Board of Health

Meeting Minutes

December 20, 2022

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TOWN OF LUDLOW

Members Present: Kelly Lamas, Chair; Antonio Tavares, Member; Adrienne DeSantis, Secretary

Also Present: Paulina Matusik, Carrie Ribeiro, 5 members of the Board of Selectmen

Motion was made by Ms. DeSantis at 6:15 PM to open the meeting. Seconded by Mr. Tavares. Vote 3-0.

This was a joint meeting with the Board of Selectman to discuss the request for a Public Health Director. Ms. Matusik began by explaining that the Board of Health is requesting a Public Health Director to oversee the staff, as well as keeping the department in compliance with the State. She reviewed the requirements to be kept in compliance with the State and that the role of Public Health Director would be to meet those workforce standards, as well as establishing work procedures. Mr. Silva asked about the nursing in the department and recalls that the department had 3-4 nurses at one point and provided many services to the residents of Ludlow. He states that he has had many residents ask him about the lacks of nurses and he would like to see that change. Ms. Lamas explains that while the department had more nurses at one time, the Board of Health now needs to look at how it can meet the workforce standards and that she believes it begins with the leadership position. Ms. Ribeiro was asked to explain what the director position would mean for the budget. She reported that Ms. Matusik is the current Interim Health Director as there is not money in the current budget for the position but that the Board of Selectman can approve it for the next fiscal year.

Mr. Goncalves asked for a comparison on how other town's health departments are structured. Ms. Matusik explained that Longmeadow has a director, a nurse, an inspector, an administrative assistant and a Health Coordinator. Agawam has the same except that they have a health agent but no coordinator. When asked about Wilbraham, she explained that they are part of a regionalized program due to their size so that they share services with other towns. Ludlow is part of a regionalized program with Palmer, Warren and West Brookfield and that there is a shared services grant that can be used for trainings, assistance, and buying equipment. Ms. Matusik wanted to reiterate that with the workforce standards being in place, it is difficult to compare communities.

Mr. DeBarge feels that you should not have a department without a department head and expect it to run smoothly. He also feels that nursing is very important for our community but feels that Ludlow does not pay enough to retain staff. Ms. DeSantis spoke to how much the health department has changed over the years and that while nursing did do a lot, things are still being done, just differently. While nursing is focusing on the clinical piece, the Health Coordinator handles the emergency preparedness, mental health and opioid piece. She feels strongly that with a director, the department will run smoothly and has full support from the Board of Health members.

Lastly Ms. Matusik spoke to the fact that the director could be a back-up for inspections. While Ludlow now has a full time inspector, there is always need for a back up.

A motion was made by Mr. Tavares to adjourn the meeting at 6:37 PM. Seconded by Ms. DeSantis. All in favor 3-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Adrienne DeSantis

Secretary

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