

**LEXINGTON BOARD OF HEALTH
MEETING MINUTES
Tuesday, January 20, 2026, 6:30 p.m.
Conducted by Remote Participation**

Board of Health Members in Attendance:

Wendy Heiger-Bernays, Ph.D., Chair; David Geller, M.D., Vice Chair; Shoolah Escott, MS; Susan Wolf-Fordham, J.D., MPA

Health Department Staff Attendees: Alicia McCartin, Public Health Director; Danetza Yachachin, Assistant Public Health Director

Absent: Jillian Tung, M.D., M.P.H.

Select Board Liaison: Mark Sandeen (Late 6:43 pm)

Documents:

DPH Guidance on Recommended Reference Materials for Pediatric Immunization

Public Meeting for Hazard Mitigation Flyer

Influenza Clinical Advisory

Environmental Health Report

Public Health Nurse Report

Hazard Mitigation and Other Emergency and Disaster Plans for Lexington PowerPoint

Meeting Called to Order:

The Board of Health meeting, held on January 20th, 2026, was called to order by Dr. Heiger-Bernays at 6:30 p.m.

Minutes Approval:

No minutes were provided.

Open Forum (2 minutes per person, state your name and address)

None

Staff Update

Ms. McCartin introduced Danetza Yachachin as the new Assistant Health Director, who is attending her first Board of Health meeting.

Ms. Yachachin shared her professional background, noting previous public health experience working for the cities of Haverhill, Medford, and Lawrence.

The Board of Health welcomed Ms. Yachachin to the department.

Respiratory Viruses and Vaccines Update

Ms. McCartin reported that the Board packet included updated guidance from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) on Pediatric Immunization schedules and a Clinical Advisory on the 2025–2026 influenza season. DPH recommends clinicians follow the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) immunization schedule for infants, children, and adolescents. Dr. Heiger-Bernays noted that Massachusetts is among a small number of states that align with AAP guidance.

Ms. McCartin reported that two additional COVID-19 and influenza vaccination clinics were scheduled to utilize the remaining vaccine supply and increase access for residents, with another clinic scheduled for February 3. Outreach was conducted via the Town website and local media.

Dr. David Geller reported that medical practices in Massachusetts are continuing to follow the American Academy of Pediatrics vaccination guidelines. He noted that the previous year experienced a severe influenza season with lower vaccination rates, while the current season has seen increased vaccination uptake. He also reported that both Influenza A and Influenza B are circulating, and that his practice had several confirmed cases in a single day. Dr. Geller emphasized that vaccination remains appropriate throughout the flu season and supported continuing local vaccination clinics.

Ms. McCartin reported that the Health Department currently provides vaccines for individuals four years of age and older. The Public Health Nurse has contacted the LABBB School director regarding vaccine availability and is available to assist if students or families require vaccination. At the time of the meeting, no requests had been received, though information had been shared with families.

Hazard Mitigation Plan Update

Dr. Heiger-Bernays mentioned that she, Ms. Wolf-Fordham, Ms. Escott, and Ms. McCartin attended a recent community meeting regarding the Hazard Mitigation Plan.

Dr. Heiger-Bernays then invited Ms. Wolf-Fordham to provide the Board with an overview of the Hazard Mitigation Plan, including other emergency preparedness and public health plans that the Board has previously discussed.

Ms. Wolf-Fordham delivered a presentation on Hazard Mitigation and other emergency and disaster plans for Lexington. Ms. Wolf-Fordham described the framework for emergency planning, highlighting how the Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP) should align with various other town emergency, public health, and sustainability plans. This alignment aims to ensure interoperability, reduce gaps and avoid duplication, and limit liability.

Ms. Wolf-Fordham stressed the need for improved communication with all groups, especially vulnerable populations, during emergencies. She noted that effective communication systems are essential in these situations. Instead of only using registries, Ms. Wolf-Fordham suggested using

evidence-based strategies to find and support vulnerable residents. She also highlighted the importance of reviewing events after they occur to learn from them.

The Board discussed past issues related to understanding roles in emergency response, shelter planning, and coordination with building project timelines. The Board mentioned that a Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) is due for an update, and that the Health Department should be included in the discussion to use the high school field house as an emergency shelter. Board members stressed the need for regional teamwork, consistency among the town's emergency plans, and preparation for possible cuts in federal funding.

The Board agreed that the Hazard Mitigation Plan should outline what is needed for infrastructure, capital, and operations to support future funding requests. They emphasized the need to protect public health and vulnerable communities while also respecting their privacy.

Dr. Heiger-Bernays proposed a motion that the Board of Health recommend:

1. Completion of the Hazard Mitigation Plan addressing identified gaps.
2. Development of a modular, interoperable disaster plan.
3. Updating the Town's Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP).
4. Conducting a post-COVID review to capture lessons learned.

Ms. Wolf-Fordham seconded the motion and suggested the Board meet with the Sustainability Officer to discuss HMP specifics. Timing constraints were noted, as the next public meeting is scheduled for May.

The motion was approved unanimously.

Dr. Heiger-Bernays will work with staff to draft and submit the recommendation, ensuring the HMP reflects current best practices and public health priorities.

Health Staff Reports:

Ms. McCartin informed the Board that Jessica Shah, Health Agent, is on Maternity leave, and Ms. Yachachin has taken over inspections since December 17, 2025.

Ms. Yachachin gave the Board an overview of her report, explaining she has conducted 14 food inspections, 4 re-inspections, 2 Pre- operational inspections, and is handling a housing complaint. She also completed a tanning establishment plan review, emphasizing public education on UV hazards.

Dr. Heiger-Bernays asked about the two housing cases.

Ms. McCartin confirmed that the cases remain active and noted that housing cases often require significant staff time to resolve.

The Board discussed potential future public awareness efforts on tanning safety.

Ms. McCartin presented Ms. Coleman's report.

Ms. McCartin reported that recent Salmonella, Campylobacter, and Shigella cases involved Lexington residents, but exposure occurred outside town.

Mr. Sandeen commented that current communicable disease reporting (including COVID-19 and influenza) lacks sufficient context when presented as single-point data. He stated that trend data would be more informative in determining whether disease activity is increasing or decreasing.

Dr. Heiger-Bernays asked whether Board members would also benefit from seeing local data contextualized alongside state-level data, noting that the current figures reflect only tested individuals.

Mr. Sandeen stated that trend-based reporting would improve understanding and suggested including data from previous months (e.g., two months prior).

Ms. McCartin indicated that staff would work on incorporating trend information into future reports.

Mr. Sandeen inquired about the recurring report of two tuberculosis (TB) cases and asked whether these represented new or ongoing cases.

Ms. McCartin clarified that the two TB cases referenced are ongoing cases, not new cases.

Ms. McCartin provided an update regarding a fire incident at Formosa Taipei that occurred on December 31, 2025. The fire originated at the grill and resulted in minor smoke damage, and the Ansul fire suppression system was discharged.

Following the incident, all affected food was discarded, ServePro conducted a full deep cleaning of the premises, a professional hood cleaning was completed, and a pre-opening inspection was conducted before reopening.

Director's Report

Ms. McCartin reported that the Farmers' Market will return to Fletcher Park for the upcoming season due to the high school construction, and that pre-planning meetings are underway to address the smaller footprint and related logistics. She also noted that staff have begun coordinating with the Town Manager's Office and other departments regarding food trucks and food vendors for Patriots' Day, including timelines for inspections and permit submissions. In addition, she reported that two ongoing housing cases continue to require significant staff time.

Tobacco Control Update

Ms. McCartin reported that tobacco permits expire at the end of January. All but one establishment has renewed its permits. The remaining permit holder has until January 31 to complete the renewal.

Board of Health Member- Committee Liaison Reports

Dr. Heiger-Bernays stated that there is no update for the Turf Working Group and mentioned that there is no update for the Semi-Quincentennial Commission beyond the previously noted planning for Patriots' Day.

Dr. Heiger-Bernays shared an update from Dr. Tung, who is the Board of Health representative on the Crematory Committee. The committee reviewed alkaline hydrolysis (water cremation) as an alternative to flame cremation, including cultural, environmental, legal, and financial considerations. While noted to have fewer environmental impacts, the process is not currently legal in Massachusetts and is therefore not feasible at this time. The committee has concluded its research and reporting. Select Board Liaison Joe Pato requested committee members' views on whether a Lexington-based crematory is recommended at this time. Further discussion is anticipated at a future meeting.

Mr. Sandeen reported that the Bicycle Advisory Committee is actively discussing electric bicycle safety concerns and holding additional meetings to develop recommendations. The committee is working to clarify the definition of e-bikes and develop safety recommendations. Dr. David Geller noted that the key issue is not whether e-bikes should exist, but rather who is allowed to ride them and at what age. He suggested that public safety education may be necessary. Mr. Sandeen added that the committee is working with the Lexington Police Department to develop simplified public guidance regarding e-bike laws.

The Board discussed that the primary issue is public safety, including rider age and enforcement, rather than the presence of e-bikes. The Board agreed to monitor developments and revisit the issue at a future meeting.

Adjournment

Dr. Geller made a motion to adjourn at 8:10 p.m.

Ms. Escott seconded the motion.

The motion was approved unanimously.