

Board of Health

Meeting Minutes

January 14, 2026

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TOWN OF LUDLOW

Members Present: Kelly Lamas, Chair; Antonio Tavares, Secretary; Lauren Yelinek, Member

Also Present: Paulina Matusik, Health Director

Meeting was called to order at 4:30 PM by Ms. Lamas and the Pledge of Allegiance was performed.

Public Hearing:

Ms. Lamas explained that the public hearing is to hear and review comments relative to the appeal of Madd EatZ food truck permit suspension.

Ms. Yelinek made a motion to open the public hearing, seconded by Mr. Tavares. All in favor 3-0.

Ms. Lamas called the Public Hearing to order @ 4:31 PM on Wednesday, January 14, 2026. The purpose of the hearing is to provide the appellant with an opportunity to be heard regarding an action taken by the Health Department. This process ensures due process under Massachusetts Law via the authority of the local Board of Health and is being conducted in compliance with the Massachusetts open meeting law. All testimony and deliberation will occur in open session; the Board will not engage in private discussion of this matter outside promptly post meetings. The ground rules for Public Hearing are as follows:

- All speakers must state their name and address for the record
- Please direct all comments to the Chair of the Board
- The Board may ask questions for clarification only
- And disruptive behavior will not be permitted

Ms. Matusik: I'm Paulina Matusik, the Health Director. Ms. Matusik noted that she handed each Board Member a packet that Ms. Quinn (Health Inspector) put together because she has been more involved in this process. She explained that she is not going to read the information that is in all the exhibits due to the sensitive nature of some of the information in the packet. Ms. Matusik explained what was in the packet as follows:

- The first attachment is a letter from Ms. Quinn (Health Inspector) to the Board and summarizes the table of contents that is in chronological order and includes:
 - o Exhibit A – Madd EatZ inspection report.
 - o Exhibit B – Email correspondence between Mr. Placzek of Madd EatZ and Ms. Quinn.
 - o Exhibit C – Email correspondence received from the Celebrate Ludlow Committee regarding a food complaint.
 - o Exhibit D – Photo of the said complaint.

- Exhibit E – Email correspondence received from Ms. Collette with Mr. Placzek.
- Exhibit F – Notice of Non-Renewal of a Mobile Server permit letter that was mailed to Madd Eatze.
- Exhibit G – The appeal letter.

Ms. Matusik explained in the letter Ms. Quinn summarizes everything that is attached in the packet and includes her next steps and recommendations to the Board that Ms. Matusik agrees with and supports. Ms. Matusik explained to Mr. Placzek that she can read it out loud or share it with him, it will be his decision, because the meeting is recorded.

Ms. Lamas: After the October 4, 2025, inspection from the event and the email that was sent on November 19th was Ms. Quinn or the Health Department aware of any future events from Madd Eatze for the rest of the 2025 season?

Ms. Matusik: No

Ms. Lamas: Okay

Ms. Lamas: Was it stated on the October 4, 2025, inspection report that a reinspection would be needed?

Ms. Matusik: With mobile food trucks there is no reinspection. It is not like a food establishment and each event they attend would be a new inspection although they do use it to make sure, they are improving and hopefully they do not find themselves in this situation. It is completely different than a food inspection where a restaurant is inspected and if there are violations or things that need to be corrected, they can follow up. Following up with a mobile server is more difficult because they don't usually know what event they will or will not be attending, the annual mobile permit gives food trucks the flexibility to operate on a last-minute basis.

Mr. Tavares: How many events did Mr. Placzek participate in, in 2025 in the Town of Ludlow?

Ms. Matusik: I have no idea because in their application they listed one event. It is up to the food vendor or the mobile food vendor to let the Health Department know what events they will be participating in. Generally, the food establishment will notify the Health Department that they will be having an event and the vendors they approved, if a vendor is not permitted, they are asked to apply for a permit. In this case, Madd Eatze, has an annual permit which means they do not have to apply for each event within the Town of Ludlow and if they are not notifying the Health Department then the Health Department has no way of knowing what event they are participating in.

Ms. Lamas: They were at the Light Up Ludlow event on November 30, 2025, were they anywhere else in Ludlow after the inspection and email communication?

Ms. Matusik: I am not sure, but I'm sure you can ask Madd Eatze and they can tell you.

Ms. Yelinek: So, just the two events we are aware of are October 4, 2025 (Falling into Fun) and November 30, 2025 (Light Up Ludlow)?

Ms. Matusik: I'm sure they were at Vanished Valley, but I don't remember, Vanished Valley communicates with the Health Department regularly about the events they are having and the food vendors that will be participating.

Mr. Tavares: He noted that Mr. Placzek did over a hundred and twenty events in 2025, in the surrounding towns.

Ms. Matusik: Looked up the application that was submitted for 2025 by Madd EatZ for the Annual Mobile Server permit. The days and hours of operation were left blank on the application.

Mr. Tavares: Anytime there is an event going on in the Town of Ludlow, for the people that have food trucks, are they supposed to communicate with the Health Department?

Ms. Matusik: Yes, they are supposed to notify the Health Department, it is part of the application. Even though they don't technically need another permit with the Health Department, they should let the Health Department know what events they are participating in because it is not just up to the main vendor putting on the event, it's on the permitted food truck or restaurant to communicate this with the Health Department.

Ms. Lamas: asked Mr. Placzek from Madd EatZ to come to the table.

Mr. Placzek: John Placzek of Carver Street, Granby, MA and the owner of Madd EatZ food truck. This is a new venture; he wasn't sure if they would even get a gig. They participated in over one hundred and twenty-two events in Northampton, South Hadley, car shows and were voted in by the South Hadley Chamber of Commerce at their Christmas Tree Lighting, they have great reviews and everything is done through Facebook. He was very disappointed when he saw the email he received from Ludlow because a lot of food was served out the food truck. He explained that most towns do not require what events they are participating in. I didn't know at the time, usually inspectors will just say let us know where you will be. Most of the time the food truck is at Vanished Valley, they do check for valid permits, and they communicate with the Health Department about their events. They have also attended events at Iron Duke, and Ludlow 250th. He feels that he does have an idea as to what happened with the chicken because he switched to a thicker crispier chicken and wishes he didn't, the chicken was good, was a better quality and he remembers probing the chicken that night. The customer brought back a little piece of chicken that was not eaten. They gave the customer her money back and apologized and thought that would be the end of it. He also received a letter from the 250th Committee saying that there was another incident regarding the food. He stated that he has dignity in his food and a great menu. He noted that the Health Inspector did get him on a couple of violations, the food being canned on the floor at the event, he installed new shelving and has new procedures, so this doesn't happen again and will switch to a cooked chicken breast.

Ms. Lamas: The email exchange that Mr. Placzek had with Ms. Quinn on November 20, 2025, were you already planning to be at the November 30, 2025, Light Up Ludlow event?

Mr. Placzek: Someone else answered the email and he was not a hundred percent confirmed to be there, it was discussed, a lot of times the committee will say “can you be there” but until they confirm it with him, for a couple of days he does not plan on it. He does call all his events a couple of days prior for a confirmation because he does not just want to show up for an event and be told that he is not needed. He also noted that when he spoke to Ms. Quinn, he was inquiring about his 2026 Annual Mobile Server permit and was told that his food truck would need to be inspected. He told Ms. Quinn that he would be at the Tree Lighting event which is only a two-hour event, do you really need to come onto the truck, he was watching the tree lighting and his daughter was there, he was having a bad day and got off on the wrong foot and explained that his wife passed away around that time and understands there is no excuse. He did go to the Health Department to apologize to Ms. Quinn, but she was not in the office at the time. He wanted to make sure everything was okay because she is the Health Inspector and has events booked for this year.

Ms. Lamas: Wanted to know if Madd Eatze participated in any events in Ludlow after October 4, 2025.

Mr. Placzek: He explained that the Ludlow Fish & Game Club wants the food truck at the club weekly.

Misty: She explained that there was a discrepancy on how to handle events, they went into the Health Department and spoke to Ms. Matusik. They verified the procedures including the notification and when to notify the department about events. It’s a new experience and a new adventure; they are willing to learn as they go.

Mr. Placzek: In some towns an inspection is done in the Spring, and you never see them again. In other towns, like Brimfield, they were on his truck every single day.

Ms. Lamas: There are food regulation standards for mobile food trucks in the state, how each municipality institutes that is based on staffing capacity, Health Inspectors are stretched thin in some communities and may not have a full-time Health Inspector. Each community will follow through with the regulations as best as they can. Ludlow has a full-time Health Inspector and Ms. Matusik, the Health Director/Inspector, has been doing great work over the last couple of years to tighten food inspections to align with state regulations and that may be why the Town of Ludlow looks a little bit different, but they do align with the state.

Misty: They have been inspected by the state and at Charter Day.

Ms. Lamas: That is a separate licensing and entity than local municipality.

Ms. Yelinek: She noted they mentioned changing the chicken but brought forward that one of her concerns from a background in nursing is the handwashing from the first inspection. Is there a lack of understanding around that and wanted to know if anything has been done to rectify it?

Mr. Placzek: He did not know anything about it, but explained there is a three bay sink with hot water.

Misty: and a handwashing sink

Ms. Yelinek: Were you able to see the first inspection where there was stuff in the handwashing sink and no hot water for proper handwashing?

Misty: She explained that an on demand hot water heater was installed.

Mr. Placzek: They bought the truck used from Connecticut, and they have been trying to do the better updates and have also been remodeling the food truck.

Mr. Tavares: Was 2025 your first year doing this?

Mr. Placzek: Yes

Mr. Tavares: You did over one hundred and twenty events.

Mr. Placzek: Yes, and they had to turn some down.

Misty: Every town has asked them to come back.

Mr. Placzek: This is our reputation on the line.

Ms. Lamas: She wanted to know how they have rectified the other violations since October 4, 2025? Ms. Yelinek mentioned the handwashing and the sink, food temperature

Mr. Placzek: The food temperature was the steamer; they are not using a steamer anymore.

Mr. Lamas: How are you rectifying the frozen foods?

Mr. Placzek: They thaw the frozen foods in the refrigerator and cook fresh.

Mr. Tavares: The incidents that happened in Ludlow were they the only incidents in all the towns?

Mr. Placzek: Yes, it shouldn't have happened and he can promise that it won't happen again.

Mr. Tavares: He could see that they were upset about it and explained that they don't want to hurt a new business and feels that mistakes can happen in any business and when this happens, they need to be corrected and if it keeps occurring that is when it becomes a problem.

Mr. Placzek: He stated that he is willing to submit all the upcoming dates to the Board if he could overturn the decision, they would be welcome on the truck, most of the events are for Vanished Valley.

Ms. Lamas: She noted that submitting the events are part of the application process. Just like a brick-and-mortar business, it's on the ownness of the owner or business to provide updates to the Health Department, Building Department or whomever.

Mr. Placzek: He explained that they do a lot of pop ups at Vanished Valley where they will call him on a Friday afternoon and ask if they can make it for a Saturday morning? The Health Department is not open, he isn't able to let the Health Department know they will be attending the event at Vanished Valley.

Ms. Lamas: She explained to Mr. Placzek the Health email is always available.

Mr. Tavares made a motion to close the public hearing, seconded by Mr. Yelinek. All in Favor 3-0.

Ms. Lamas stated the public hearing closes at 4:57 PM and thanked everyone who participated.

Ms. Lamas explained to the Board that they are appealing the notice of non-renewal mobile food service permit for the 2026 season. As a Board, they will be discussing the appeal, and the options would be to uphold the non-renewal or amend the non-renewal.

Mr. Tavares noted that Madd EatZ did over hundred and twenty events throughout five towns and unfortunately the chicken incident happened in the Town of Ludlow. He feels that giving this small business a three hundred-and sixty-five-day suspension is too much because they started a new business, they are trying to succeed and felt that they are genuinely upset over the incident. Mr. Tavares would like them to submit the dates of their events and inspect their truck and food, but noted that if there are repeat violations, he will be the first person to say something.

Ms. Yelinek feels the same way as Mr. Tavares but the biggest concern she has is they participated in over a hundred and twenty events throughout the year, but the incidents happened at the end of the year, she is questioning if these incidents were the first two of the year or was this the first time they were inspected? When she discussed handwashing with them, she feels that this is important and is basic food safety handling and from a public health standpoint, if this is the lense they are looking at, this would be her primary concern. Her recommendation would be a strict probationary period because some of the violations are very concerning to her.

Ms. Lamas stated that her concern is food safety and agrees with the Board they are a new small business and the Board wants businesses to succeed and be successful in Ludlow. This is a learning curve and an opportunity for learning and education as it relates to food safety. Concurrently another layer of education relates to the role of the Health Department and the Board of Health as they are there to uphold local and state regulations as it pertains to food safety. What one town may do versus another town may be different and to respect the role of the Health Inspector and the Health Department during the inspections at events, and she feels this goes concurrent with the educational part of it. Ms. Lamas agrees with Ms. Yelinek's sentiment around a strict probationary period if they are going to consider permit renewal and what that may look like. She explained that when a restaurant in town has violations, there are reinspection's whether they are in 4 weeks, 6 weeks, 3 months or 6 months there is continual follow up. With mobile food trucks it is difficult for a Health Inspector to educate around the violations and consistently follow up, which is why having the dates of the events ahead of time is very important because a lot of the events happen on nights and weekends and how do they carve that into the schedule of a Health Inspector that is still playing catch up at times in town. She is of the mindset that if someone has a food permit whether it is mobile or a restaurant, they should be held to the same state regulations they are permitted for. It is not because they are there to tell anyone what to do but to follow state regulations and for the safety of the community and to prevent any food born illnesses which is why

these regulations exist. She is not sure what the probationary period will look like but if there are event dates set, they should be submitted immediately, and if events happen last minute within 24 to 48 hours they should communicate this to the Health Department, and if there is an event and the Health Department is not made aware of this, it would be an immediate violation and a revoking of the probationary permit.

Ms. Yelinek made a motion to approve Madd Eatz for a six-month conditional permit pending Health Inspector approval and the conditions that were discussed which are listed as follows:

- **The permit fee for the conditional permit will be \$60.00.**
- **During the six-month probationary period, the five violations from October 4, 2025, must be rectified.**
- **Any violations that are flagged for high-risk food born illness, the permit will be revoked.**
- **The six-month conditional permit will expire on July 1, 2026.**

Seconded by Mr. Tavares. All in favor 3-0.

Monthly Business:

Mr. Tavares signed the meeting minutes from November 20, 2025. Mr. Tavares made a motion to approve the meeting minutes of Thursday, November 20, 2025, seconded by Ms. Yelinek. All in favor 3-0.

Actions/correspondence:

Ms. Matusik discussed with the Board about implementing a Regional Mobile Food Inspection, she is bringing this to the Ludlow Board of Health first because they will be the central hub for this inspection, and she will be meeting individually with the other Regional Boards that will result in a Regional Mobile Server permit where food trucks can apply to be inspected one time instead of being inspected multiple times.

- The four towns that would be included in this would be Ludlow, Palmer, Warren and West Brookfield because they are a part of the Coalition.
- The Regional Health Inspector (Ms. Obuchowski) works out of the Ludlow office, and it would be convenient to be the hub because she is already stationed in Ludlow as her primary check-in location. This would be easier for her so she would not have to drive to other locations.
- Ms. Matusik is receiving feedback from food trucks on how frustrating it is to apply for separate permits but also to get pre-inspected and drive to each town individually, which is why she is looking to implement this because they would just have to come to Ludlow, they would still submit an application, one for each town with all of the required documentation and receive one inspection for all four towns. This will save them on gas and time.

The Board likes this idea and would like Ms. Matusik to proceed with this process.

Ms. Matusik explained that last month she met with the Finance Planning Committee, Mr. Strange, Ms. Ribeiro and the Accountant to discuss the annual Board of Health budget. The only increase to the budget was for Personal Services and no changes to General Expenses. She broke down the increase of \$20,735.00 as follows:

- \$6,757.00 - Appointed Officials (Health Director & Health Inspector positions)
- \$6,904.00 – Nurse’s increase for one Public Health Nurse
- \$1,732.00 – Clerical increase

Ms. Matusik noted that these increases are written in the Personal Policy Manuel as step increases that are already a part of the approved compensation plan for the Town of Ludlow.

- \$288.00 – Fringe Benefits
- \$288.00 - Emergency and Personal Days
- \$1,065.00 – Holidays
- \$500.00 – Longevity
- \$3,087.00 – Vacation Time

This budget was approved by Mr. Strange and Ms. Ribeiro at their meeting but noted that it does need to be approved by the Select Board. At the meeting she stated the Finance Committee and the Accounting department did not have any questions regarding the budget.

Ms. Yelinek asked what is the Nurses Certification? Ms. Matusik explained that in the nurse’s contract it states:

- \$500.00 for a bachelor’s degree
- \$1,000.00 for a master’s degree

Ms. Matusik wanted to remind the Board about the Ethics training. If the Board did not receive an email from the state, they should be all set. She also noted that she does not need a copy of the certificate because they are automatically sent to the Town Clerk.

Other Discussion:

Ms. Matusik updated the Board with the Health Department updates. Every year they do an annual report, the report is due by the end of February. Currently the Health Department is working on this, the report will include everything that was done in 2025.

The Public Health Nurse has retired and was wished well in her next chapter.

Ms. Matusik has started the process for the 2026 State Vaccine Program Re Enrollment which begins the week of January 19, 2026. She explained that the application is reviewed with the state, and this program would supply them with state supplied vaccines that would allow individuals with out insurance to be vaccinated. She also noted that she is working with Ms. Yelinek and the Medical Director on this.

Ms. Matusik completed the yearly staff reviews for her department and discussed goals for 2026. Some of the new goals discussed were:

- Expanding the vaccination services.
- Updating the Towns dumpster and unkept property by-laws.
- Expanding their quarterly newsletter.
- Public Education Materials.
- Participation in community events to increase awareness and prevention.

And through the Mill Towns Shared Services:

- The department will expand shared programming
- Grant supported initiatives and cross community outreach in Ludlow, Palmer, Warren and West Brookfield. This will include hosting the intern, so the intern can be utilized for all four towns.
- Sharing education programs and regional capacity building efforts which would include inspections and nursing.

Ms. Matusik updated the Board with the Shared Services updates. The part-time Public Health Nurse position has been posted for awhile now. Ms. Matusik and Ms. McMurray interviewed a candidate today and felt that the interview went great; the candidate was very knowledgeable and willing to expand on the goals Ms. Matusik discussed earlier and is looking to move forward with this candidate and looking at a February start date.

Ms. Matusik explained that she is looking to fill the Ludlow Public Health Nurse position, she would like to post for the position by February/March and is looking to hire for a July 1st, start date.

Ms. Matusik noted that there have been a couple of issues with the current Title V Contractor and pulled the contract from him. There is another candidate that Ms. McMurray will interview Friday, January 16, 2026. The Title V Contractor works on anything that has to do with Title V, which includes perc tests, plan reviews, anything septic related. This person would mainly be utilized for the Warren area where communities don't have a full-time inspector. The Title V Contractor would fill in for Ms. Matusik and Ms. Quinn if they are out sick or on vacation to conduct a final inspection because final inspections should be done within forty-eight hours. Ms. Matusik and Ms. Quinn may be flexing their hours, mainly working through lunch and to offer Fridays as an emergency day if Warren or West Brookfield may need septic work. Ms. Obuchowski, Regional Health Inspector, will be trained during this time because she hasn't had the time to train regarding septic.

There were a couple applications for the Social Worker position and in speaking with Human Resources they will need to rework the job description because they are receiving candidates that technically do not qualify for a Social Worker position. They are receiving more applications from community health workers and to be considered a Social Worker they would need to have a master's in social work or be able to obtain that certification. Their current position is listed to have a licensed independent clinical social worker or a master's in social work degree. She would like to rework the job description to open it up for more applicants.

Ms. Lamas suggested looking at the market for MSW's, could the job description be restructured for a community health worker or something similar like a community health advocate, so they could get someone who has a bachelor's in social work and/or community health worker because that will still meet the description. Would the goal be to have educational sessions around resources, awareness and getting them connected to services. Ms. Matusik noted that after speaking with Human Recourses, this would be what she is leaning towards.

Ms. Yelinek also suggested looking into a person who has a background in case management with a bachelor's degree.

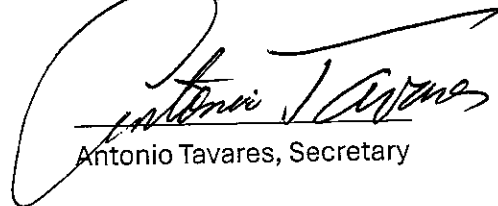
Ms. Matusik noted that the next CPR class is scheduled for February 10, 2026 @ 10:30 AM.

The legal notices were reviewed by the Board.

The next Board of Health meeting will be on Wednesday, February 11, 2026 @ 4:30 PM in the Select Boards Conference Room.

Mr. Tavares made a motion to adjourn the meeting @ 5:43 PM, seconded by Ms. Yelinek. All in favor 3-0.

Respectfully Submitted,

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