

BOARD OF HEALTH MEETING

Tuesday February 1, 2022 – 5:00 PM

Richmond Town Hall, 1529 State Road, Richmond, MA 01254

PRESENT: Peter Cohen, Chair; Andy Fisher; Fred Schubert; Tony Segal via phone call; Valerie Bird, Agent; Emilie Jarrett, R.N., Comm. Health Assn.; Phyllis LeBeau, Recording Secretary

Peter opened the meeting at 5:00 PM.

Approval of the Minutes of the January 4, 2022 meeting: Hearing no objection, Tony moved to approve the minutes as read. The motion was seconded by Andy and passed by unanimous vote.

OLD BUSINESS:

Hilltop Orchard – Fire and Water Testing: Peter reported that the latest problem at Hilltop Orchards is that the Mass EPA has a problem with their drinking water supply. Valerie explained that they do not have a current Certified Water Operator for their drinking water, and they need to put a tap above the final outlet for sampling. They have until February 23rd to complete those requirements. Letter from the DEP is attached.

After the fire at Hilltop Orchard, they needed to have the ancile system inspected because they do cook doughnuts and that's a grease-laden process, which was completed. That provided them with permission to re-open the limited area where they have wine-tastings and sell doughnuts. It is only that very limited area that can be open to the public. Val will follow up for compliance by February 23rd.

Mass DEP Private Well Testing Program Update: The DEP is now willing to test all wells in Town. They provide a kit for water samples and instructions on where to send the sample for testing for Pfas. Tony requested the sign-on information, which Peter will send him.

Mask and Vaccine Policy: The masking policy exists but Peter was unaware of where it may be published (NOTE: *The policy is accessible through the bi-weekly e-newsletter as a link to the document on the Town Website*). Peter felt that masking is not a problem as he sees that it is universally complied with.

Andy agreed that the masking requirement is working well. The problem for him is the Employee Vaccination Mandate, which the BOH advocated but could not implement on their own. There was a compromise by the Board of Selectmen that produced a strong suggestion for employee vaccination, but not a mandate.

NEW BUSINESS:

Board of Health Agent Report: Val provided a monthly log, which is attached here. She expanded on one of the items:

20 Swamp Road has a recreation hall in which they would like to install a toilet and a sink. They would like to use a tight tank and are asking for the Board's approval before moving forward. This is a new use of an existing building. There was a discussion of the location and description of the site which at one time included outhouses, which will have to be removed. Fred moved to approve the use of a tight tank with the understanding that full approval will be contingent on seeing a proper design. Peter seconded the motion, which was carried by unanimous vote.

Richmond Consolidated School has a new Testing Protocol: Parents are being given home testing kits for students to be tested twice a week. Emilie explained that the guidelines are from the Dept. of Secondary Education (DESE) through the Department of Health. Since September the school had been using the "Test and Stay" program. If a child is exposed in school and there is a school close contact, that child can attend school while they are getting tested every day for as long as they remain negative. They determined that out of all of Massachusetts, there were hardly any positive cases through school. Schools are being shown to be safe. They decided it would be better to send test kits home for the parents so that they could monitor the children every week and report any positive results. This is a solution that the State came up with to alleviate the extensive work being done by school nurses and the amount of energy needed for contact monitoring of the "Test and Stay." That energy and attention needed to go elsewhere. The school continues to do pool testing every Thursday. Any positive results are followed up and quarantined.

It was generally agreed among the members of the Board that the school has been doing a fabulous job.

Budget: Fred has been in touch with the Alliance and has learned that there is basically no incremental charge above the Alliance line item in the budget for the addition of Public Health Services. Fred explained how he budgeted some additional funds under Agent Expenses in case the anticipated charge of \$4,500.00 for the Alliance contract is not correct. However, a change in the Town's process has put the Agent Expenses amount into the general Board of Health expenses and not as a separate line item.

The budget needs to be approved by the Board of Health and then submitted to Danielle Fillio, the Town Administrator. Peter will hand-deliver the budget to her.

Board of Health Annual Report: There was a discussion of various sources of information about the Board's activities during the year 2021, particularly the minutes of the meetings of the Board during that year. Peter has asked Phyllis to provide him with copies of those, which she will attend to.

Agent's Report: (See attached)

Highlighted Items: Hilltop Orchards: Val visited twice with the Fire Department to make sure they were compliant.

2312 State Road- a formally abandoned house near Cone Hill Rd. which is being torn apart. She noted that the septic is designed for two bedrooms not three, which she made the Building Inspector aware of.

60 Patton Road is all set. They will have to go back in the spring and bury the drainage pipe which is currently going across the lawn.

572 Dean Hill Rd – Val asked if there had been a fire there at one time. There was a discussion of which property was in question.

Unanticipated Topics: Peter reported that he had received an email from Danielle with a series of emails between herself and Rick Bell about high water table impacting his three septic dry wells. Danielle has responded that nothing can be done at this time as the ground is frozen. Peter asked Val if she would speak to Danielle about the situation and see if Danielle would like her to speak to Mr. Bell. Val provided a definition of “dry well,” which typically will not pass Title V as they are usually within the water table. She believed he will probably have to have a new septic system installed.

Emilie provided a Community Health Report: In the month of January there were 37 confirmed COVID cases. The last case she saw in Richmond was on the 24th of January, so the trend is in the right direction with the number of new cases dropping. She cautioned, however, that her numbers do not include anyone who tested positive at home.

Dr. Doyle will probably have his regular call on Wednesday at 3:00 PM. He does the call every other week now with the local Boards of Health to update them on the status of COVID in Berkshire County.

Emilie participated in a vaccination clinic earlier in January which had a very good turnout for booster shots and children’s vaccination. It was noted that Richmond has one of highest vaccination rates in Massachusetts. Emilie will retire on July 1,2022 at which time the Alliance will take over.

Peter then inquired of Fred when he would be leaving. Fred said he will attend the March meeting and then he and Mrs. Schubert will be in Connecticut as of March 14th. Search for a replacement for Fred will be on the March Agenda. Peter will recommend that Dr. Laurence Cohen be appointed to sit in as an Interim member of the Board.

Peter announced that he feels unable to continue in his role as Chair of the Board of Health, although he does intend to remain as a member of the Board. Tony will move up as the next Chair as of the March meeting.

The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday March 1, 2022 at 5:00 PM.

There being no further business before the Board, Andy moved that the meeting be adjourned at 6:00 PM. The motion was seconded and passed by unanimous consent.