



**Town of Mendon
Board of Health
20 Main St. Mendon
Minutes for
May 24, 2017**

Chairman Andy Fiske called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Present: Alan Greenberg - Vice Chairman, Tom Fichtner - BOH Member, Kim Newman, Town Administrator, Chris Burke, Board of Selectmen Member, Alan Tetreault Tree Warden and a few residents of Mendon.

Location – Board of Health Office– 18 Main Street, Mendon, MA 01756

This meeting was held to discuss the nuisance of Gypsy Moth Caterpillars. The Board of Health wanted residents to be able to voice their concerns. One resident expressed their view that this issue is a public health crisis. Her children don't want to go to school because they are afraid to go outside. Another resident expressed their view that given the amount of taxes paid, they should be able to enjoy town properties without getting rashes from the Gypsy Caterpillars. Residents in attendance noted that the Town of Blackstone had sprayed and wanted to know why the Town of Mendon had not sprayed.

The Board expressed their understanding of the residents viewpoints. Tom Fichtner (BOH Member) provided an oral outline to those in attendance, as to what he witnessed upon inspecting the various locations in question. Please see attached.

The Board of Health explained that it is too late to take any action this year. Ms. Newman (Town Administrator) also explained that there is no money set aside to spray this year. She suggested to the residents to talk to her or one of the Selectmen in August. There would be a special town meeting in November. If residents felt strongly enough about spraying in the Spring of 2018, the Special Town Meeting in November would be the time to set aside money.

Chris Burke (Selectman) also expressed his view that it is indeed too late for spraying this year and echoed Ms. Newman's commentary about next Spring. In addition, the meeting was also attended by an individual who has professional experience in this area. His view also supported the statements made by Mr. Burke & Ms. Newman that it is too late in the year to be effective with spraying. The Board thanked all those who attended.

Don Morin of the Police Station Building Committee stopped by to talk about the shared septic system at the Town Hall Complex. He told the BOH that they have contacted the MassDEP to possibly have a change in usage for the septic. Don just wanted to let the BOH know and to keep the Board in the loop. The Board thanked Don for stopping by.

The Board will meet June 7th and June 21st.

Tom made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Alan seconds the motion. All members agreed. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Board of Health – Gypsy Moth Caterpillar Assessment

Assessment Period – May 19, 2017 thru May 24, 2017

This report is a summary of visual assessments, performed by Board of Health Member Tom Fichtner, done at the Mendon Town Park located on Millville Road & the field / play areas at both the Henry P. Clough Elementary School and the Miscoe Hill Middle School. In addition, this report includes feedback from information gathered thru communications with various individuals at both the local & state levels.

The visual assessment of field areas focused on the immediate field areas which included structures such as playground equipment, fencing, dugouts, bleachers & shacks. A minor visual assessment was made of the foliage surrounding these field areas.

As for the Town Park on Millville Road, general results indicated a very low presence of the Gypsy Moth Caterpillars on the structures examined. Two areas that showed a bit more activity than others were the shelf areas of the softball dugouts and along the dividing fence between Lowell Field & Pazzella Field. The softball dugouts are the only dugouts with shelving which resides directly over the bench where players sit. Caterpillars were observed hanging from these shelves which could then easily deposit them on top of the players below. The dividing fence between Lowell Field & Pazzella Field has a bright yellow protective cap running along the top of the fence line. This cap had considerable activity of caterpillar movement when it was first observed. However, in a follow up visit days later, that activity was dramatically reduced on both the fence cap and on the dugout shelves.

The other fields (Grady, Grant & Tetreault), along with the playground area had a very low to non-existent presence of caterpillars on the associated structures. As I walked the perimeter to view the foliage, I could see segments that were more

densely populated with the caterpillars than others. During my assessments, I did not see much movement thru the air of these caterpillars.

As for the Henry P. Clough Elementary School, the areas assessed were the playground area and the area containing the open field. Caterpillar activity on playground equipment was virtually non-existent. However, this area does closely abutt foliage and it would be easy to see how caterpillars could easily make contact thru wind travel to either the equipment or the children. There was very minor activity on the perimeter fencing. To note, in conversation with school personnel, the height of their presence has diminished. It seemed to be at its greatest during the first two weeks of May. In conversation with the School Nurse, they have had a steady flow of children over the last two to three weeks coming to the Nurse's Office for issues of itching & rashes. Although I did not document the specific number, the rate of flow believed to be provided was an average of 20-30/day over the last three week period.

The open field area at Clough does not have many structures other than the soccer nets & benches for general seating. Examination of these produced a very minor existence of caterpillars. It was noted that directly behind the benches were small trees that had a moderate presence of caterpillar activity. Proximity of these trees to the benches would easily allow for transfer of caterpillars onto people below.

As for the Miscoe Hill School, the direct field environment was found to be very clean. A handful of caterpillars were seen scattered near the top of fencing for the softball dugouts but visual signs of heavy concentration could be detected. These results were consistent for both the softball field & the baseball field. None of these dugouts have shelving in them. The baseball dugouts are in a closer proximity to heavier foliage than the softball dugouts are. There was a fair amount of activity noticed at the top section of one of the dugout fences. A couple of clusters with 10-12 caterpillars did exist. In conversation with the School Nurse, she estimated that in the first two weeks of May, they saw approximately 10-15 children per day with complaints of itching & rashes. The third week tailed off to about 5 total for the week.

Upon review of the playground area at Miscoe Hill, benches & fencing had very minor, almost non-existent activity. However, this play area is surrounded by

foliage and even has trees within the fenced-in area of the playground. The activity of the caterpillars on these trees within the playground area was steady. Also, there are tables situated below these trees which allows for direct caterpillar contact from the trees to the tables. Upon visual inspection of the actual tables, there was very little sign of the caterpillars. There is one tree that currently has a “tape band” around the trunk designed to “grab or stick” the caterpillars to it. This tape band was densely populated with caterpillars. In speaking with a traffic monitor, it was communicated that for a 2-3 week period, the backpacks that the children bring could not be hung up on the fencing as they would normally do because of the heavy presence of the caterpillars. However, that has subsided and they are now back to using the fencing to hang the backpacks.

In broadening my assessment, I sought input from the medical community. Inquiries were made to Milford Hospital to determine their level of experience with regard to a flow of individuals seeking treatment that may relate to caterpillar exposure.

Communication received from the Infectious Disease Nurse provided the following:

- a) She had not been alerted to any activity of individuals seeking treatment for rash-related symptoms.
- b) She had not received any inquiries from surrounding physician offices regarding any incidences of rash-related symptoms associated with Gypsy Moth Caterpillars

Communication received from the ER/Urgent Care MD provided the following:

We have seen a number (at least a dozen) of adults as well as children with rashes consistent with gypsy moth caterpillar exposure over the past few weeks, almost exclusively occurring on exposed areas of skin (neck, face, arms/legs), in our urgent care center. Most of those affected do not report/remember seeing a caterpillar on their skin and diagnosis is based on appearance and distribution of rash and recent opportunity for exposure (being in wooded area or under a tree).

In addition to receiving communications from Milford Hospital, agencies such as DCR & DPH were contacted regarding this issue. Their specific responses can be provided as desired. In general, neither agency is deeming this issue to be a public health crisis, although they have expressed their understanding of the major discomfort & frustration that this issue creates.

In communication with our local Parks & Recreation Dept., no direct phone or email complaints have been received. The discussion on Facebook has been the only communication. Parks & Recreation has also provided their view on spraying which can also be shared as desired.

This report respectfully submitted this 24th day of May, 2017 and to be included in the Board of Health Meeting Minutes.

Approved October 10, 2017