

# Blackstone Valley Partnership for Public Health

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## MINUTES

January 25, 2023 – 11am

*This meeting was held remotely under the provisions allowed by Acts (2021) Chapter 20, An Act relative to extending specific COVID-19 measures adopted during the state of emergency (<https://malegislature.gov/Laws/SessionLaws/Acts/2021/Chapter20>) approved on June 16, 2021*

Attendees: Connor Robichaud– CMRPC; Jack McLellan – Mendon; Jeanne Gniadek and Neil Vaidya – Northbridge; Erin Hightower– Uxbridge; Kristin Harris, and Agnieszka Podstawka – Douglas, Diane Tiernan – Upton, Dan Markman, Jack Sullivan, and Deb Vescera – BVPPH

### 1. Approval of Minutes

Jeanne made a motion, seconded by Erin, to approve the minutes of the December 13, 2022, BVPPH meetings. The motion to include this adjustment and approve the minutes passed unanimously.

### 2. Inspection Staff Update

Retake for five people on their ServSafe is coming up, and finalizing the restaurant newsletter – how to deal with food waste given the new DEP maximums on food waste. Jeanne has shared their weekly reports and the February Calendar. Danielle is in housing court.

### 3. Public Health Nurse Update

COVID, Flu, and RSV numbers are still high. Deb attended the CHNA 6 meeting to develop relationships and participate in their activities. There is a new mother drive coming to Northbridge. They are focused on homelessness, especially youth homelessness.

Franklin Vet Services has partnered with Mass Hire for a career fair.

Deb has coordinated a new Hoarding Task Force for Uxbridge.

We are planning new baby visits in Douglas, reaching out by postcards through the Town Clerk.

### 4. Epidemiologist Updates

Jack is working on year-end PowerPoints and analysis. I will create presentations for BVPPH as a whole and each town individually. Demographic breakdowns, vax, booster status. Comparing 2022 to 2023 is challenging because over 90% of testing is now done at home. We're looking at numbers that reflect the big picture but are not precise. There is still an opportunity to sign onto the wastewater analysis – Douglas and Uxbridge are the only two right now.

The rural vax initiative for Douglas, Mendon, and Upton may allow towns to request state-run clinics to give gift cards to those vaccinated.

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Jack also noted that reinfection within 90 days is increasingly common. PCR testing can detect a prior infection, so antigen testing is recommended.

## **5. Shared Service Coordinator Update**

Connor reported that the Public Health Excellence Grant that funds the two Regional Health Inspectors is on track to be spent down by the end of the fiscal year, with a \$10-15k reserve in case of an urgent need. These are expected to renew for FY24.

Connor also reported on the Contact Tracing Grant that funds the Public Health Nurse and Epidemiologist. On their current course, Connor expects BVPPH funds to carry beyond the initial FY23 grant term through all of FY24, assuming DPH allows this extension as they have indicated they will. Connor does not expect additional funding for this program.

If there are funds for year-end purchases, Jeanne suggested a Community Resource Guide. She gave examples from Northborough and Grafton.

## **6. Public Health Nurse annual salary increase.**

Diane made a motion to give Deb the maximum 3% salary increase based on her work performance, and Erin seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

## **7. Unanticipated business**

There is some concern about the towns of Blackstone and Millville lacking work for the inspectors when they come. To best utilize resources, the group suggested sending a notice to those towns so they can notify Jeanne when they need services instead of automatically sending them to towns that may not have work for them.

## **8. Adjourn**

The next meeting will be Feb 16<sup>th</sup> at noon.

The meeting adjourned at 11:58 am.