A joint meeting of the Board of Selectmen and the Board of Health was held on Tuesday, November 23, 2021. Michael LaFever, Chairman; Adrienne DeSantis, Secretary; and Andrea Crete, Health Agent were present. Kelly Lamas, Member attended the meeting by phone. Minutes are being recorded by LCTV video and are being transcribed from the video. The meeting was opened and called to order at 5:45 p.m. by Mr. LaFever.

This meeting is a continuation on the request for a full-time Health Inspector for the department.

Mr. LaFever spoke of the department trying to restructure in order to meet the requirements set forth by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health. Under the requirements, the Town is responsible for approximately 424 required inspections. Currently the department averages around 250-300 inspections performed during the year.

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Mr. Goncalves asked if septic inspections were included in that amount. Mr. Lafever explained that the total is only food establishment inspections. It does not include other variables like septic or food trucks.

Mr. Gannette asked how long an inspection typically takes. Mr. LaFever answered that it depends on the size of the establishment, it could be anywhere from an hour to a whole day. The FDA recommends that an inspector, on average, should be able to perform 250 inspections a year. Mr. Gannette stated that the current number of inspections (223 from last year) meets that number. Mr. LaFever states that 223 does not include inspecting every establishment in town. Ms. DeSantis states that 250 represents a dedicated inspector. Ms. Crete is not just an inspector, but also the department head.

Mr. Silva questioned why the department is eliminating services in order to hire a new position. He is not in favor of eliminating services. Mr. Silva credited Ludlow for the different services that other communities don't offer.

Mr. Goncalves spoke how the Board of Health has gone from having 3 full-time and 1 part-time nurses to just 1 full-time nurse in a very short amount of time. Mr. Goncalves asked about the possibility to hire a part-time inspector and filling 1 of the nursing positions. He also mentioned on increasing the nurse's salary in order to possibly fill the open position.

Mr. Rosenblum spoke of the department switching to more education instead of services. Mr. Rosenblum asked if there is a 5–10 year plan for the department.

Ms. Crete spoke of the difficulty to compare inspections to pedicures and other services. Public Health is constantly changing. The department is trying to address the need to meet the mandates set by the State. The 30-hour part-time nurse recently retired. There is talk of filling that position to focus on services for the community. The Board of Health will be discussing pedicures and services at their meeting of November 30, 2021.

Mr. LaFever stated that the department has recently been focusing on covering all state mandated services. There is difficulty hiring the proper staff to do this based on the pay.

Ms. DeSantis spoke of the public health needs of Ludlow. Ms. DeSantis praised Ms. Crete with being a strong asset for the Town. The department needs to focus on programming and education within the community. By hiring a full-time inspector, it will free up Ms. Crete to focus on those needs.

Ms. Lamas spoke of moving the department to the 21st century. Ms. Lamas could not comment on Ms. Crete's performance. Ms. Lamas has only been on the Board for a short amount of time and has not seen a performance evaluation for Ms. Crete. Ms. Lamas would like to see an additional nurse hired.

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Mr. Gannette would not be willing to hire a full-time inspector right now. He would like to see the possibility of a part-time inspector along with the possibility of increasing salaries to keep the current staff. Mr. Gannette stated that the reason the town hired Ms. Crete, was to perform inspections.

Mr. Goncalves asked about the Public Health Coordinator position. Is the position necessary?

Ms. Crete explained that the PHPC is responsible for emergency preparedness, providing trainings within the Town, and creating and implementing public health programs. The current coordinator is taking a training to become certified to teach CPR and first aid next week. Ms. Lamas added that a PHPC is typical in a health department. They are usually responsible to build infrastructure within the town to address other public health needs.

Mr. Gannette reiterated that he is against the new position at this time.

Motion made by Mr. Gannette to not approve the position for a full-time Inspector for the Board of Health at this time. Seconded by Mr. Silva. The Selectmen voted 3-1 to not approve the position.

Motion made by Mr. LaFever to adjourn the meeting of the Board of Health at 6:15 pm. Seconded by Ms. DeSantis. All in favor 3-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Adrienne DeSantis
Secretary