

**HUMAN SERVICES SUBCOMITTEE OF THE WARRANT COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
Friday, April 2, 2021
Virtual Zoom Meeting
10:00 a.m.**

**RECEIVED
TOWN CLERK
BELMONT, MA**

DATE: April 16, 2021
TIME: 10:21 AM

Committee Members Virtually Attending:

Chair Bob McLaughlin; Member Jenny Fallon, Member Lynn Read

Also in attendance:

Wesley Chin, Director of the Health Department

The Chair, Bob McLaughlin, called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. on April 2, 2021 and recited the protocol permitted under Governor Baker's Executive Order of March 12, 2020 suspending certain provisions of the open meeting law. The Chair took a roll call attendance.

The purpose of the meeting was for the Human Services Subcommittee to meet with the Health Department to discuss the FY22 Health Department Budget.

The proposed Budget showed a total of \$604,961 which represented a 1.4% increase over the FY21 Budget, which will remain the same even if the Belmont override is unsuccessful (pp. 71-74 of the Budget Book), because the Department's budget is a small percentage of the Town budget and the Town recognizes that the demands on the Health Department resulting from the COVID pandemic will continue into FY 2023.

The Director explained that the department usually has four full-time employees, which include the Director, an Assistant Director, an Animal Control Officer and Public Health Program Assistant. Part-time employees include a 20-hour per week youth and family coordinator/social worker and 26-hour Veterans service officer and a 19-hour per week youth coordinator.

The COVID-19 pandemic put enormous demands on the Health Department for testing, contact tracing, and other demands resulting from COVID. The Director explained that they received a \$22,000 grant from the state and an \$80,000 grant from the federal government to augment their personnel to deal with their increased duties. As a result, the department brought back its part-time summer environmental health intern as a full-time employee and added three part-time trainees. The Director pointed out that Belmont shares a public health nurse 14 hours per week with Lexington.

The pandemic has highlighted the Town's need for a Social Worker to provide services for senior residents who became especially isolated due to social distancing and have identified the Health Department as part of their support system. To the extent that social work services are delivered as a result of the pandemic, some federal money might reimburse the Town. However, the need for a Social Worker to provide services for senior residents who are isolated has been a constant need of the Town for many years and will extend beyond the pandemic. In the long term, these services may come through the Council on Aging or the Health Department.

Because of the pandemic demands on the department, the restaurant inspections were suspended and the Veterans Service Officer and the Animal Control Officer undertook much broader duties to help with the increased demands upon the department. Some Health Department staff have been working 70 to 80 hours a week, a level that is not sustainable. Belmont's ability to address Disease Control can improve only if the Town has a full-time Public Health Nurse.

It was noted that the part-time position of youth coordinator has experienced several turnovers which appears to be because it usually is staffed by a graduate student who moves on at the end of the year.

There being no further business to come before the meeting, the meeting was adjourned at 11:10 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Chairman Robert E. McLaughlin, Sr.