

Winthrop Board of Health Meeting

December 13, 2022 at 6:30 pm

Harvey Hearing Room and via Zoom

Call to order: 6:47 pm

Roll call: Bill Schmidt, Chair; Jeanne Holgersen, Vice-Chair; Marianne Dalton, Member.

Present: Via Zoom: Ann Marie Kessel, NSPHC-MAPC; (Metropolitan Area Planning Council) Barry Keppard, MAPC; Claire Hoffman, MAPC; Dorothy Charles, Health Department; Town Councillor Tracey Honan; Wendy Millar-Page, Solid Waste and Recycling Manager; Kurt Millar (also in person). In-person: Vasili Mallios; Layne Petrie, School Committee Member.

Review of minutes: approved unanimously 3-0.

Public comment: Vasili Mallios expresses frustration at the late start of the meeting, as he believed the meeting had been cancelled when he arrived @630 and saw the meeting room was dark. He speaks against the proposed Keeping of Animals regulation. Mr Mallios states that the item prohibiting keeping of chickens in spaces other than side or back yards is merely arbitrary and has no basis on fact. He presents a multiple-page set of signatures (285 signatures in total) he has collected from town residents in support of his cause, and submits this into the record of the meeting minutes.

He cites several quotes from the CDC, Mass.gov, and others that he states support his contention that the location of his chickens in his front yard poses no threat to the public health.

Bill replies that the regulations proposed are not directed at any one individual, but are in support of regulating keeping of animals for the public at large. Bill cites multiple articles and sources that confirm that “backyard chickens” are so termed because they do pose a threat to the public health when not housed an appropriate distance away from the streets and/or abutters. Bill states the term “attractive nuisance” is a legal definition meaning “something on a landowner’s property that draws children in and may look inviting, but is actually [potentially] harmful”. Mr Mallios states that swimming pools are an example of attractive nuisances and they are not prohibited.

Bill states that the regulation as proposed does not prohibit keeping chickens in side or back yards, but only front yards.

Mr Mallios states that his animals are secured, and contrasts this with wildlife that are not secured, and asks if the Board proposes to regulate wildlife as well.

Councillor Tracey Honan speaks on the beehives language in the proposed regulation. She states she supports Mr Mallios in his request that the stipulation preventing placement of chickens in front yards be removed.

Presentation—MAPC North Suffolk Community Health Needs Assessment: Ann Marie Kessel reports on the Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) covering Revere, Chelsea and Winthrop.

Ann Marie has a Power Point presentation that outlines the purpose of the CHNA and what the group then does with the data collected from the CHNA in a Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP).

Ann Marie states that a CHNA is conducted every 3 years. The current set of data from 2022 will be analyzed by Ann Marie's team at NSPHC and MAPC.

The data was gathered from a group of 1401 total respondents; from Chelsea, 493; Revere, 717; Winthrop, 191. Questions asked of respondents came under 4 general categories: social, economic, and environmental health, and racial inequities. Subcategories included affordability and conditions of housing; economic stability and mobility; access to clean water, breathability of air and access to cooling during extreme heat; accessibility of mental health/substance abuse assistance; and access to local investment opportunities such as purchasing a home.

Ann Marie states that focus groups also identified strengths of the community: in Winthrop, these included dedication of first responders; municipal commitment; a sense of community; the benefits of being a small town; and access to transportation.

The presentation then concluded with a preview of what the CHIP process is, with comments from Barry Keppard and Claire Hoffman, both from MAPC. Both Barry and Claire state that working groups are being formed and the CHIP will be updated from the last one in 2019, focusing on housing, environmental health, economic stability, and behavioral health. Developing goals and objectives along with actions to achieve is the work of the groups, as well as narrowing the objectives to one to two that can be further explored and implemented. Grant funding is pursued as well to achieve the objectives once identified.

Ann Marie states that the results of the CHNA will be released soon, to Meredith Hurley, Director of Public Health and Clinical Services and her staff, who will then pass the results on to the Board.

Bill asks the presenting group if environmental health will be a focus in the CHIP, as the surveys collected from the last CHNA showed that environmental health was a major concern, but it was not focused upon in the CHIP. Barry replies that he looks forward to using the data gathered for this assessment, which includes focusing on environmental health, to continue to implement environmental health improvements. Barry adds that the partnership with Meredith and her staff has been indispensable for his team at MAPC.

Past business: Bill states that Al Legee, Commissioner of Inspectional Services, who is unable to attend tonight's meeting, sent a memo about the following issues:

76 Sunnyside Avenue status: property is slated for sale, and if sale is not completed by the end of this week, there will be a receivership hearing on the property.

Housing code changes webinar—followup: Bill reports from Al's memo that changes are coming, a webinar was held last week and someone from Inspectional Services was able to attend the webinar.

41 Putnam Street dumpster and Dumpster Regulation: Bill reports from Al's memo that a request is going to be made for JRM to remove the smaller dumpster, and leave the one remaining larger size dumpster.

Mass DEP New Waste Disposal bans—textiles, etc: Wendy Millar-Page, Solid Waste and Recycling Manager reports textile recovery is going well. Wendy is putting out the word about Capitol Waste collecting mattresses every other Friday, people need to contact Capitol Waste directly for fees and scheduling for pickup. Tree pickup will take place the first 2 weeks after New Year's Day.

Board of Health town website: Marianne has volunteered to try and work with Bill to “clean up” the website, adding pertinent information and removing what is no longer necessary.

Board of Health workplan for 2023: Bill will be working on this.

COVID-19—Town of Winthrop, Board of Health, vaccinations, tests, etc:

Director of Public Health and Clinical Services update—Flu vaccinations: Meredith Hurley, Director of Public Health and Clinical Services is unable to attend this evening, and has sent the Board a report which Bill reads into the record:

Rates of Covid and flu activity are high in Massachusetts. Vaccine clinics are held 9 am-6:30 pm every Tuesday. Covid boosters are available.

Community Engagement event—Mental Health—followup: held November 16, good turnout. The goal was to share data related to mental health, both youth and adult, substance abuse and domestic violence. Community feedback on these issues will enable Meredith’s team to better utilize the grants recently awarded to the Public Health department. Work groups are being formed: youth mental health, adult mental health, substance use and domestic violence. Those interested in joining any of these work groups are encouraged to contact Meredith’s office. Meetings begin in January.

Overdose prevention mentor program: Via the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO), Meredith’s department has been selected to monitor 2 health departments who are starting their own overdose prevention programs. The two health departments are in Mobile, Alabama and Gary Eaton County, Michigan. Meredith’s team will be working with both departments over the next 8 months, meeting monthly to develop a work plan

and actionable steps to promote overdose prevention in their jurisdiction.

Grease Trap regulation: Bill hopes to update this soon.

MRC update: Bill reports having spoken to Jeanne Maggio, Coordinator of Medical Reserve Corp (MRC), who states that her team is working hard.

Trash, Recycling and Solid Waste Disposal regulation: Bill reports speaking to Vice President Rugierrio recently about fees, which are in the Town Council's purview, and about ensuring that there are no inconsistencies between the town ordinances and the Board regulations.

Keeping of Animals regulation: Marianne states that the regulations the Board are looking to pass are not targeted toward any one individual, but rather to ensure that all those looking to keep chickens will be held to a single, enforceable standard. Mr Mallios replies that Inspectional Services (IS) should be utilized to respond to any complaints from abutters of those keeping chickens. Bill clarifies that IS is not staffed to respond to such complaints. Bill also reviews that the regulations as proposed are not as restrictive as those in other municipalities, which would restrict keeping of chickens to backyards and/or prohibit abutting side streets.

Bill states that the regulations are meant to be proactive rather than reactive. He states that if regulations are clearly stated at the beginning of the permitting process, there is a better chance that those applying for permits will comply with the regulations, Bill reviews that if the previous regulations were enforced at the time Mr Mallios applied for his permit, he would not have likely been able to have had chickens on his property at all. The variance granted to Mr

Mallios allowed him to keep chickens in his front yard until the Board updated the former ordinances, which included rules about horses, cattle, and other animals no longer kept in the Town.

Jeanne points out the attractive nuisance that chickens pose in Mr Mallios' front yard, and lists 4 different bird-borne diseases that put children and the elderly at risk when they come in contact with any infected birds. She states that infected birds are asymptomatic.

Layne Petrie states that Mr Mallios' keeping of chickens inspired her to obtain chickens for her own yard, and states that she has complied with all the regulations. Bill states that the Board's objective in putting updated regulations in place is to ensure that all permits are vetted by the Board.

Kurt Miller states that the Health Department is the entity that grants permits for keeping of animals. He further states that Inspectional Services is responsible for inspecting and following up on complaints.

The Board decides to vote on the new Keeping of Animals regulation tonight. The regulations are approved unanimously 3-0. Bill proposes an amendment that will put the regulation in place as of April 1, 2023, approved unanimously. This will be communicated to current and new chicken and beehive owners, and education will be provided for those who request permits for keeping chickens and honeybees.

Draft Performance Standards Phase 1 Webinar—followup: Bill reports that the Office of Local and Regional Health, part of DPH, is formulating standards for boards of health in Massachusetts. The tool will entail a comprehensive list of issues that boards of health are able to act upon. This is coming sometime this spring.

NSPHC Environmental Health Working Group—followup: Bill reports a study funded by federal grant on the effect of carbon emissions from trains on Chelsea, Revere, Everett, East Boston and Winthrop is taking place.

North Suffolk Zero Carbon Action Plan—December 13 @10:30 am: Bill reports an event at the Senior Center where Rachel Kelly, Town Planner, spoke on reducing carbon emissions and environmental improvement. Excluding emissions from the airport, in Winthrop, carbon emissions originate from passenger vehicles (1/3), residential buildings (1/2) and manufacturers (1/6).

Schedule of meetings for January-June 2023: List of meetings for next year agreed upon by board members.

Adjournment: 8:38 pm, approved 3-0 unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Marianne Dalton, Member