



TOWN OF SHREWSBURY

Richard D. Carney Municipal Office Building
100 Maple Avenue
Shrewsbury, Massachusetts 05145

Date: October 20, 2023
To: Board of Health
From: Jennie Fishman, Chair
Re: Board of Health Meeting Minutes
ATTENDANCE: Jennie Fishman, Dr. George Abraham

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Central MA Regional Public Health Alliance (CMRPHA):
Soloe Dennis, Director of Public Health – in person
Ian Wong, Deputy Director of Public Health – in person
Amelia Houghton, Chief of Public Health Nursing – remote
Karina Scott, Shared Service Coordinator - remote
Cherry Tangri, Public Health Prevention Specialist (Tobacco) - in person
Emma Stefanski, Regional Public Health Coordinator – in person

YATCO Energy:
Janepher Kyazze – remote
Barry Ahern, Khadijeh Yatim, Tarek Yatim, Donald O’Neil,
Mike Jacobs – in person

Steve Venincasa – Shrewsbury – in person

Massachusetts Association of Health Boards (MAHB):
Cheryl Sbarra, Executive Director and Senior Staff Attorney - remote

NOT IN ATTENDANCE: Karyn Rossacci, Board of Health member

The next meeting of the Board of Health will be held on **FRIDAY, October 20, 2023** at 8:00 a.m. in the Board of Selectmen’s Meeting Room located at the Richard D. Carney Municipal Building, 100 Maple Avenue, Shrewsbury, Massachusetts 01545, at which time and place the Board of Health will consider the following agenda:

- 1. Call to order.** The meeting was called to order at 8:03 a.m. by Jennie Fishman.
- 2. Review and approval of Minutes from the September 22, 2023 Board of Health Meeting. (taken out of order)**
On a motion made by Dr. Abraham and seconded by Jennie Fishman and on a roll call vote; Dr. Abraham, aye; and Jennie Fishman, aye, the Board of Health voted to approve the Minutes from the September 22, 2023 Board of Health Meeting. Approved 2 - 0.
- 3. Review and Discuss the number of Tobacco Retailer permits allowed in Shrewsbury – requested by Donald J. O’Neil, Esquire on behalf of YATCO Energy.**
Mr. O’Neil addressed the Board. He is an attorney from the City of Worcester and represents YATCO Energy. On behalf of his client, he asked the Board to reconsider the cap on tobacco retailer permits and possibly increase the number. YATCO Energy is looking to add a location in Shrewsbury to operate as a gas and convenience store. Other YATCO Energy locations within the area offer tobacco products. He asked if the Board could give new businesses coming into Town a consideration when setting the cap on tobacco permit. He felt that it is creating an unfair advantage for existing businesses and discourages building in Shrewsbury. Customers come from all over along this stretch of commercial zoned area where YATCO Energy would like to be located. He feels the number of tobacco retailers permits currently available are too low for commercial-zoned areas in Town. There would be a significant loss of revenue.

Question: It is your client’s position solely a financial business interest and not public health?

Answer: Adults have right to make their own choices and it is up to them to decide whether to smoke or not.

In addition, businesses pay taxes, generating revenue for the Town.

The Board of Health's role is to promote and protect public health.

Question: Where is the proposed location?

Answer: 193 Hartford Turnpike.

Question: What is the percentage of children under the age of eighteen (18) in Shrewsbury's population?

Answer: Will have to research that number.

Question: How many tobacco retailer licenses are in that area?

Answer: seven (7), eight (8) or nine (9).

Cheryl Sbarra, Executive Director and Senior Staff Attorney for the MAHB addressed the Board. Her agency provides legal education to three hundred and fifty one (351) Board of Health in the Commonwealth of MA. Tobacco is the only consumer product cause of death. The density strategy is used in many communities in MA. The long-term strategy is to reduce access to the number of tobacco retailer permits. It is true that towns grow. When the Shrewsbury Board of Health originally capped the number of tobacco retailer permits, it was a higher number. The purpose behind this policy is to assure the number is commensurate in all municipalities, not base the issuance of tobacco retailer permits per capital. When businesses come into any municipality, it is their responsibility to see what the regulations are in place, if any. Within the last year, a different business was asking that the Board consider increasing the number of permits. A Public Hearing took place and the Board voted to have the cap remain at twenty (20). No increase to the number of permits.

At this time, the Board thanked everyone for attending the meeting and will take YATCO Energy's request under advisement.

4. Review and Discuss Coronavirus / COVID-19 Update.

Amelia Houghton provided the Board with an update. From a public health nurse perspective, there weren't any COVID-19 clusters reported this month. The Town of Shrewsbury hosted a Flu and COVID-19 vaccination clinic. The Arbovirus reporting has ended for mosquitoes; however, people should still be cautious when entering wooded areas. Ticks are also still a threat at this time of year.

Dr. Abraham noted that there is a new COVID-19 variant called HV.1 that is part of the Omicron family. New variants continue to develop. Vaccines are still effective against the new variant. Regarding Influenza (flu), the numbers are low at this time. It peaks from December through March. The numbers are expected to increase during that timeframe.

Question: Are the COVID-19 Rapid tests effective against detecting new variants?

Answer: No updated information published regarding the COVID-19 Rapid test kits but there was clarification around the expiration dates.

5. Review and Discuss Updates from the Central Massachusetts Regional Public Health Alliance (CMRPHA).

Emma Stefanski provided the Board with an update since the last meeting held last month. In total, there were eighty five (85) inspections completed. The majority were routine and the follow-up on complaints received. One food establishment had a small kitchen fire but is back up and running; one (1) complaint about the use of plastic bags; one (1) food-borne illness investigation and one (1) general sanitation of a food establishment. She will continue to work with all to ensure compliance with the food code.

Question: Do we require folks to wear masks when cooking?

Answer: There is not anything in the food code that says it is a requirement. Each food establishment must have an employee sick policy in place and there are procedures for when those events happen. Most food establishments prefer that their employees stay home when feeling ill.

6. Review meeting schedule. The next scheduled Board of Health meeting will be held on Thursday, November 9, 2023 at 6:30 p.m. in the Board of Selectmen's Meeting Room located at the Richard D. Carney Municipal Building, 100 Maple Avenue, Shrewsbury, MA 01545.

7. Adjourn. On a motion made by Dr. Abraham and seconded by Jennie Fishman and on a roll call vote, Dr. Abraham, aye and Jennie Fishman aye, the Board of Health voted to adjourn the meeting at 8:21 a.m. Approved 2 - 0.

Correspondence:

