

Winthrop Board of Health
Meeting Minutes for January 13, 2026, at 4:00 pm
Harvey Hearing Room, Town Hall

Meeting called to order at 4:02 pm.

Members Present: Chair Christine Reilly, Jeanne Maggio, Mary Lou Cooney

Minutes from the Board of Health meeting of December 9, 2025, were read and unanimously approved.

Director of Public Health and Clinical Services Update: None

Commissioner of Inspectional Services Update:

Al Legee and Sharon Sicurella noted that IS is very busy as the Town is growing.

Some of the responsibilities of Inspectional Services include:

- Health inspections of restaurants, grocery stores, and liquor stores;
- Beaches;
- Accessory dwelling units, houses, AirBNBs;
- Habitable inspections of apartment units (\$150 per unit, good for 5 years; and
- Boat yards

Current issues:

- Derelict property on Hermon Street: IS to stay on top of all violations and issues.
- Captain Jack's Boatyard, directly behind the car wash: Derelict and renegade boats, boat junkyard will be addressed.

A question about parking for apartment dwellings was asked by the Board and Mr. Legee answered the responsibility is across several Town boards; it depends on people load and square footage; and the Planning Board is tough on parking.

Mr. Legee and Ms. Sicurella discussed the restaurant letter grade system. Also present for public comment were local business owner Cheryl Queen and the Chamber of Commerce's Diana Aliberti.

The Board's position:

- The grading system has nothing to do with food.
- The grading system was on the Board's meeting agendas from July 2023 until the regulations were signed in June 2024.
- Restaurant owners were invited and did not attend the meetings, with the exception of Ms. Queen from Twist and Shake.

- It is the restaurant owners' responsibility to know the regulations.
- The public has a right to know if restaurants are not fixing problems.

According to the regulations, no business should have to get less than an A. As written, the regulations stipulate that restaurants are given a second chance to fix problems before they have to post anything on their window. They are also allowed a third inspection at their own cost. In total, they have three chances before a grade of C or D is given.

Response of Inspectional Services:

- Everyone has probably forgotten the regulations.
- People will think the grade reflects the taste of the food but IS are not food tasters.
- It is too much work.

Ms. Queen remarked that if consumers are told a restaurant is closing for health code violations, they will stay away even if violations are fixed.

The Board is concerned about the Town's liability if someone got sick at a restaurant that should have had a letter grade posted and did not. Could the person sue the Town because the regulations were not followed and they did not have information that should have been showing? IS countered that even if a restaurant got a good inspection does not mean that something could not soon happen to change any issues that might arise with the restaurant. Mr. Legee said that he would follow up on that.

It was agreed that public education of the regulations would be key to understanding. The Board suggested an article for the Winthrop Transcript and perhaps Facebook, and that they would be willing to wait until the next meeting, until the public is aware. IS promised they would run anything by the Board first. Ms. Sicurella noted any article would be from both IS and the Board of Health. Ms. Aliberti was asked to send information to Chamber members.

The Board noted that an email to the Town Attorney did not result in an adequate reply, and an email to James Letterie got no answer. The Board questioned the liability of the town. Mr. Legee said that he and Ms. Sicurella would find out.

The Board agreed to postpone further discussion on the topic for three months to allow adequate time for the regulations to be implemented. IS thanked the Board and agreed that the meeting was productive.

IS was asked if it was under their purview to inspect convenience stores for THD candies and they replied that Bonnie Carrol of Six City Tobacco Initiative would have to send someone undercover.

Agenda Items:

- Utensils

The Board proposed that instead of a regulation or a mandate, an awareness campaign and information to the public may be sufficient. Mothers Out Front could go around and speak with restaurant owners. It was noted that the onus was on the customer to ask for “no utensils”. Ms. Queen gave an example of something a server might say: “Do you need spoons, or do you have spoons at home?”

It was noted that the issue may be a moot point as the proposed statewide regulation passed the Senate and is now in the House Ways and Means Committee. It would start in January of 2027 if it passes.

Ms. Aliberti had sent out an email to the businesses in town, but said it would require phone calls, visits, and perhaps mail queries. The Board expressed gratitude for her efforts.

Per the last meeting, a poster had been proposed, and an article in the Winthrop Transcript by Wendy Millar-Page.

It was decided that a public awareness campaign would be a good first start and if no progress was made in a year, the Board would revisit. It was suggested that Mothers Out Front work with the Chamber regarding posters and promotion.

Proposed Agenda Items for the Next Meeting: None.

Next meeting: To Be Determined

Adjournment at 5:10 pm; approved unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Christine Reilly,
Chair, Winthrop Board of Health