

## Board of Health Minutes

March 20, 2020

Town of Auburn  
Board of Health  
Town Hall Selectman's Room  
104 Central Street, Auburn, Massachusetts

**Members Present :** Eric Otterson Chairman; Carolyn Griffin Vice Chair; Steve Nordborg Member;

**In Attendance:** Darlene Coyle, Director of Public Health; Eileen Alexander, Asst. Public Health Director; Paula Conway, DDIS Administrative Assistant

**Vice Chairman Carolyn Griffin in accordance with the Open Meeting Law , called the meeting to order at 5:02pm.**

### **Discussion- COVID 19 Emergency Action Response**

So we have requested for the board to meet for emergency action response, as you may know we have an evolving situation that has it's changing daily over the past weeks. And wanted to bring you together for this emergency meeting just to keep you updated on what's happening at the town level. The Assistant Town Manager met with all the department heads for an emergency meeting, and discussed the current situation and what's happening with the fast track of the coronavirus, as part of the discussions there are several towns that have taken some action to try to mitigate the virus spreading in municipalities. As part of that discussion we have to look at what the workforce and to try to make sure that we can keep as many people working as possible it is part of our everyday duties. We interact with the public that's obviously what our purpose is, but to try to look at what we can do to try to minimize the contact of people coming in contact with one another with trying to keep from a six foot distance between us. So working with the Town Manager they decided to close all town buildings to the public. Now closing the town buildings to the public does not mean that we're closed for business, we can still interact with the public through phone or email. In closing the town buildings we have had obviously less contact physical contact with the public, but obviously still handling in office operations. One of the contacts from the town was earlier this week with the restaurants and bars. Our office has been in contact with all of our permitted establishments and the sent out order and guidance on making sure that people are adhering to the requirements. We have had some complaints on that as you can imagine since it's not it's not a popular order, but it's one that we have the authority to enforce and the governor expects the Board of Health to do that. We have already dealt with at least one of those complaints and we've had numerous calls to our Department about various questions. A lot of them have questions that there are not clear answers to so we've had a number of calls to the state. The state has been pushing out a lot of information they're trying to keep the mass.gov website updated, as things change every day. So we have been in contact with the state at some point almost daily with either questions or something that we're asking for, and conference calls have been very helpful. Eileen and our staff have been in contact with high risk facilities in the long term care facilities. Eileen is in contact with somebody from those facilities almost daily several times a day to be able to try to mitigate any concerns. The town has a Local Emergency Planning Management Committee that meets on a regular basis. We met this week to try to talk about how to maintain staffing levels because if anyone happen to

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come down with symptoms or is exposed to somebody that has the virus, how that is handled especially. We are looking at staffing in different ways as well in different timeframes. Yesterday, the Assistant Town Manager was in contact with the Town Selectmen and the Town Manager and declared a state of emergency at the town level. This is consistent with many other towns, and in conjunction with Boards of Health they can take their own consideration to do this, as well. I think I mentioned the restaurants gatherings of 25 people or more prohibiting that, the schools closing period of time as well so those are all things that have already occurred. What this declaration would allow the Town, the Board of Health possibly some resources that may come as a result of the declarations that have already been made. So this is something that we're not the first in the state to do it; there are other towns that are taking this action. I do know that this declaration is allowed in accordance with Chapter 44 Section 31 called liabilities in excess of appropriations forbidden exceptions, so again it helps us to receive funds from the government. We do have also this week you may have recalled at one of the press conferences for the governor the governor announced that there would be it would be \$5,000,000 that was marking board of health to be able to use that money to help in the actions that were already taking. That was announced earlier in the week, a request was sent out to every Board of Health in the Commonwealth and we had to respond in a 24-hour period to request for money of what we think we might need. We don't really know exactly what we need but we know we're going to need help and that may look like more nursing services. We do have a public health nurse, as you can imagine with this type number of people that may be affected by this we're going to need help in that venue. We did put in a request to the state and again it was like real general but for services nursing and staffing services, supplies is one of the biggest needs. I'm sure you heard it is personal protective equipment that is obviously very hot topic and very scarce. The declaration that I provided to you just helps us as a Town, the declaration does have to be authorized in order for us to get money from the state, but this may help if there is other means of money from the government, so that's a general overview. Several of the meetings for emergency planning are occurring, and at least two or three meetings this week, and in meetings even pre-planning meetings in the past several weeks. We have stayed in contact with the Assistant Senior Center Director in regards to the nutrition program. So as part of the town buildings closed to the public, there were some exceptions. The nutrition program for the senior is one of the exceptions because obviously we wanted to make sure that seniors are still getting their meals, so that program is still running to feed the community. I'd like to just know if you can consider looking at this and if obviously you're comfortable I would recommend you approving this declaration.

The trailer actually went through some repairs this past fall, we had a little bit of problem with some of the seals on it. Everything's organized in it all the equipment the regular preparedness equipment in there but as far as any PPE any personal protective equipment pretty much all of our PPE that that we have had we have obviously shared with first responders, because they are the staff actually going and responding to calls.

That's why the state is asking what you think you might need. We know we would need a lot of things. Like over the years we've had things like signage and cones and you know like hard equipment that we would use to set up an actual site. We actually use most of the equipment for all of our flu clinics. We've

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gotten it through grant money and we want to use it. The more we feel comfortable with it, the easier it is when we actually do need to use it.

We do have administrative and office supplies like clipboards, pens, staplers and a copier to assist with clinics.

**Steve:** I shall make a motion for the declaration of emergency for COVID-19 dated March 20, 2020 to accept as presented.

**Carolyn:** Second that motion **all in favor: Vote 2-0**

**Darlene Coyle:** If something comes up that the Board needs to move on, I don't know if you want to identify any leniency allowing approvals to happen for any other plans we normally have meetings for. If there is any local upgrade approvals or any waivers like that those are consistent with Title 5 item requests.

**Steve Nordborg:** During the emergency in regards to your day-to-day operations, I would have no problem leaving that flexibility in regards to LUA'S obviously by State guidelines you know anything that kind of stuff. We still need to try to keep business moving and just like everything else it's just as temporary during the crisis. I would leave that to your discretion. I have no problem just trusting your judgment.

**Eric Otterson enters the meeting.**

**Eric Otterson:** I just want to thank you guys, you are doing a phenomenal job. I'm in these meetings for with Department heads through Emergency Management as well, so I kind of wear both hats with doing this. And just for the public out there and fellow board members as well. I cannot speak more highly on the Board of Health staff here and what they're doing day in and day out, lack of sleep getting caught up on these regulations these regulations change sometimes by the hour. Darlene is keeping me in the loop as much as she can and then I'm certainly appreciative of that. But I'm so tied up with emergency medicine and I still have to work in the emergency room as well. I think it's important to know that anyone who's watching this knows that you have class acts up here consummate professionals with the day-to-day operations of the Town of Auburn Board of Health, I'm very happy that they are doing everything they can and it doesn't go unnoticed by me. I want to convey that to the general public as well, and I know our Board members know that as well. So we certainly wanted to say, we know it's scary but everybody will get through this and just need to follow their lead.

**NEXT MEETINGS :** To be determined on available dates by email.

**Eric Otterson entertains a motion to close the hearing.**

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**Motion: Carolyn Griffin moved to adjourn the meeting at 5:44PM**  
**Second: Steve Nordborg      Vote: All in favor 3-0**

**Approved on 9-28-2020**