

KINGSTON BOARD OF HEALTH
MEETING MINUTES
March 13, 2023

Present: Chairman Joe Casna (via Zoom), Vice Chair Bill Kavol. Members, Janet Wade and Heidi Whipple.

Absent: Member Dennis Randall.

Also present: Gloria Mitchell, Assistant Town Administrator and Arthur Boyle.

6:00 p.m. Kingston Board of Health Meeting was called to order by Joe Casna.

6:02 p.m. Motion to accept the resignation of Paula Rossi-Clapp as Health Agent and whose last effective day of employment is March 26th, made by Joe Casna

Second: Heidi Whipple

4-0-0

DISCUSSION:

Joe stated that Arthur is here to discuss his availability to help. Conversations will need to be had to discuss the budget/funding. He has also heard from other health agents in the area that have offered help if needed.

Arthur stated that available approximately 10-15 hours a week for days that are most convenient. The Administrative Assistant, Lori Jones, is capable of running the office day-to-day. The only day he has an issue with is Thursday. Joe asked him to work out a schedule with Lori and to go over things with Paula.

Joe said that the job is being posted on the Town's website and Massachusetts Municipal Association website. Gloria stated that the job must first be posted internally for 10 days from the date of posting then we can look at external applications.

Janet asked to make comments. She has given a tremendous amount of thought on this. We are responsible for the health of 14,000 people in Kingston and we need to take this seriously. The facts are that the Board of Health has created a poor reputation for itself. We need to learn from this and not repeat the mistakes of the past going forward. We can't keep doing what we are doing. The responsibilities of the Health Department have grown and we need to address them (MAVEN, infectious diseases, bringing in a Public Health Nurse brings new directions and responsibilities, clinics, health education classes). We need to look at lessons learned. We need to obtain hard information on candidates regarding education, skills, job experience, interpersonal communication, and management experience. They must offer solid professional recommendations. We must clearly explain and review the job description with candidates and get return feedback. From the beginning, we must create a solid line of

communication between the health department members, health department leadership and Board of Health members. WE MUST TAKE OUR TIME and wait to get the right person. We need to look at what is working and what is not. This is not a training ground for people. We need people with skills and certifications that can start from the get-go like Arthur. Recruitment and the hiring process – it needs to be reviewed. What are the responsibilities of the position, the lines of communication between all of the parties concerned, the probation process which is 6 months. The probation form needs to be looked at and it needs to be agreed upon by all and is legally correct. Communication between the Health Department, the BOH, and the Town Management – it should be illustrated, written and verbally explained.

Janet feels this is a good opportunity to recreate and improve the Health Department so people know our good intent and we are looking to do what is best for the town. A lot of this is based on research analysis. Get the numbers (how many perc tests, restaurant inspections, tobacco inspections, etc.) and how much do these cost the department. Find a person(s) who has experience in sewer inspections, food inspections, and compliance with the different regulations. Should we consider contracting out the different type of inspections? Maybe we need to investigate having a Health Director and having a health agent that does those responsibilities and a PHN that does those responsibilities. These positions are comparable, and they just do different things. Rather than a health agent not only having the responsibility for all the inspections but incidental health issues that arise and any other issues that come on with the PHN. We need to research the compensation rates in the surrounding areas for health agents and for people that we may want to contract with to do inspections. We also need to look at different models for the structure of this department. Do we want to continue with the current structure as it is? There needs to be excellent communication from the get-go with whoever we may hire, make sure they have the credentials and they know what the department is all about.

Janet would like to discuss how we feel about her remarks on lessons learned and on the restructuring of the department. Heidi stated they are valid remarks. We are coming up short with the money we pay someone. They will go for the big money in another town. Janet stated maybe we don't need a health agent. Joe said this has been discussed with Tina and we do not currently have a position listed as a Health Director. We are challenged with hiring a Health Agent. Some of the larger communities have Health Directors with part-time employees who do the inspectional services. That is not how the Kingston Health Department is currently structured and changing that would take time until 2025 if things went well. The question that is before you is the process of the hiring of the health agent. There was a committee that vetted the applicants. Gloria and Arthur were on the committee. Gloria stated that Adam Hatch from the Fire Department, and Tina from Human Resources were on the committee.

Bill said this time we should have part of the Board picking this time. He stated that our reputation in the Town is not bad. We did not create a poor reputation because people want to leave. People change jobs all the time. We need more involvement with the next pick.

Joe asked Janet and Heidi how they would like to proceed. Heidi would like to have the Board do the vetting. Joe asked Gloria if they are required to interview all the candidates if they do the vetting themselves. Gloria responded no. Gloria explained the process is the job applications come in to Tina in HR and she can upload and sent the applications to the Board members. If Janet would like to change the position, she would be happy to discuss it with Janet and when to start that process. Joe stated, in the meantime, we owe it to the Town to hire the best Health Agent we can based on the applications we receive. Janet would like to look into the process of a Health Director. We take the time to train people and then they leave.

Bill asked if there were any applicants for the PHN position. There has not.

Arthur said that Janet is right on track to do a cost analysis to have a Health Director, health agent, and part-time nurse. We have been unable to get the health department back to what it was before COVID. The numbers don't lie. We are underfunded and understaffed. He will help for as long as it takes. He asks the Board to take a vote tonight to designate him to be the acting or interim health agent.

6:31 p.m. Motion to appoint Arthur Boyle as interim Health Agent during our lapse of permanent Health Agent starting immediately made by Heidi Whipple.

Second: Janet Wade

4-0-0

ADJOURN

6:33 p.m. Motion to Adjourn by Heidi Whipple.

Second: Bill Kavol

4-0-0

Lori Jones, Administrative Assistant
Kingston Board of Health

Approved: April 5, 2023