The regular meeting of the Board of Health was held on Tuesday, May 25, 2021. Michael LaFever, Chairman; Adrienne DeSantis, Secretary; Kelly Lamas, Member (attended remotely by phone) and Andrea Crete, Health Agent were present. Minutes are being recorded by LCTV video and are being transcribed from the video. The meeting was called to order at 5:30 p.m. by Mr. LaFever. **This meeting was held during the 2020-2021 COVID-19 pandemic.**

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Board members read the minutes of May 11, 2021. Minutes were signed by Ms. DeSantis.

Board members signed departmental bills.

The meeting was joined by Angela Kramer and Martha Seed, by phone, to provide a COVID-19/contact tracing update. Ms. Kramer states this week the town has only seen 20 cases. Most of these cases were in the younger population due to 2 specific incidents. These were not school related. Ms. DeSantis asked which places were involved. It was with soccer and an enclosed dance studio. Ms. Kramer has been in touch with the coaches and instructors. On the weekly robocall, there was mention of Pfizer vaccines available for children over age 12 at the Palmer clinic. With the state opening up everything and lifting the mask mandate on May 29th, the message being advertised is about getting kids vaccinated. The hope is that many people will take advantage of this. The virus seems to be targeting younger kids. This could be due to the amount of fully vaccinated adults. Ms. Lamas said that Baystate Health is launching mobile vaccination teams to help with vaccinating kids and the homebound population.

The town nurses have been working with the fire department to provide vaccines for homebound individuals through the Palmer clinic. Currently there have been 14 vaccines given to the homebound. Ms. DeSantis asked which town the 14 were located in. All were done within Ludlow. The nurses are resuming pedicures for homebound patients on June 1st. This will be a slow process with the hopes of getting back to a regular schedule. The nurses have begun to do TB testing within the office again. The hope is for the department to reinstitute the services that were offered before COVID.

Ms. Kramer spoke of the COVID-19 impact survey that was put out in February. The data from the survey has just been released. Ms. Kramer feels that there is a great opportunity to provide a lot of targeted education based on the survey results.

The Palmer clinic has been going extremely well. It has been a great learning experience for all staff. Ms. Seed agreed that it has been a wealth of knowledge. Ms. Kramer will be attending a webinar on June 3rd on how to break through vaccine hesitancy.

The meeting was joined by Herbert Abelson, by phone, from the Granby Board of Health. Mr. Abelson discussed the possibility of a shared services grant. The town of Granby is developing a shared services plan with other towns. This would allow for smaller towns to improve the health and welfare of their residents by providing more services. Ms. Crete asked if Granby has a Health Agent. Currently they do not. The inspections are being covered by board members along with borrowed inspectors from Holyoke. Granby also has an agreement with South

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Hadley to do MAVEN work. Ms. Crete would like to see a breakdown in the types and number of inspections performed within Granby. Ms. DeSantis asked what Granby would be envisioning with joining services with Ludlow. The goal is for independent Boards of Health to cooperate with each other to enhance the services that each provide. Mr. Abelson believes that towns are missing out on issues with public health. Smaller towns do not always have the staff to provide what is needed. Ms. Lamas did say that the state is really looking into this concept. Ms. Lamas would like to see an assessment of the departments and the gaps within that need to be filled. There was a question as to how much money is available from the state for these grants. Mr. Abelson thinks it is about $300,000 per year. Ms. DeSantis asked if this would be a coalition of towns. The coalitions should include a minimum of 3 towns working cooperatively to improve their services. The goal would be for the towns of Granby, South Hadley, and Ludlow to work together.

Ms. Kramer was a shared nurse for about 8 communities through the CIC grant. She provided the towns Maven work, flu clinics, and blood pressure clinics. This was done 2 days a week and she worked for the Town of Ludlow 3 days a week. The CIC grant ran for 2 years and was due to renew. It did not renew and the towns needed to pitch in to continue paying for the shared nurse. Ms. Kramer did state that during the COVID pandemic, being a shared nurse became very overwhelming. Mr. Abelson shows that this is a great example of where more personnel is needed. One of the benefits of a shared service grant is the availability of more personnel to provide the services needed.

Ms. Crete did work for numerous regional public health systems. The grant money does eventually go away. One town would function as the lead entity. After the grant money disappears, it would be up to each community to fund positions that were hired. Ms. Crete did also state it could be difficult to find staff to work for a coalition. Ms. Lamas would like to see the state sustainability plan for these coalitions. Board members would like to get more information on the shared services grant before making a decision. Mr. LaFever feels that there should be communication amongst all towns to see if it is feasible. Mr. Abelson did thank the board for allowing him to present this plan.

The newly hired Animal Control Officer is no longer working for the town. This also means that there is no Animal Inspector. Ms. Crete is willing to fill in and provide guidance until a new ACO can be hired. The Department of Agriculture will send new nomination forms to be completed.

There was a request for a Local Upgrade Approval for 23 West Belmont Street, owned by Arlene Hitchcock. Engineer John Kopinsky is asking for the use of one deep observation hole in the proposed area. Motion made by Ms. DeSantis to approve the variance. Seconded by Ms. Lamas. Roll call vote taken: Ms. DeSantis – yes, Ms. Lamas – yes, Mr. LaFever – yes. Motion passes 3-0.

Ms. Crete discussed the 10 essential services in public health. She met with the Ms. Kramer and Ms. Seed and feels that the department is meeting every part. Under the 1st service of assessing the needs of the community, the town uses MAVEN to look into communicable diseases. Ms. Seed is currently working with Springfield for the grant to assess the accessibility for the

population to receive information. This would address any gaps and disparities in certain populations. Ms. Lamas would like to see a more in-depth assessment of where the department stands regarding each of the 10 essential services. Ms. Lamas has reached out at the State level to see if the jail is influencing any of the statistics for Ludlow. Ms. DeSantis agrees that it would be nice to know how the statistics for the jail impacted the statistics for the town. Ms. Crete did say that for COVID, all of the information was combined. The numbers for jail along with other closed communities were combined into the town data. Because most of these locations have their own nursing staff, Ms. Crete would look at to how the town nurses could work with these closed communities to provide outreach and education depending on the needs.

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When it comes to restructuring the department, Ms. Lamas would like more due diligence in what services the department is providing by performing an in-depth assessment of the 10 essential services to see where the department lags. Ms. Crete feels that she is making recommendations to the Board based on her expertise and experience while working with municipal health departments. Ms. Lamas does agree that changes need to be made. Ms. Lamas does also agree that there needs to be a process gone through to weigh what changes need to be made before hand. Ms. DeSantis does agree with Ms. Lamas in the process she has laid out. Ms. DeSantis feels that Ms. Crete will need to find the time to complete this assessment. Mr. LaFever feels that the framework with the 10 essential services is very vague and does not provide a lot of detail when it comes to performing an assessment. Ms. DeSantis did recommend going through prior year annual reports to look at the services the department provides. Ms. Crete asked Ms. Lamas to provide examples of what would satisfy each of the 10 essential services. Ms. Crete will put together a presentation for the next meeting on the 10 essential services and how the department is meeting each one. Ms. Crete does feel that by doing this assessment, it is holding up restructuring of the department and the hiring of an employee to fill the vacant position. Ms. Lamas feels that the homework has to be complete before the Board can decide which way to fill the position.

Ms. DeSantis asked about discussing the new position. This topic will be tabled for a later meeting.

Ms. Seed is currently working with the Springfield Health Department on a grant focusing on outreach in the community. Ms. Seed has put together a survey to focus on the access to information for residents that speak foreign languages. The survey will be directed toward 3 languages Portuguese, Polish, and Turkish. There is a definite language barrier within town. Ms. Lamas reviewed the survey and made recommendations to simplify it. Ms. Seed has now produced 2 separate surveys. One focuses on health literacy, and the other on how people obtain information. The survey also asks about receiving the Covid vaccine. Ms. DeSantis feels that people who are not vaccinated would not be comfortable in answering the survey. Ms. DeSantis feels that the main target should be about the language barrier. Ms. Crete did say that the main focus is where non-English speaking people receive information about public health. Ms. Lamas would like to remove the questions about the COVID vaccine if the focus is only on the language barrier. Ms. Lamas would like to see the survey in an online format. Ms. Seed will be working to try and bring it online. The department will be hosting a community health worker intern from Holyoke Community College. This individual will be under the direction of

Ms. Seed. The goal is to have them reaching out to individuals within the town that speak other languages. This internship will be for 10 weeks at approximately 12.5 hours per week and will begin in July. Ms. DeSantis proposes that once the intern starts, that they be brought to a Board meeting. Once that happens, then for Ms. Seed to come back to the Board with the survey to be sent out. Ms. Seed asked about adding a question within the survey about language spoken. Ms. DeSantis would like to see something for primary and secondary languages. Ms. Seed is having some difficulty in trying to translate the surveys into other languages. Ms. Lamas did mention to ask the town volunteers to hopefully help translate the survey.

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Ms. Crete discussed with the board about the proposed new cemetery to be located on Center Street. The DPW is looking to move forward with the construction of the cemetery. In order for this to happen, the Board of Health has to hold a public hearing and give approval for the land to be used for that purpose. Ms. DeSantis asked what types of questions could be presented at a hearing. Ms. Crete did mention the possibility of the effects on a private well. Ms. Crete discussed the possibility of doing deep hole testing to verify the groundwater. Ms. DeSantis would like to have someone from the DPH or the DPW present during the hearing to assist with possible questions. Ms. Lamas agrees with having someone at the hearing. The hearing will be scheduled for June 8, 2021 at 6:00 pm. There will be a notice published in The Register.

Motion made by Ms. DeSantis to adjourn the meeting at 7:12 p.m. with Ms. Lamas seconding the motion. All in favor 3-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Adrienne DeSantis
Secretary