



## **Acton Board of Health**

Meeting Minutes

April 4, 2023

7:30 PM.

VIRTUAL PARTICIPANTS VIA ZOOM

### **Present:**

Virtual Members Present: Mark Conoby, Dr. William Taylor, William McInnis, Dr. Rekha Singh and Michael Kreuze.

Virtual Associate Members Present: None

Virtual Staff Present: Sheryl Ball-Health Director

Others Present: Himaja Nagireddy, Select Board Liaison, Kim Kastens, Alissa Nicol, Mary Lynn Miller, Timothy Deschamps, Matt Mostoller and Alexandra Wahlstrom.

### **1. Opening**

Chairman – Mark Conoby opened the meeting at 7:31 P.M. A script was read that was provided by the Town stating why the meetings are virtual and this meeting of the Board of Health was called to order.

### **2. Regular Business**

#### **Health Director Update**

Ms. Ball informed the Board that the Select Board approved the proposed energy storage at 100 Discovery Way with conditions last evening and the vote was 4-1. The Board asked about those conditions and Ms. Ball stated that she has not seen them yet. The Board also questioned who the enforcer will be for those conditions and it was stated that it should be the Planning and Health Divisions.

Ms. Ball stated there are two documents in extra information this evening and one is from the Superintendent of Schools, Peter Light, which provides some background on the proposed location of the energy storage facility at the Boardwalk campus, located at 75 Spruce Street. Superintendent Light stated that the battery storage provides the school with numerous benefits including, achieving their goal of net zero by using the renewable energy these would provide along with other financial benefits. Superintendent Light also spoke to how the proposed location of the battery storage was chosen, citing existing infrastructure and its compliance with codes. Ms. Ball stated that when the Board met about this Hazardous Materials Control application on a previous agenda, the Board identified some concerns which were expressed to the applicant after that meeting. Those concerns included the proposed location and this memo was sent to the Board as a result of that concern. The Board stated that they expect this



hazardous materials control permit to come back before the Board and we can discuss this further then.

The Board also stated that we asked the applicant at 100 Discovery Way to outfit our fire fighters with any needed equipment that we currently do not have that may be needed in the event of a fire scenario at an energy storage site but questioned if that onus should be taken on by all proposed battery storage facilities and wondered if an account could be set up for payments. Ms. Ball stated that a gift account could be created to address this need that other vendors could utilize that gift account.

Ms. Ball stated that the second extra information in the Board packet actually speaks to conductivity that relates to the Acton Water District update and asked the Board to discuss then. The Board agreed.

Ms. Ball also stated that the State of Massachusetts signed an extension to allow Boards and Committees the ability to meet remotely through March of 2025.

#### **Nursing – Update**

Ms. Salamon was unable to attend this evening. Ms. Ball stated that Acton had 25 cases of COVID in the month of March and so far in April we have 3 reportable cases. Ms. Ball also stated that both long term facilities are not reporting current cases.

#### **Acton Water District – Water Quality Update**

Matthew Mostoller, District Manager and Alexandra Wahlstrom, Environmental Analyst were present from the Acton Water District to discuss the water quality of Acton's drinking water especially related to PFAS and Sodium.

Ms. Wahlstrom stated that when the Acton Water District sees higher results of sodium they make a concerted effort to notify vulnerable populations including the Council on Aging, Acton Nursing, Acton Medical and Emerson Hospitals so those needing low sodium diets are aware that our levels are high. Ms. Wahlstrom stated that the range of sodium from 2007-present has been between 10-115 milligrams per liter. Mr. Mostoller stated that there are a lot of factors that could be raising these numbers, including the Acton Water District use of sodium fluoride and sodium hyper chlorate as well as deicing chemicals both the State and the Acton DPW use on their roadways to keep them clear of ice. Mr. Mostoller also stated that homeowners can do their part by properly storing deicing chemicals and limit usage. In addition, some homeowners have reverse osmosis systems or water softeners that could be contributing to this as well and both are not allowed to be discharged to septic systems per Title 5. These systems are allowed to be discharged to a dry well and the Board asked what the difference was as both a septic system and a dry well discharge ends up in the same water source. Mr. Mostoller stated that the discharge from a reverse osmosis system to a septic system can cause the septic not to function properly by upsetting the microbial activity and septic systems are typically installed in faster draining soils which could result in the discharge getting to the groundwater faster than utilizing



a dry well which is not designed to be in those faster draining soils. The Board also noted that the raw water results have higher sodium levels than the finished water and Ms. Wahlstrom stated that's because they blend their water with a variety of their wells which yield lower sodium results. Mr. Mostoller stated that the town commissioned Comprehensive Environmental, Inc (CEI) who identified some ongoing conductivity measures that both Green Acton and CEI have sampled and these reports show areas with higher sodium levels. The Board asked if they specifically blend wells with low sodium levels with the higher sodium levels. Mr. Mostoller stated no but they do look at where the higher concentrations are coming from to see if there are measures to help get these levels reduced like ensuring deicing chemicals are stored properly. Mr. Mostoller also spoke about going through the Mass DOT (Department of Transportation) to establish low salt areas but Acton did not meet the criteria. Mr. Mostoller stated to be accepted into this program with the DOT you need to monitor for 10 years and then the State could take action. It has been over 10 years since asking DOT and finding out Acton did not qualify so it was suggested that the Town look into this again. Mr. Mostoller stated that their wells are dug in the over burden but they did dig some bedrock wells and found the sodium levels to be fairly similar in both water sources. The Board asked if higher use of water and draw from the aquifers contributes to these levels but Mr. Mostoller stated that the Town is not really drawing an increase in water over the years. Dr. Kim Kastens mentioned that there is another memo that is dated after the one in the Board's packet comparing the more recent data to that of Green Acton and provides some more detailed recommendations as to what can be done to help address this issue. She asked Ms. Ball to make sure the Board has this. The public also asked why the town self-serve salt shed is uncovered. Ms. Ball stated she would look into this.

Mr. Mostoller also spoke about the PFAS levels that the Town is experiencing. Mr. Mostoller stated that all of our water is currently meeting the Massachusetts standard for PFOS of 20 parts per trillion for the combined 6 compounds and we've made a lot of progress from when we first started sampling back in 2020. This reduction is due to blending, increased output from some wells, changes made from waste handling practices and adjustments to the Districts treatment processes. The District is also in a pilot treatment process with the State to help address our PFAS levels. Mr. Mostoller stated that they operate 24 wells and the range of PFAS runs in the single digits to 90 ppt and stressed that this is a community wide issue as private wells are also showing high numbers. Mr. Mostoller stated that we need to all do our part and help get these numbers reduced and suggested that we send out educational brochures to ensure of that the public and businesses are aware of items that may be contributing to these numbers. Mr. Mostoller also mentioned that rain water is known to contain PFAS. In order to treat our water for PFAS it requires approximately 20 million dollars to make these improvements and it was also suggested that we look into funding sources to help private well owners and also work on ensuring these residents are educated. It was also stated that we look into other potential water sources, i.e. MWRA. The Board asked what they levels are in Nagog Pond and it was stated around 10 ppt. The public asked about deviations in our PFAS numbers and Mr. Mostoller stated that yes there are deviations. Dr. Kim Kastens, Pope Road, stated she is on a private well and had her well tested for PFAS and stated that it was very expensive and the results are difficult for the average home owner to interpret and suggested that we aid by sending these 100+ private well water owners a packet of information to help assist them. It was also noted that the DEP had



funding for private well owners to do testing but Acton was not chosen to participate since there are communities that have more private wells than public water and those communities were chosen.

### **Central Mass. Mosquito Control Project (CMMCP) – Update from Timothy Deschamps**

Mr. Deschamps was present before the Board to discuss plans for the upcoming mosquito season. Mr. Deschamps stated that they expect an average season this year due to rain water being normal to below normal this year. Mr. Deschamps stated that they are currently working on their larval control program using certified organic certified bacterial products and will do so through the end of April. Mr. Deschamps stated that in May when those spring species will be emerging the surveillance program will begin by collecting adult mosquito samples for testing of viruses from our catch basins. Mr. Deschamps also stated that are beginning to see some mosquitoes in other towns test positive for Jamestown Candy Virus which they hope to work with UMass Amherst to do some testing for as currently Acton has not identified a mosquito with this virus. It was stated that this virus typically has mild symptoms. Mr. Deschamps stated that he will be working with Health at this year's hazardous waste collection day by collecting used tires. The Board asked what we can assist with and Mr. Deschamps stated continued excellent communication with them.. The Board asked if Acton has a link to CMMCP website and Ms. Ball stated she would double check as this website is a good resource for our homeowners. The Board also asked if their program targets ticks and Mr. Deschamps says their processes help but they are not currently targeting ticks but hope to someday. The Board thanked Mr. Deschamps for the work they do and for sharing with us this evening.

### **Proposed Town Warrant Article 40 – Independent Sewer Commissioners**

Ms. Alissa Nicol was present this evening to present to the Board a non-binding resolution warrant article that invite the Select Board to determine the best option for conducting an objective analysis through a working group, a study or a consultant to help determine whether or not the Select Board should remain as the Sewer Commissioners or move this responsibility to an independent group. This proposed article does not determine what the best approach is but suggests that if there are costs associated with this proposal that any funding could come from a grant. Ms. Nicol stated that the Select Board functions as Sewer Commissioners but believes that very few Board members have the financial and technical knowledge required to administer those duties due to their focus on many other duties and obligations which limit the meeting time devoted to Sewer Commissioner business. Ms. Nicol also stated that these Select Board priorities could also be a conflict, as the Sewer Commissioners are bound to serve the interests of the sewer district rate payers and the Select Board members are concerned with the needs of all residents. Ms. Nicol mentioned she would like to consider having an independent body, acting as sewer commissioners, or a sewer committee to advise the Select Board, or even a structural change whereby the Sewer Commission business is taken up more regularly at a dedicated meeting. Ms. Nicol believes that this would increase opportunities for public engagement, and possibly result in better management of the plant and system.





Ms. Nicol also mentioned the failed attempt to sewer the Spencer Tuttle Flint proposed expansion which failed to get the 2/3 required majority at town meeting, and the more recent proposed West Acton sewer expansion where 75% of voters at town meeting voted no. After that failed attempt there was talk about restructuring the financing model to make it more equitable for users but that discussion has not taken place. Ms. Nicol is also concerned with the financial investment which include the rehabilitation currently underway, significant upgrades and future expansion being explored including the 40B Powder mill and the Great Road corridor projects. Ms. Nicol asked the Board for concerns, comments and support of this proposed Article. The Board discussed this and stated that have no concerns with this proposal but believe that this has been well studied in the past and even some of the Board of Health current members were involved very extensively in the beginning so the Board gave no opinion to this proposed article.

#### **Minutes – March 7, 2023**

On a motion made by Dr. Taylor, seconded by Mr. Kreuze, the Board unanimously voted to accept the minutes of March 7, 2023. The Chair took roll call and the vote was 5-0.

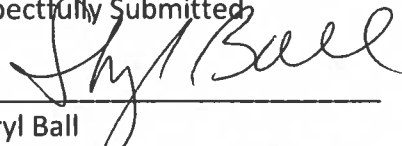
#### **4. Adjournment**


On a motion made by Dr. Taylor, seconded by Mr. McInnis, the Board unanimously voted to adjourn at 9:41 PM. The Chair took roll call and all were in favor.

#### **Documents and Exhibits Used During this Meeting;**

- Town of Acton script for boards and committees opening meeting
- Board of Health agenda
- Acton Water District- Water testing results for sodium and PFAS, Conductivity report and Green Acton comments
- Citizen Petitions – Sewer commissioner, composting required and Renters articles
- Minutes from 3-7-23
- Extra Information-Letter from Superintendent Light - Nexamp proposal for 75 Spruce St

Respectfully Submitted,

  
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Sheryl Ball  
Acton Board of Health

  
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Mark Conoby, Chairman  
Acton Board of Health