6. Vote to approve QHD meeting minutes from November 17, 2023 - R.Hall motioned to approve the meeting minutes; J.Potter seconded, all in favor.

7. Vote on filling QHD Vice Chair position - Board members voted Jennifer McMartin to fill Quabbin Health District Vice Chair position. J.Potter motioned to approve; C.Duroshea seconded, all approved.

B.Pula motioned to adjourn the meeting at 7:35pm; C.Duroshea seconded, all approved.

Respectfully submitted,
Desiree Vennert, QHD Support Staff

Minutes approved: October 23, 2024