

**Board of Health  
Meeting Minutes  
March 4, 2013**

Members Present:

Bea Brunkhorst, Co-Chair  
Sarah Thompson  
Kevin Wormstead  
Tom Kinzer, Co-Chair

Staff Present:

Heidi Porter, Director  
Mary Firestone, Recording Secretary

Also Attending:

Sam Lipson, Director of Environmental Health,  
City of Cambridge  
Nancy Asbedian for The Bedford Citizen

Member Absent:

Anita Raj

The meeting was called to order at 7:10 P.M. Dr. Brunkhorst chaired.

Minutes:

Ms. Thompson moved to accept the minutes of the February 4, 2013, Board of Health meeting, as amended. Mr. Wormstead seconded the motion. Vote count: 4-0-0

Bedford Biosafety Regulation Review:

*Discussion with Consultant Sam Lipson:*

Ms. Porter introduced Mr. Lipson and explained that he had been a great resource in redrafting the regulations.

Mr. Lipson gave an overview of events, beginning in 1977, which led to regulation of recombinant DNA (rDNA) in Cambridge to address concerns of both citizens and biologists about the possible development of pathogens and impact to workers and/or the environment in the event of a release. In Cambridge the decision was made to allow work on rDNA, but under review by regulatory authorities. An ordinance was developed in 1981 in Cambridge and was later adopted by other towns. Public concern was aroused in recent years by development of a Biosafety Level 4 (BL4) laboratory in Boston in 2007-2008. There was no better response than to open it up to public discussion about the potential risk. Though it was promised that no rDNA would be used, the safety of non-recombinant work had to be addressed.

Dr. Brunkhorst explained her background in the rDNA field, the work done at the facility where she works, German Merck in Billerica, and their cautionary procedures. Mr. Lipson mentioned the experience of other towns. It is most useful in firms doing recombinant work to encourage the lab to include their non-recombinant work in safety procedures and develop an internal safety culture. Having an Institutional Biosafety Committee (IBC), with meeting minutes available, gives an assurance that safety is considered. Such meetings are also a good opportunity to review things not directly related to regulation. In the event there is a problem, it is enormously beneficial to show that they are meeting the highest standards.

Changes to the Bedford rDNA regulation were discussed. Bedford Board of Health personnel sit on the IBCs of Bedford biotech firms and therefore have more insight into the specific company's processes. Mr. Kinzer asked whether companies considering Bedford as a location are put off by regulation; it was discussed that Bedford is highly rated by the companies. The Massachusetts Biotech Council encourages adoption of regulations.

Mr. Lipson explained that in Cambridge "science hotel" facilities are being established; these are companies which host shared services for very small firms, especially start-ups. Permits may be held

by the tenant or by the landlord. Some proposed facilities act as a “lab central” where individuals just want bench space. Mr. Lipson makes sure that all parties are aware of their responsibilities; some may not be aware of the logistics of running a lab. He said that the regulations are laid out in a way that people concerned will understand it, though it’s not in plain language. Mr. Wormstead said that companies are already covered by OSHA regulations on blood-borne pathogens, including requirements for training.

Regulations typically require permitting for agents, like some influenza viruses, requiring a biosafety level of “BL2 Plus”; laboratories choose to work within the parameters of biosafety under a BL3 level as it would be too expensive to meet the BL3 requirements. A permit in good standing requires not only payment of a fee but much documentation.

Lab experience is needed for personnel in a municipal health department regulating laboratories; presently, on the Bedford Board of Health, two members have such experience: Dr. Brunkhorst and Mr. Wormstead. Fees and regulations set parameters to allow a company to know what the cost of regulatory oversight will be to the town. Mr. Wormstead said that the existence of biotech regulations enhances Bedford as a potential business location. Mr. Kinzer said that the Town Manager and the Board of Selectmen are fully on board for recruitment of biotech companies. Some towns have been less hospitable, e.g., Belmont was hampered in recruitment of a BL2 facility by religious organizations which stand against organized medicine.

Ms. Porter said that Mr. Lipson had recommended having an initial public hearing with current permittees invited to get their comments. Mr. Kinzer suggested that the IBC should cover all work, not just rDNA work. “Exempt” vs. “non-exempt” work is defined according to National Institutes of Health guidelines, so confusion can be quickly resolved. Mr. Lipson suggested that applications for permits should be submitted electronically.

Board members thanked Mr. Lipson for his advice; he said that he will continue to work with the Board on the regulations. Mr. Kinzer asked whether the regulations are of benefit to the companies. Mr. Lipson said that they provide clarity. Mr. Kinzer mentioned the benefit of regulations to the Fire Department. Mr. Lipson suggested giving a presentation to the Fire Department on what they do not need to worry about. He said that objections from community members may be in earnest or may be covering another agenda. Mr. Kinzer said that these issues do have something to do with the town’s future, financially and otherwise.

American Cancer Society --- Cancer Prevention Study --- Discussion:

The American Cancer society has announced that it want to recruit volunteer for a 30 year study comparable to the Framingham Heart Study. It is strictly a prevention study; there will be not intervention and no control group. The Society has asked the Board to promote participation in the study. Dr. Brunkhorst said that if the Board promotes it, it will have credence. The Board won’t have access to the data, but the study results will be published. They are recruiting across the U.S. and in Puerto Rico. The study is not reactionary and is not about Bedford. Subjects must be between the ages of 30 and 65 with no history of cancer.

Board of Health Action Items --- Old and New Business:

*Liaison Assignments:*

Ms. Porter attended the Bedford Community Partnership meeting on March 20; among the topics discussed were prevention of sports injuries, e.g., ACL tears, the success of the gun buy-back program, and a forum on gun violence at First Parish planned for March 13. Margot Fleishman said that warrant articles for the April 1 Town Meeting are set.

Ms. Porter also attended the Safe Routes to School meeting on March 1 where Blue Zones, safe, car free areas around schools, were discussed along with access in emergencies, and a survey on school traffic. A cost proposal for \$12,000 was provided for a study on methods for remote drop-offs of students en route to school.

Mr. Kinzer attended a meeting of the Financial Planning and Coordinating Committee. The final tuning of the budget to be presented at Town Meeting was discussed. The town is in better fiscal shape. The effect of the federal sequester is not yet known. Residential tax bills may become somewhat lower. There was some dispute on how to pay for the new artificial turf installation; part will be paid in cash and the balance will be bonded.

Mr. Kinzer also attended the Planning Board meeting on the Comprehensive Plan where he announced the upcoming planned Board of Health forum on the built environment with Mark Fenton.

Dr. Brunkhorst said that she and Ms. Porter are planning to participate in the IBC for the Bedford firm Joule Unlimited Technologies but have not yet received their rDNA project registration paperwork. Joule's project is the derivation of ethanol from algae; they have demonstration plants in New Mexico and Texas.

Ms. Thompson said that a resident had asked her about the safety of town water. Ms. Porter said that the water is tested weekly and for several months has been found to be free and clear of any contaminants; she said that winter temperatures keep down the total coliform count; total coliform is a non-hazardous indicator of contamination. One main water line will be replaced and one is being relined in the coming year.

Mr. Kinzer pointed out a legal notice in the Minuteman that the town intends a taking of properties for non-payment of taxes; two of the properties involve current hoarding cases.

#### Director's Report:

Ms. Porter said two meetings were held in Bedford with the Shriver Center. The first meeting was with members of the Bedford Citizen Corps where training was provided on responding to the needs of people with disabilities during emergencies. The second meeting included Bedford stakeholders including representatives of the group homes, special needs collaboratives and schools, town department heads and emergency personnel around the table to discuss current emergency plans and identify any gaps. The group made a commitment to meet regularly.

Ms. Porter has asked that the Selectmen appoint her as an alternate commissioner to represent the town on the East Middlesex Mosquito Control Project since the current commissioner is sometimes unable to attend.

Ms. Porter is involved in seeking a risk assessment to determine if the proposed solution to the water quality problem at Springs Brook Park poses a risk to human health or the environment before it is implemented. She was asked by the Recreation Director to obtain a proposal from a risk assessor and is in the process of coordinating this.

She said that a pneumonia vaccination clinic will be held on March 14.

The population of families in transition at the Plaza Hotel has decreased; the reason is unknown.

Food Safety Awareness training will be provided for all food service permittees, including churches.

A collection of medical sharps will be held on April 27.

A video on hazardous waste collection is being prepared.

The next meetings of the Board will take place on April 8, May 6, and June 3, 2013.

Mr. Wormstead moved to adjourn the meeting; Ms. Thompson seconded the motion. Vote count: 4-0-1. The meeting was adjourned at 10:00 P.M.

  
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Anita Raj