

Winthrop Board of Health Minutes for meeting on 03/14/2024

Meeting called to order at 6:43

Members Present: Bill Shmidt, Jeanne Holgerson, Christine Reilly

Minutes for the meeting on 2/15/2024 were approved unanimously 3-0

Meeting on 3/14/2024 included a public Hearing

Public Hearing on Letter Grading of Food Establishments

The BOH is proposing to implement a letter grading system of food establishments and food trucks in order to let the public know how each establishment is doing. The BOH hopes every restaurant will get an A. Under current system, BOH only gets feedback when someone files a complaint and an inspection is done.

Betsy sent an email to all food businesses in town with a copy of the proposed grading system. One response from a restaurant was received and one town councilor commented.

Sharon will also send it out again.

The BOH will accept comments and questions until 3/29/24. The inspection process itself will not change. The Board approved a draft of the regulations, it can be modified if needed.

Bill explained that once we reach the point where the grades are posted, there will be letter grades of A, B, C. Will not give anyone a D or F. The inspectors will be following the same codes now used, nothing is new. Each establishment will start with 100 points at the beginning of the inspection. Violations will fall into three categories. For a foodborne critical violation 10 points will be deducted. For a critical violation 7 points will be deducted. For a non critical violation, 2 points will be deducted.

Grade A if the score is 94-100 points.

Grade B if the score is 81-93 points.

Grade C if the score is 80 or less.

The first year is a trial situation; the grades will be available on the town website.

The grades will be posted at the restaurant the second year.

Questions posed

Do the inspectors have a list they follow when doing inspections and do the business owners have access to it so they know ahead of time what to expect. (Bill replied they follow the state codes for inspections and that these are available to the owners. There will be no change in the regulations.)

What is the definition of a "food establishment". Does it include any place that sells food, such as convenience stores selling wrapped sandwiches or only restaurants?

What expertise do the inspectors have? (Bill replied that they are certified food inspectors.)

Has it been shown that restaurant grading systems are helpful or is it just adding another layer to the process?

Will the business owners be educated on how the process will work?

Will any classes be held to inform them of how the new system will work and how they can ensure they will get a good grade.

What would be the next steps if a restaurant got a B.

How long will it be until that grade can be changed?
How soon does the B get posted on the window?

Will the business owners have all the information needed to pass the inspection? (It was discussed that it is the owner's responsibility with any business or profession requiring a license to find out about and follow any rules or regulations)

Is there a possibility of another grading system instead of A B C? (Perhaps A+, A, A-, etc)

Does the process take into account first offenders versus repeat offenders?

(it was explained that any establishment not happy with the grade assigned can ask for a second inspection after being given time to correct any violations. And if, not happy with the second grade, they can pay for a third inspection. The letter assigned at the 3rd inspection will be the one posted.)

What will happen if a restaurant gets re-inspected the second or third year and gets a lower grade? (same as above)

Concern expressed over whether new owners, such as in the future, will have the information they need in order to get a good grade. (example given that just like someone operating a dry cleaning business must learn to properly manage the chemical, any one deciding to open a restaurant should educate themselves on what it entails and how to prevent any risks to the public health.

Question posed as to whether the public will be educated about the new system so they will know what the letter grades represent.

Should there be a requirement that restaurant owners take a course to learn the regulations they need to abide by? (There is already a requirement that someone at the restaurant, on each shift, must have taken and passed the Serve Safe course. It is available online)

Public Hearing closed at 7:44pm

Tobacco Sale Regulation

Bonnie Carroll was asked to attend the BOH meeting in order to provide an update on the 2024 Model Sales Regulations from the state. Ahead of the meeting, a copy of the model regulations was sent and Bill reviewed them and compared them to the regulations now in place for Winthrop. Some changes were designed to cut out loopholes. Winthrop currently has 16 businesses with a license to sell tobacco, but according to current guidelines for a town this size, there should be only 12. No licenses will be rescinded, but if one is given up, it will not be reissued as a way to decrease the number to 12. Bonnie stated that the major changes are just language. For example, regulations said no menthol cigarettes, but then tightened the regulation to say no menthol, mint or wintergreen. Recent change is that rolling papers for tobacco cannot be flavored. Regulations used to state that the business had to have a non-mobile permanent location, it has been changed to say an indoor non-mobile permanent location. Another update is that no new license to sell tobacco will be granted to an establishment that is within 500 feet of an existing licensed business. Another update is that the penalty for sale of tobacco to a minor will be a \$1000 fine and a 3 day suspension of the license to sell. The BOH will further review the new model regulations on sale of tobacco and consider updating Winthrop's

regulations if needed. Bonnie also informed the BOH that there is a new product on the Market called ZIN, which is a nicotine salt and is widely available at a low cost.

Past Business

Lewis Lake Water Quality email sent to town manager requesting an update as there has been no reply from DPW.

Director of Public Health and Clinical Services Update sent via email

C.L.E.A.R. Program

Have begun mentoring 2 new police departments in way to integrate peer recovery systems. The departments are from Missouri and Ohio; through the Department of Justice, we will be meeting virtually every month and will be hosting them both at the end of the program in-person for 2 days.

Three officers from Virginia will be visiting in April to learn more about the C.L.E.A.R. Program as well.

Other

We have finally received 3 AEDs for the EB Newton building. Awaiting install from facilities.

Upcoming trainings:

- CPR for staff and volunteers

- Diversity and Equity Training

- Self-Care Coping Groups for staff

- Toll of Working With Trauma for staff

Working on a grant proposal for Healthy Aging in Elders that would be done in conjunction with the non-profit called Front Porch Building Communities & Innovative Solutions for Seniors.

The Equitable Approaches to Public Safety(EAPS) grant provides our community with about \$450,000 annually to deliver many of the services of WDPH&CS. It was left out of Gov. Healey's proposed FY25 budget. We hope that the Winthrop BOH can help our elected advocate through our elected officials for such an important stream of funding.

May 1, 2024 at 6pm: COVID19 Tree Memorial dedication at Town Hall.

Boston University Metro-Bridge Project

BU developed some plans to deal with childhood obesity in Winthrop. Their recommendations were to try to develop more options in Winthrop for families to access healthy food. Report was written in 2019. An email was sent to Meridith Hurley to for further information. She replied that the Winthrop Marketplace is now accepting SNAP benefits and that she is not aware of any current plans for a community garden, but there was one in the past at the Senior Center.

Commissioner of Inspectional Services Update sent via email

Restaurant inspections for the 1st half of the year are starting up again.

Illr is doing regular grease trap inspections.]

76 Sunnyside has been sold and all permits signed off on.

Working with Wendy to do trash enforcement throughout the town.

Hotel on Shirley Street has been given a citation for the trash issue.

We have also been working with the Police Dept. on enforcement within the building.

Reptile Circus - Owner was informed that no poisonous animals are allowed in Winthrop and he stated he has none. He also informed that in order to open up a business, he must apply for a business license from the town

Grease Trap Regulations Bill has been working on the updates.

East Boston Health Center has been renamed Neighborhood health. They are planning to expand their PACE program which provides outreach services to those needing health care at home.

Adjournment at 8:23 unanimously approved 3-0