



## **Town of Mendon Board of Health Minutes for April 8, 2020**

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

Present: Alan Greenberg -Vice Chairman Tom Fichtner - BOH Member, Missy Kakela-Boisvert, Sr. Administrative Assistant to BOH,

In addition to the above confirmed attendees, there was a participant who did call into the meeting. The participant's name came across from the recording system at the same time Missy was reading the opening announcement for how the meeting would be conducted remotely & it was unclear what the stated name was. When asked by Chairman Fiske if he/she would identify themselves, there was no response from the caller.

Location – Conference Call number 774-462-5991 Participates number 1233

**Scholarships** – E.L. Harvey & Sons provides scholarship money of \$1,000.00. The BOH typically allocates this money in the form of 2 - \$500.00 scholarships to graduating High School Seniors from Mendon. The Board will award the scholarships again this year but the Board will allow extra time because of the current pandemic situation, which has created a disruption in normal school processes & activities. The Board wants to make sure that the applicants have enough time to submit their applications. Missy will contact the Guidance Counselors at Nipmuc Regional and BVT. This year, the due date for returning the applications will be June 1, 2020.

**EEE** – This year's season for Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE) could be worse than last year based on initial estimates & feedback received. Alan had reached out to Max Carbone, who is the BOH Animal Inspector, for his input. Max is working on a presentation and the Board will look to have Max participate for the next BOH conference call meeting that will be scheduled for Wednesday April 15, 2020 at 7:00pm.

**COVID-19** – The Board decided that, due to the importance of what is going on with COVID-19 & the ever-changing activity, they will meet on a weekly basis. The Board wants to make themselves available more frequently in a public forum to hear from folks & discuss activity or answer any questions or concerns. As the State is heading into what has been described as the apex of this COVID-19 situation, Health Agent Lenny Izzo will not be personally performing any perc testing or septic inspections. Chairman Andy Fiske explained that there is a property in Town that has a failing system and needs to have a perc test done. Andy reached out to Tom Ryder who is the BOH Engineer. Tom R. has agreed to do the perc test. Missy had been in communication with Tom R. and the property owners' engineer. A date and time have been scheduled. Tom R. did say that only the excavator, the soil evaluator, the owner of the property and Tom R. himself will be present and will practice strict social distancing guidelines.

Further discussion of the COVID-19 topic moved to the discussion of releasing the actual count of COVID-19 positive cases. Missy explained that she has received requests from local newspaper outlets. Missy worked with Lenny (BOH Health Agent) on a simple statement to be provided to the public. It reads as follows:

The Mendon Board of Health is respecting the request from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health not to release positive COVID-19 case count information. Mendon is a small community and we are trying to respect the privacy of those who have been directly affected. The Massachusetts Department of Public Health releases numbers by county every day and can be found at <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-updates-and-information>  
Leonard Izzo, Health Agent  
Mendon Board of Health

The Board did ask the unknown participant, that was on the call, if he/she had any questions, as the Board was looking to give all on line the opportunity to ask the Board any questions or make any comment. The participant chose not to respond..

In additional discussion of the idea to release the positive case count, Chairman Andy Fiske noted what he believed a couple of local towns (Hopedale & Upton) were providing for case count numbers. He believes that one town had referenced one case while the other had no cases although not absolutely certain of these values. Andy wondered whether or not these towns were really providing actual numbers any further, as he indicated that he believed the real numbers would be higher given the situation & that quite possibly these towns are now following the recommendation by the MDPH to no longer release positive case counts. Andy did not feel it was relevant to provide positive case count information at this time.

In response, BOH Member Tom Fichtner stated that we should not assume that the numbers that have been provided in these towns are not real simply because of one's belief that they couldn't be accurate. It would not be right to presume that these towns have moved to not making any further reports of positive COVID-19 cases. Tom reasserted his initial belief that, since we have already provided confirmation of COVID-19 in our Town, we should provide the public the case count for positive COVID-19 as a means to let the public measure for themselves either just how minimal or how extensive it may be in Mendon. Tom F. also stated he does not believe that providing the COVID-19 positive case count in any way, shape or form would be a violation to HIPPA guidelines. Vice Chairman Alan Greenberg joined the discussion to reaffirm his current position that the case count value should not be provided at this time but would be open to re-evaluating this position if circumstances changed.

Missy asked the Board if they wished to take a formal vote on their positions of whether or not the case count for positive COVID-19 should be presented to the public. However, the response back was that each of the members views have been made known so no need to record a formal vote. All Members were in agreement.

The COVID-19 discussion moved to the topic of additional signage. Dan Byer (Parks Commissioner) had expressed an interest in posting signs at the parks, given that the Parks have been under a BOH order to be closed due to the COVID-19 situation. The discussion involved the possibility of having these signs paid for from the allotted money received from the State to cover COVID-19-related expenses. All Board members are in favor of posting such signage. The messaging for the signs themselves is still under discussion. Missy will verify if the cost of these signs is a COVID-19 allowable expense.

Next, the discussion moved to permitting. An on-going issue regarding an illegal dumpster at the Roger L. Wood American Legion Post 355 was discussed. To note, a dumpster had been brought in some time back to handle the debris from renovation work that is being performed by students from Blackstone Valley Technical High School. This is an educational-based project led by staff as a way to also provide community enrichment concepts to the students. The company

(Dumpster Divers) had been previously contacted & were made aware that they were operating without a permit. It was believed that they would comply but as of this meeting, no Permit Application had been submitted. Tom presented the thought of having the dumpster removed, given that they have had ample time to comply. However, it was decided that Missy would reach out to Dumpster Divers again to discuss with the hope that this issue will be resolved without disrupting the good work that is going on at the American Legion.

Next, the topic of Meeting Minutes was addressed. Tom F. made a motion to approve the minutes from January 8<sup>th</sup> 2020, February 12<sup>th</sup>, 2020 and February 26<sup>th</sup> 2020. Alan G. seconds the motion. All members agreed. Motion carried. Missy next stated that a couple of her projects, while working from home next week, will be to update the Town website with regards to BOH Meeting Minutes and to also update the website with updated changes to Permit Applications.

Next meeting will be April 15, 2020.

Alan made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Tom seconds the motion. Both members agreed. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 7:44p.m.

**Approved April 15, 2020**

# DRAFT SCRIPT FOR REMOTELY CONDUCTED OPEN MEETINGS

## Confirming Member Access:

As a preliminary matter, this is [Missy Kakela-Boisvert, Sr. Administrative Assistant]. Permit me to confirm that all members and persons anticipated on the agenda are present and can hear me.

- Members, when I call your name, please respond in the affirmative.

*Andrew Fiske, Alan Greenberg, Thomas Fichtner*

## Introduction to Remote Meeting:

Good evening. This Open Meeting of [Mendon Board of Health] is being conducted remotely consistent with Governor Baker's Executive Order of March 12, 2020, due to the current State of Emergency in the Commonwealth due to the outbreak of the "COVID-19 Virus."

In order to mitigate the transmission of the COVID-19 Virus, we have been advised and directed by the Commonwealth to suspend public gatherings, and as such, the Governor's Order suspends the requirement of the Open Meeting Law to have all meetings in a publicly accessible *physical* location. Further, all members of public bodies are allowed and encouraged to participate remotely.

The Order, which you can find posted with agenda materials for this meeting allows public bodies to meet entirely remotely so long as reasonable public access is afforded so that the public can follow along with the deliberations of the meeting.

Ensuring public access does not ensure public participation unless such participation is required by law. This meeting [will] feature public comment.

For this meeting, [the Mendon Board of Health] is convening by [telephone conference] as posted on the Town's Website identifying how the public may join.

**\*For Non-Novus Supported Meetings:** All supporting materials that have been provided members of this body are available on the Town's website unless otherwise noted. The public is encouraged to follow along using the posted agenda unless **The Chair** notes otherwise.

## Meeting Business Ground Rules

We are now turning to the first item on the agenda. Before we do so, permit me to cover some ground rules for effective and clear conduct of our business and to ensure accurate meeting minutes.

- **I,** will introduce each speaker on the agenda. After they conclude their remarks, the Chair will go down the line of Members, inviting each by name to provide any comment, questions, or motions. Please hold until your name is called. Further,
  - Please remember to mute your phone or computer when you are not speaking;
  - Please remember to speak clearly and in a way that helps generate accurate minutes
- For any response, please wait until the Chair yields the floor to you, and state your name before speaking.
- If members wish to engage in colloquy with other members, please do so through the Chair, taking care to identify yourself.
- **For Items with Public Comment:**

After members have spoken, the Chair will afford public comment as follows:

- The Chair will first ask members of the public who wish to speak to identify their names and addresses only;
- Once the Chair has a list of all public commentators, I will call on each by name and afford 3 minutes for any comments.