

**Rehoboth Board of Human Services and Community health
Minutes of Meeting
November 9, 2023
Francis Building, Francis Farm Campus**

In attendance: Brittany Bixenman, Kimberly Ciociola, Robert Lambe, Richard Panofsky, Bruce Thayer.
Guest: Geraldine Hamel

1. The meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm.
2. Minutes. B. Thayer moved to approve the minutes of the meeting of October 12, 2023, with a few typos and one sentence corrected; R. Panofsky seconded; the motion carried unanimously.
3. Public Health Report.
 - R. Lambe reviewed the various status documents distributed by email. Covid reports are variable, with wastewater levels fairly low, and case numbers are very low compared to a year ago. Respiratory illness aggregated (RSV, flu, and COVID) are lower than last few years. Arbovirus activity should decline with the first frost. EEE risk remains moderate for Rehoboth. West Nile Virus has had 6 cases in Massachusetts, and risk is low for Rehoboth. Mavor reports show few issues (one alert for Lyme disease).
 - G. Hamel added that RSV alerts show typical levels. Also, the manufacturer of a baby-snack-food WanaBana is voluntarily recalling fruit purée pouches due to elevated levels of lead; she has posted an alert on the Town Nurse webpage.
4. Review of interdisciplinary issues from member boards and agencies.
 - a) Board of Health.
 - b) Council on Aging. B. Bixenman reported the activities and meals numbers are steady. Funding for the exercise equipment is uncertain but they are pursuing grants. A Lions Club dinner for seniors is scheduled after being missing last year because of the closed kitchen.
 - c) Rehoboth School Department.
 - d) Human Services Department.
 - e) Rehoboth Community. K. Ciociola asked about possible community impact from the growing housing shortages in Massachusetts and Seekonk. G. Hamel reported this is being discussed and processed in regional Public Health Nurse organizations. Rehoboth may have one family, but they receive help from the state, not involving our town. There are no reports in the schools of students in this status.
 - f) Board of Selectmen Representative.
 - R. Panofsky reported he informed Board Chair Skip Vadnais of our Board's recommendation of a no-smoking policy for all town campuses. He suggested we present it at a BOS meeting soon, at which next steps would be considered. R. Panofsky moved that the Board would attend an upcoming BOS meeting to recommend a Rehoboth campus-wide smoking ban and discuss next steps; R. Lambe seconded; motion carried unanimously.
 - R. Panofsky also suggested Chair Vadnais should be informed more quickly of our work by receiving clearly marked "draft" minutes before their official approval; by consensus, the group agreed. As Clerk Panofsky will do this after each meeting.
5. Old business. Project for Town Preparedness. R. Lambe and R. Panofsky reported meeting with Skip Vadnais to share results of our research into needs for organizing emergency preparedness. That discussion brought out that our Board has many roles to play in giving advice and guidance and

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providing information and advice. The Town, however, must provide the administrative leadership to organize and manage the processes, which include continual consultation and participation in regional and state-wide meetings. By consensus, our Board remains eager to advise and tackle specific areas involving human service or health contexts. R. Panofsky will work further with Mr. Vadnais to help draw up better understandings of needs.

6. New Business

- a) Signposts at town trails with health related alerts. G. Hamel is pursuing a project with our Shared Services Grant (Northern Bristol County Public Health Alliance) to post signs with health advisories about safety with mosquitoes. She and Health Officer Karl Drown have identified seven locations on our trails for these signs. They look forward to additional sign projects touching on other health aspects.
- b) Developing guidelines for town health emergencies. Covered in item 5 above.

Next meeting will be December 14, 2023.

At 8:11 pm R. Panofsky moved adjournment, B. Thayer seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Richard Panofsky, Clerk



Robert Lambe, Chair



Richard Panofsky, Clerk