

Board of Health

Meeting Minutes

October 15, 2025

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TOWN OF LUDLOW

Members Present: Kelly Lamas, Chair; Antonio Tavares, Secretary

Also Present: Paulina Matusik; Health Director

Meeting was called to order at 4:32 PM by Ms. Lamas and the Pledge of Allegiance was performed.

Monthly Business:

Mr. Tavares signed the meeting minutes from September 11, 2025. Mr. Tavares made a motion to approve the meeting minutes of September 11, 2025, seconded by Ms. Lamas. All in favor 2-0.

Actions/Correspondence:

Ms. Matusik discussed with the Board, Lease of Commercial Kitchens, which is brand new, and noted that their department does not currently have this. She handed the Board copies of a draft application, a draft guideline document and a guidance form to be approved by the Board. The reason Ms. Matusik is presenting this to the Board is because this is a requirement in the Food Code. The Food Code identifies Commercial Kitchens as food preparation facilities that provide space and access to professional equipment on a lease or rental basis. She noted that there has been an increase in Mobile Food operations in Massachusetts within the last few years. The Health Department has received inquiries from residents looking to operate out of leased commercial kitchens. As of now the Health Department does not know who leases their kitchen or to whom and by requiring them to have a permit, this would give them this information and it would allow the Health Inspector to do inspections. She also explained who might be a lessee, a mobile food operation utilizing an established kitchen for food storage, food preparation, and ware washing or an individual looking to operate a food related business without the overhead of their own facility. Mr. Tavares asked, "If someone is renting a kitchen, it's not their own place?" Ms. Matusik explained that instead of getting a permit for a residential kitchen they would rent a leased commercial space allowing them to be able to do more. On the application, she is recommending a tiered fee schedule, but the Board can decide if they would want to do a one fee schedule or the tiered section. The reason this was put together is that given the money tendered and/or exchanged for the use of the facility and the equipment, the fee schedule is to hold businesses accountable without barring a financial imposition. Mr. Tavares wanted to know if he was not going to use his kitchen anymore and wanted to lease it to someone else, what would be needed? Ms. Matusik explained that he would still need a permit for his business and who he leased the kitchen to would also need a permit for their business because they are utilizing his kitchen along with the required documentation and they would still need to meet the food code. Mr. Tavares made a motion to

approve the application, guidance and the tiered fee schedule, seconded by Ms. Lamas. All in favor 2-0.

Ms. Matusik handed the Board draft letters to increase the permit fee from \$80.00 to \$100.00 for Residential Kitchens. She noted there are a couple of reasons for the increase including waving the temporary food event permit for Ludlow residential kitchens only in an effort to support their home base businesses. They are also suggesting a \$20.00 increase because it better aligns with their retail food establishments under the two hundred square feet. Ms. Matusik asked Ms. Quinn to look up pricing comparable in other communities near them for residential kitchens.

- Belchertown - \$100.00
- Palmer - \$100.00
- Westfield - \$100.00
- Springfield - \$100.00
- Northampton - \$150.00 minimum plus occupancy and square footage
- East Longmeadow - \$200.00

Ms. Matusik explained that last year they had a residential kitchen that should have been permitted as retail food because they were selling wholesale and they were not cooking in their home, which means they were permitted incorrectly over the years. This would align if a residential kitchen decided to rent out a kitchen and become a retail food operation and this would also align with other towns. Mr. Tavares made a motion accept and approve the new permit fee from \$80.00 to \$100.00 for licensed residential kitchens as of January 1, 2026, seconded by Ms. Lamas. All in favor 2-0.

Ms. Matusik wanted to remind everyone that the permit renewal deadline is approaching, and the renewal letters will be mailed out on October 27, 2025, and that all renewals will need to be submitted by December 22, 2025. After December 31, 2025, all permits will expire, and the 50% late fee will go into effect.

Ms. Lamas mentioned that all permit fees go to the operating town budget and does not go directly to the Health Department.

Ms. Lamas explained that as of now there are two members of the Board because at their last meeting, Ms. DeSantis resigned and expressed that she will be missed. The Board of Health Appointment has been posted by Human Resources, they are collecting all letters of interest, and the letters are due by Friday, October 17, 2025. Ms. Lamas has been communicating with Mr. Strange, Town Administrator, regarding questions that she has and about what to discuss during the appointment discussion. Ms. Lamas created a list of Board of Health questions for Mr. Tavares to review and to see if there is anything he would like to add. Once he has approved the questions, they will forward them to the Select Board for review and to see if they would like to add anything. Ms. Lamas explained that the Board of Health appointment is to finish Ms. DeSantis's term which will run until March of 2026 at which point that person can decide if they want to run for election and there could be others that want to run as well. The meeting will be held on October 20, 2025, at

6:00 PM and as the Board of Health Chair, Ms. Lamas will facilitate the meeting. This meeting is being held within thirty days in hopes of filling the appointment so that there will only be one meeting without the third Board Member. Ms. Lamas discussed with Mr. Tavares that both will be present at the meeting and the Select Board Members of four, she was thinking that each of the Select Board Members could ask one question, and they could start and end with the questions because they are familiar with their role and responsibilities. Mr. Tavares agreed. Ms. Lamas asked Mr. Strange what the process is for voting and Mr. Strange explained the law requires a majority not a polarity and assuming all Board Members attend which is the plan, the agenda will be posted to offer the opportunity for remote because Mr. Alves may or may not be present, if it is posted remotely than he can vote. Assuming all six Board Members attend, the appointee would require at least four votes of the six voting members. If no candidate receives a majority vote the members would continue to deliberate and revote. If there is a tie, they would have to deliberate and revote. Ms. Lamas also thought it would be appropriate to give each candidate 15-20 minutes, Mr. Tavares agreed and noted that they will not know how many candidates there are until Friday, October 17, 2025. Ms. Lamas referenced Chapter 111: Section 36 in the questions and noted that she will be sending the Select Board information on this, so they are aware and understand what it means along with information on Public Health Excellence (Shared Services).

Ms. Matusik explained that because they are a two-member Board all votes need to be unanimous in order to move any policies, procedures and decisions moving forward because they are the entire board and once the third position is filled it will change the dynamic.

Mr. Tavares wanted to discuss the hours of operation regarding the Health Department because when he went to the Town Hall on Thursday, September 18, 2025, the Health Department was closed between 9-11 am. He wanted to know why the Health Department would close during business hours when on Friday the Town Hall closes at 12:00 PM? Mr. Tavares thought that whenever the office is closed, it should be approved by Mr. Strange, the Town Administrator.

Ms. Matusik explained that the Health Department follows the Town of Ludlow schedule, the Health Department does not need permission from the Select Board or the Town Administrator to close but she does notify their office that the Health Department will be closed. Ms. Matusik oversees the day-to-day operations and understands why Mr. Tavares would want the office to be open for the residents. Mr. Tavares was under the impression that all the departments go through the Town Administrator. Ms. Matusik explained to Mr. Tavares that the Health Department and the Board of Health are standalone departments and do not answer to the Select Board or to the Town Administrator, but she does make other departments aware when she does close the office and does put it on Facebook to make the residents aware. Ms. Matusik asked the Board if they would like her to follow a different process and to let her know what that process would be.

Mr. Tavares asked Ms. Matusik if she should make the Board aware when she closes the Health Department during business hours? Ms. Matusik explained to Mr. Tavares that when she closes the office it is under day-to-day operations, and the Board does not operate on a day-to-day basis. She did let Mr. Tavares know that when she closes the office that she would send an email to the Board

or make a phone call but noted again that this does fall under the day-to-day operations that the Board Members do not get involved with and shouldn't.

Mr. Tavares feels that the residents/taxpayers of Ludlow are paying for the employees when the department is closed. Ms. Matusik explained to Mr. Tavares that the Town Hall will be closed on Friday, December 5, 2025 from 8:00 – 12:00 PM for Mental Health and feels that one of the things the Town Administrator is looking to do is to promote positive mental health well being and she feels that sometimes this is done outside of the office which she feels is important. Dealing with the public is hard, noting that their department deals with a lot of complaints and angry residents. She notes that the Health Department is not very well liked because their department receives complaints and when the complaints are investigated, correction order letters are mailed. And getting outside of the office is important by bringing staff morale up and to sustain employees to want to come to work and stay at work and does feel that it aligns with the vision of what the Town Administrator is looking to do. She explained that other departments do things differently and that's okay, but she is working hard to do what she feels is best for her department. Ms. Matusik also noted that the busiest time in the Health Department is generally lunch hours between 11:00 – 1:00 PM and they are always open during that time. She does take into consideration when she does close the department, noting it is very rare. Sometimes there are emergencies and she may need to close the door, especially if the department is short-staffed or if she needs to go out to perform a final inspection, she does the best she can to notify people.

Ms. Lamas suggested that going forward to send each Board Member an email as to why the office will be closed and noted that the department does not do this often and felt this was the first time. Mr. Tavares also feels that this will help to answer questions when residents question the Board as to why the department may be closed. Ms. Lamas feels that from her perspective, sometimes the departments need to do team building and close the department for a little bit, it does not happen often and noted that this is the third time that Town Hall will be closed for a Mental Health Event that the Town Administrator is doing for the employees. She also feels that building team engagement in any department is important because of attrition, we need to keep staff and the staff are doing great, noting it's hard to find people to work everywhere.

Mr. Tavares wanted to know if everyone from the Health Department went to the event. Ms. Matusik explained that the event was a going away get together for their Social Worker and did not want to speak more about the reason but did let Mr. Tavares know that they could have a private conversation after the meeting for clarification. Ms. Matusik explained that not everyone attended. Ms. Lamas explained that it has to do with personal matters and he should speak with Ms. Matusik privately.

Ms. Matusik asked for clarification if the Board wants her to email the Board, post it on Facebook and is there a timeframe? Ms. Lamas asked Ms. Matusik to continue what she is doing for townwide and send an email to each Board Member explaining why she is closing the department.

Ms. Matusik updated the Board with the monthly Health Department updates. October is domestic violence awareness month and explained that on September 30, 2025, Ludlow High School hosted

their first mental health event by promoting wellness and providing resources for all students. The Ludlow Health Department participated by leading the "Rise Up" against partner violence table. At the table, health department staff and high school students shared information on educational materials about healthy vs. unhealthy relationships, strategies for supporting friends and ways to prioritize mental health and self-care. Students received an educational flyer that was created by Ms. McMurray which included a lot of local and national resources, self-care activities and tools for recognizing and addressing partner violence. Ms. Matusik felt that this event was a great event because it was for students, by students. The students were engaged and there was a lot of communication.

Ms. Matusik let the Board know that the Health Department is doing homebound and in-office Flu Vaccines. The in-office Flu Vaccines can be scheduled for Tuesday evenings and Friday mornings. To schedule an in-office appointment, please call the Health Department at 413-566-5600 x 1271. She also explained there were two Flu Clinics held at the Senior Center on September 15, 2025, with seventy-four residents vaccinated and on September 22, 2025, with forty-five residents vaccinated totaling one hundred and thirty-five residents that have been vaccinated.

Ms. Matusik noted that all homebound Public Health Nursing services resumed on October 6, 2025.

Ms. Matusik updated the Board with the monthly Shared Services updates. There is an upcoming CPR class being held on Thursday, October 23, 2025, at 10:30 AM for anyone that would need renewal of their choke saver or interested in First Aid CPR/AED training.

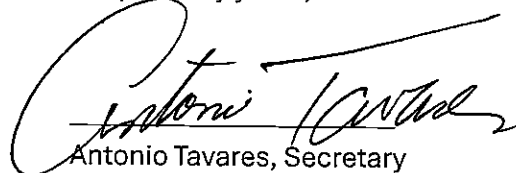
The Social Worker position has been posted, and two applications have been received with one interview scheduled for Thursday, October 23, 2025.

The legal notices were reviewed by the Board.

The next Board of Health meeting will be on Thursday, November 13, 2025, at 4:30 PM in the Select Board Conference Room.

Mr. Tavares made a motion to adjourn the meeting on October 15, 2025, at 5:03 PM, seconded by Ms. Lamas. All in favor 2-0.

Respectfully yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Antonio Tavares", is written over a horizontal line. The signature is fluid and cursive.

Antonio Tavares, Secretary