

March 10, 2023

WINCHESTER BOARD OF HEALTH 2022 Annual Report

Board Members

- Ruth Trimarchi, Chair
- Dr. Greg Sawicki, Vice Chair
- Maureen Quill Pimentel

Director of Public Health

- Jen Murphy

Youth Volunteers (a pilot program initiated in 2022 with two non-voting student seats)

- Abigail Madden
- Raymond Yang

Charge

“The board of health shall be responsible for the formulation and enforcement of rules and regulations affecting the environment and the public health. It shall have all of the powers and duties given to boards of health under the constitution and general laws of the Commonwealth, and such additional powers and duties as may be authorized by the charter, by by-law or by other town meeting vote” (Winchester Home Rule Charter, Article 3 Section 3-5; [Massachusetts General Law Chapter 111, Sections 1 through 244](#))

Health Department – the Board of Health is an elected volunteer policy-setting. Annually, the Board appoints our ‘Agent’, the Winchester Director of Public Health, a hired professional public health expert and Town Staff member who implements all Federal, State and local regulations and policies for which the Board is responsible. Please see below for the Annual Report of the Health Department.

January-March - Covid19 continued to occupy much of the Board’s attention in the first months of 2022. Nation-wide political conflicts regarding face mask recommendations and mandates played out at the local level, with individuals from other States attending Winchester’s virtual Board of Health meetings, and individuals from other nearby Towns attending in-person meetings to express their opinions regarding this singular aspect of the pandemic

March - Greg Sawicki and Ruth Trimarchi, were elected to the Board of Health to join Maureen Pimentel who had been serving for one year, creating a relatively new Board of Health

April - to maintain orderly meetings while allowing public input and the business of the Board to be conducted, the Board elected to establish a [Public Comment Policy](#)

May – endorsed the “[Heat Response Strategy](#)” developed by the Sustainability Director

June – adopted Goals for the upcoming year. As the Covid pandemic demanded less of our time, the Board discussed appropriate ways to become more ‘proactive’ than ‘reactive’ with our charge. MGL and Winchester’s Home Rule Charter give local Boards of Health broad authority and responsibilities (Charge, above). Additionally, the [MA Blueprint for Public Health Excellence](#), [SAPHE 2.0 Act \(Bill H.5104\)](#) and the [MA Association of Health Board’s Legal Handbook](#) outline significant aspirational goals. The Board of Health had never before set formal goals so we agreed to start with four straight-forward goals: 1) Support the Health Department re Covid, mental health, climate change, tobacco/vaping, vaccination programs, mandatory inspections, clinics/screenings and all routine work; 2) Communications – Develop a robust BOH webpage to encourage communication, engagement and transparency; 3) Outreach to Boards, Committees and the community; 4) Support DEI related to health

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July - the Board Chair and Health Director met with members of the School Committee and the Superintendent to discuss a Covid Mitigation Plan for the start of the 2022 academic year

July-August – the Board considered the possibility of expanding the size of the Board of Health from 3 to 5 members. This would involve a change in the Town Charter. Information on the efficacy of various Board configurations was sought from multiple surrounding municipalities’ Boards of Health and Health Departments; as well as the [Metropolitan Area Planning Council Public Health Division](#) (MAPC); and the [Massachusetts Association of Public Health Boards](#) (MAHB). After discussion with the Town Manager and Select Board Chair, Board of Health members decided that, while expanding the Board size from 3 to 5 members might very well be in the best interests of delivering public health to Winchester, it is appropriate to first expand the Health Department Staff. Therefore, the Board committed to advocating for a Full Time Environmental Health Inspector position to be added to the Town Manager’s FY24 Budget. In 2019 a half-time Inspector was approved by Town meeting but has proven impossible to fill since appropriately qualified candidates were not applying for this part time position

August - established two Youth Volunteer non-voting seats as a pilot program and posted the opportunity on the Town website and at the High School; 5 students applied, applications were reviewed by the Board and 2 were chosen. The Youth Volunteers are currently engaged in research on Food Plans for the Health Department, conducting a Mental Health Survey at the HS, and worked at the MLK Day of Service

August - adopted a [Reproductive Health Rights Policy](#); translated it into Mandarin and Spanish

September - delivered two public education webinars on the [Impacts Of Climate Change On Public Health](#) during Winchester’s Climate Solutions Week. Co-sponsored “Health Begins at Home”, a panel event on [Affordable Housing](#), with the Network for Social Justice

October – groups seeking support from the Board of Health to bring Articles to Town Meeting:

- Leaf Blowers Management. George Wood and Rachel Whitehead of Quiet Clean Winchester gave a presentation. The Board unanimously voted to support this Article
- Accessory Dwelling Units. Diab Jerius, Planning Board, gave a presentation; Catherine Boyle and Felicity Tuttle, Housing Partnership, answered questions. Vote: 2-1 to support this Article
- Community Preservation Act. Maura Sullivan answered questions. No action on this Article

November – developed updated structure and content for the BOH webpage to expand beyond our Charge and BOH member names, and to make it more user-friendly

December – launched the new [Board of Health webpage](#); this will now continuously be updated as needed. Initiated longer range strategic planning, identifying tools to assess unmet community needs, prioritize actions and determine resources. Actions may include a systematic review of existing Regulations and Fees; developing a Recruiting and Orientation Packet for future BOH members; outreach to groups under-represented in regional and Town Community Needs Assessments; participating in and spearheading regional collaborative initiatives; targeting emerging environmental issues such as PFAS, rats, impacts of climate change on mental health; and other actions for building a healthier community.

Throughout the year, the Board of Health continued to release Public Health Advisories for Covid, Flu, RSV, Monkeypox, Cold Weather and Norovirus; updated Tobacco Regulations; authorized the Health Director to condemn buildings, deal with hoarding concerns, food establishment violations and set a Fee Schedule. Board of Health members handed out free Covid tests and various public health brochures at Town Day, Farmers Markets, MLK Day and Pride Fest, thereby continuing to reach out to the community and deliver on our charge to protect “the environment and the public health” for the people of Winchester.

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HEALTH DEPARTMENT 2022 Annual Report

Director of Public Health: Jennifer Murphy

Mission Statement:

The mission of the Health Department is to promote a healthy community by protecting the public's health and well-being through prevention and control of communicable disease and environmental health hazards.

Accomplishments – Calendar Year 2022

2022 was largely focused on the continuing response to COVID-19 in addition to non-COVID services:

1. Testing: Held 20 community PCR testing clinics at Town Hall for community and town employees; over 2900 tests administered. Over 15,000 home antigen tests were given out to community.
2. Held 18 COVID community vaccination clinics for all eligible age groups, conducted home visits and clinics targeted to school-aged students. 1642 total COVID vaccines administered
3. Collaborated with School Nurse Leader and Superintendent on COVID case management within the school district community.
4. Devised and implemented case management response protocol for follow up to overwhelming Omicron surge in community and schools to contain the spread of the virus through confirmed and self-reported case follow up.
5. Provided timely COVID risk communication messaging on mitigation strategies, recommended measures and restrictions, and regularly informed the community of important COVID data.

Non-COVID activities:

6. Adopted and implemented new local tobacco regulation and enforce new state tobacco/vape laws.
7. Worked to revamp the regional Medical Reserve Corps volunteer unit.
8. Updated the Winchester Emergency Dispensing Site plans for public health response.
9. Offered annual flu clinics:
 - With strong collaboration between the Health Department and School Department for the 14th year, flu clinics were held in each of the 8 school buildings during the school day. 1219 students received their flu vaccine that included both the shot and FluMist.
 - General Public Flu Clinics – 7 clinics, office appointments and home visits for a total of 1262 flu vaccines administered.
10. In addition to holding monthly meetings of the Winchester Coalition for a Safer Community (WCSC), the Community Health Program Manager (CHPM) arranged for the following programs (highlights):
 - Produced and mailed a flyer with Mental Health resources to every household and created an accompanying Mental Health Wellness resource website.
 - Presentation to WHS juniors and parents by Henry Cunnane on his journey from substance use disorder to recovery.
 - "Helping Kids Manage Friendship and Academic Ups and Downs with Resilience," presentation by licensed clinical counselor, Phyllis Fligel to community.
11. Offered 2 Household Hazardous Waste Days in collaboration with DPW. Spring and Fall events collected a total of 24,812 lbs of hazardous waste.
12. Held 2 medication/sharps disposal days in collaboration with the Winchester Police Department, U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency, and WHS volunteers. Continued to collect meds and sharps 24/7 at kiosk in police station lobby. Total sharps collected = 789 lbs and Total Meds Collected = 748 lbs.
13. Conducted bladder cancer screening for current and retired Winchester Fire Fighters.

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14. Provided TB screenings and directly observed therapy throughout the year.
15. Administered routine immunizations for children in need and continued to provide shingles vaccination to eligible residents.
16. Followed up and provided case management on 236 communicable disease cases, including monkeypox, that were non-COVID.
17. Routinely inspected and permitted: all seasonal and permanent food service activities, camps for children, semi-public pools, as well as reviewed and approved plans for new food establishments and all Title V submittals.
18. Contracted for mosquito control and surveillance of West Nile Virus with the Eastern Middlesex Mosquito Control District.
19. Offered subsidized tick analysis program for residents with support from Winchester Hospital/Lahey.
20. Contracted with U.S. Wildlife Service for Canada geese control.
21. Process transfer station permits for all eligible low-income residents.

Goals for calendar year 2023:

1. Continue communicable disease response measures and case management, including COVID-19, as needed.
2. Offer COVID vaccinations for all eligible age groups and continue to give away home antigen test kits and supplies to the community.
3. Utilize opioid settlement funding for community mental health resources and services and substance use disorder prevention and harm reduction.
4. Increase outreach and education to community for rodent control, tick and mosquito-borne disease prevention and other vectors especially as they relate to climate change.
5. Enhance Health Department website updates including additional online permitting and payment.
6. Continue to offer immunizations for the general public including: annual flu clinics, pneumonia, tetanus and shingle clinics, as well as blood pressure and TB screenings.
7. Continue to offer vaccination programs for children including mandatory childhood vaccines and HPV for HS seniors.
8. Hold school-based flu immunization clinic program in every school in collaboration with the School Department for the 15th year.
9. Carry out all mandatory inspection and permitting requirements: food service, housing, pools, camps for children, wells, beach, Title V, etc.
10. Contract with U.S. Wildlife Service for Canada geese control and contract with the Eastern Middlesex Mosquito Control District for mosquito control activities.
11. Collaborate with police department to provide for medication and sharps kiosk collection in addition to holding two annual household hazardous waste and medication/sharps collection days.

Communicable Disease Surveillance Cases - 2022

| | | |
|---------------------------------|------|----------------------|
| Babesiosis | 2 | |
| Campylobacteriosis | 5 | |
| Group B streptococcus | 1 | |
| Haemophilus Influenza | 1 | |
| Hepatitis B | 5 | |
| Hepatitis C | 8 | |
| Human Granulocytic Anaplasmosis | 1 | |
| Influenza (lab diagnosed) | 166 | |
| Lyme Disease | 34 | |
| Malaria | 1 | |
| Monkeypox | 3 | |
| Mumps | 2 | |
| *Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) | 3040 | COVID-19 Deaths = 18 |

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| Salmonellosis | 2 |
| Shigellosis | 2 |
| Yersiniosis | 1 |
| Varicella | 2 |
| Total | **3276 |

* Does not include test results from home tests.

**This number reflects confirmed, probable, suspect and revoked cases.

Respectfully submitted on 3/10/2023

Ruth Trimarchi, Chair
Dr. Greg Sawicki, Vice-Chair
Maureen Pimentel