

October 10th, 2024 Meeting Minutes

11:00 am -1 pm EST

In-person: 25 Bryant Ln, Tyngsborough, MA 01879

**Voting members in attendance:**

Kristel Bennett, Billerica

Donna Greenwood, Chelmsford

Shannon Gillis, Tewksbury

Angela Lemire, Tyngsborough

**Non-voting members in attendance:**

Shelagh Collins, Billerica

Cynthia Baker, BME Strategies

Haleigh Schultz, BME Strategies

Ashley Pavlakos, Regional Public Health Nurse

**Voting members absent:**

Kerri Oun, Tyngsborough

## **I. Opening**

4/4 voting members present, quorum was met.

### **Motion to start the meeting**

Kristel made a motion to start the meeting. Shannon seconded the motion.

Billerica: Y

Chelmsford: Y

Tewksbury: Y

Tyngsborough: Y

**All in favor.**

Haleigh called the meeting to order at 11:11 am.

### **Approval of previous meeting minutes**

Donna motioned to approve the September 2024 Coalition Meeting minutes. Kristel seconded the motion.

Billerica: Y

Chelmsford: Y

Tewksbury: Y

Tyngsborough: Y

**All in favor.**

## II. Announcements & Reminders

### A. Training Dates Recap

Housing Court training is scheduled for Tuesday, October 29th. The training will take place in Billerica from 11AM - 1PM. Please extend the invite to other department staff and folks who participate in clerical and housing-related matters.

The Hoarding Training Series is scheduled for January 14th and January 21st. These are all-day, virtual trainings, from 9AM - 4PM. Towns are encouraged to invite other stakeholders and partners, such as Hoarding Task Forces and Councils on Aging. The training is focused on understanding the root causes of hoarding, connecting folks with resources from an interdisciplinary standpoint.

### B. Expense & Reimbursement Form

The NEPHA Reimbursement form was approved during the September meeting. Please use this form for all expense and reimbursement requests. To submit a request, complete the form and send it to [health@tyngsboroughma.gov](mailto:health@tyngsboroughma.gov) with Haleigh and Cynthia on copy. With a tighter budget this year, tracking expenses will be extremely helpful for planning and reporting purposes.

### C. NEPHA Regional Staff Request Form

The Regional Staff Request Form was approved during the September meeting. Please use the form for all regional staff support requests, such as health clinics, inspection support, and special events.

### D. RS & CHO Renewal

Registered Sanitarian and Certified Health Officer credentials expire on December 31st. The renewal period opened on October 1st and runs through January 15th. To renew, log onto the Health Professions Licensing Portal and submit an online renewal application. 12 contact hours of CEUs are required for renewal. Additionally, there will be office hours for any questions or support requests. Office hours will take place on:

- Wednesday, November 6th - 9:30-10:30AM, 2-3PM
- Wednesday, December 11th - 10-11AM, 2-3PM

### E. Annual Notification Memorandum

As part of the requirements for grant administration, stakeholders from each municipality will receive an annual participation memorandum. This is a one-way communication to inform your municipality of PHE participation, including the commitment to shared services and funding

available within the PHE scope. No response is needed. By Friday, October 18th, please send Haleigh and Cynthia the names and emails of the following contacts for your town:

- Mayor, Town Administrator, or Town Manager
- Chief Financial Officer
- Select Board Chair or Board of Selectmen Chair
- Board of Health Chair

## F. IMA Amendment & Execution

As a reminder, the IMA amendment aims to de-identify individual Health Department staff to accommodate future staff changes and ensure sustainability in future years. The amendment leverages standard language proposed by MAHB. Please consider the amendment as part of your internal IMA review process. Upon execution, we are required to provide the amendment to DPH within 30 days. Please reach out to Cynthia and Haleigh for any additional IMA support. Two communities have already signed.

## G. OLRH Data Solutions Project

OLRH is undergoing a new project to build a data solution that all health departments across the state can use to collect, organize, share, and report public health data to streamline their daily work. This is meant to be a one-stop shop for many different user groups to leverage existing data, share new data, and continue expanding public health capacity. OLRH is currently looking for volunteers to participate in feedback processes across many different touch points, including 1:1 interviews, listening sessions, focus groups, office hours, and user testing of prototypes. If you are interested in participating in any of these touch points (your participation is based on your interest, availability, and capacity), please complete this [survey](#).

## III. **Budget Status & Contingencies**

### A. Options for shifting FY25 funds

To recap our last conversation, we voted to shift \$1,500 from technology software and \$1,000 from travel to pad the training budget. The current training allotment covers all training requests to date, but does not provide a buffer for future training opportunities. Providing coverage for training is one of the strongest use cases for PHE funding, and we don't want to cut opportunities short. Moving forward, we have an opportunity to communicate very clearly and proactively about where we want coverage using PHE funds.

In addition to the funding freed up during our September meeting, the update in Relavent licenses not only reduced redundancy, but also freed up an additional several thousand dollars. The current Technology Software estimate accounts for all licenses, with a \$2,000 buffer for future hires. We can also expect additional funding available from the fringe allocation originally budgeted for the

Inspector role. If we go the full contractor route, we will free up approximately \$9k in fringe benefits previously allocated to the 0.5 FTE.

**B. Opportunities for Budget Expansion**

As funds shift, we have many opportunities for reallocation, including digitization closeout, additional training capacity, and additional translation opportunities within the Health Communications line. We will continue to monitor expense requests and contingencies and plan accordingly. A budget modification is likely coming in the next couple of months.

## **IV. Inspector JD Review**

**A. 0.5 FTE vs Contractor**

Based on previous conversations, it sounds like the preference for additional inspectional capacity is through a contractor with a primary focus in food protection. A contractor will allow additional scheduling flexibility, with appropriate training and experience upon hire. In addition to freeing up municipal inspectors currently focused on food protection, this will hopefully expand Arielle's capacity for prospective programmatic planning, such as education and outreach opportunities.

Haleigh asked whether this still feels like the most appropriate option and captures each town's need. The group discussed time commitment, and whether there is enough demand for the role to appeal to a contractor. Angela and Shannon both confirmed that Tyngsborough and Tewksbury are looking for an additional ~5 hours per week. Chelmsford and Billerica could leverage the additional hire as necessary for emergency, weekend, and surge support. Donna noted that Chelmsford is still fairly self-sufficient and would rarely need additional regional staff support. Angela elaborated that with additional coverage, there would also be an opportunity to fill weekly hours with ServSafe course offerings and additional educational outreach. Ashley flagged the challenge of marketing this role in a job description; are they on call or guaranteed a set schedule? The group agreed that this will be a challenging hire, but it's worth putting out a request for the ideal position, then making adjustments as necessary based on response.

The group discussed gaps in current coverage, and how the coalition might be able to leverage additional inspectional support. Everyone agreed that in order to move forward, more reflection on an individual town basis needs to be done to best understand current coverage and needs. The barriers identified in the conversation include scheduling, vacation time, sick time, and additional external commitments. The group decided to table the hiring decision for now, with the intention of reassessing individual needs and regrouping at the next meeting.

### **Motion to table**

Kristel motioned to table remaining Regional Inspector hiring-related agenda items. Shannon seconded the motion.

Billerica: Y  
Chelmsford: Y  
Tewksbury: Y  
Tyngsborough: Y  
**All in favor.**

## V. Review of FY24 Backup Documentation Audit

### A. Overview & Results

The Backup Documentation Audit was conducted during FY24 and originally presented at the May coalition meeting. Bringing these results back, Haleigh and Cynthia want to revisit the audit and opportunities for further engagement. The audit was originally conducted to assess food protection and housing documents used during routine inspections and follow-up orders, with the goal of better understanding completeness, compliance, and opportunities for training and tailoring across the coalition. In FY25, the group committed to leveraging the audit to improve food protection and housing inspection processes, as outlined in Performance Standards 3 and 4.

The food protection results demonstrate opportunity for improvement across all towns, with the caveat that the software used, templates, and types of documents differ across the coalition. Similarly, the housing document assessment outlines areas of opportunity for improved inspections. The audit results can provide insight into opportunities to expand training, tailor and update templates to better prompt inspectors, and identify areas of inconsistency across towns. The group confirmed that they have not engaged with the audit results since the spring and would like to review individual results internally to better understand options for engaging with stakeholders.

Cynthia and Haleigh will share back individual town results. Before the next coalition meeting, one-on-one town meetings will be scheduled to provide a deep dive into results. At a future coalition meeting, the group will discuss engaging vendors to tailor inspectional software and templates.

## VI. Workplan Check-In

### A. Dashboard Check-In

So far, the coalition has made great progress in all FY25 workplan areas.

- PS1 aims to improve food protection staffing capacity, with a goal of hiring additional inspectional support by the end of November. As the group continues to navigate the hiring conversation, this timeline might change.
- PS2 aims to facilitate training opportunities to strengthen housing inspection capacity. Both the Housing Court and Hoarding trainings have been sourced and scheduled. Future

activities include designing a hoarding case management SOP and integrating translation and interpreting services.

- PS3 & PS4 aim to improve Food Protection and Housing inspection processes. The group is on track with the proposed timeline to review the FY24 backup documentation audit and engage vendors to improve templates and documentation.
- S1 outlines the development of a Communications Plan. The plan is well underway, with the opportunity to build out additional areas in the coming months. Moving forward, convening regional staff for collaborative meetings on a more regular basis will help further this objective.
- E1 aims to explore Maternal and Child Health opportunities. The first Community of Practice meeting is scheduled for Thursday, November 7th. All regional staff members are invited to attend.

Haleigh highlighted areas of success for workplan objectives so far, including the development of shared resources and standard operating procedures to optimize internal collaboration. Future priorities include inspector hiring, documentation audit engagement, training facilitation, and digitization closeout.

## VII. Community Updates

Ashley described her new course, which has been condensed to 8 weeks in a hybrid format. She would love to expand the reach to engage more individuals across all communities. Upcoming events include flu clinics, Trunk or Treat, and a Coat Drive (organized by Siobhan). The Mammogram Van will be back on November 7th.

Chelmsford is also busy with flu season! Donna spoke to the town's home vaccine program, which was recently advertised in tandem with Meals on Wheels. The flyer has attracted additional community engagement. The town is still offering a depression and anxiety support group, which they would love to extend to other neighboring towns. The Fall Festival went great.

Kristel provided a staffing update, as Billerica has a new Head Clerk. Now that the office is fully staffed, the town is busy with upcoming flu clinics.

Angela is looking forward to a quieter month in Tyngsborough after a very busy September. Flu and COVID vaccination clinics are upcoming. The town had to cancel the Self Defense Class, but they hope to offer the course sometime in the winter. Siobhan's recent roller skating event went extremely well, and had an impressive turnout. Future activities hope to provide additional sober-friendly events tailored to men.

## VIII. Adjournment

The next regular coalition meeting will be held in-person in **Chelmsford on Monday, November 18th, from 11AM - 1PM.**

### **Motion to adjourn the meeting**

Shannon motioned to adjourn the meeting. Kristel seconded the motion.

Billerica: Y

Chelmsford: Y

Tewksbury: Y

Tyngsborough: Y

**All in favor.**

**Meeting adjourned at 1:00 PM.**

### **Documents used by the public body during the meeting:**

NEPHA October Meeting Slides

# NEPHA Coalition Meeting



October 10th, 2024



BME STRATEGIES



# Meeting Opening

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# Agenda

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- I. Opening
- II. Announcements & Reminders
- III. Budget Status & Contingencies
- IV. Inspector JD Review
- V. Review of Documentation Audit
- VI. Workplan Check-In
- VII. Community Updates
- VIII. Adjournment

Approval of September 2024 meeting  
minutes

# Announcements & Reminders

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# Upcoming Training Dates

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- Housing Court Training - October 29th
  - 11am - 1pm in Billerica
- Hoarding training series scheduled for January 14th & January 21st
  - Virtual, 9am - 4pm

# NEPHA Internal Processes

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## Expenditure Request/Reimbursement Form

- The NEPHA Reimbursement Form was approved - please use for all spending requests

## NEPHA Regional Staff Request Form

- The Regional Staff Request was updated and approved - please fill out the [Google Form](#) for regional staff support requests

# RS & CHO Renewal

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## Registered Sanitarian & Certified Health Officer Renewal

- All credentials expire on 12/31/24 - the renewal period will run from 10/1/2024 through 1/15/2025
- Technical support office hours for RS/CHO renewal will be held on:
  - Wednesday, 11/6 from 9:30-10:30 AM and 2:00-3:00 PM
  - Wednesday, 12/11 from 10:00-11:00 AM and 2:00-3:00 PM
- Please reach out to [rs.cho@mass.gov](mailto:rs.cho@mass.gov) for more info

# Annual Notification Memorandum

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By October 31st, each town is to receive a notification of participation from the lead municipality.

**We kindly ask municipalities to share the following contacts and email addresses:**

- Mayor, Town Administrator, or Town Manager
- Chief Financial Officer
- Select Board Chair or Selectmen Chair
- Board of Health Chair

**Please send this information to Haleigh & Cynthia by Friday, October 18th**



Memorandum

To: Mayor/Town Administrator/Town Manager  
Chief Financial Officer  
Select Board Chair/Board of Selectman Chair  
Board of Health Chair

From: INSERT VENDOR

Date: *No later than October 31 of each fiscal year*

Subject: PHE Participating Municipality Statement of Commitment Annual Notification

As you are likely aware, the TOWN/CITY of INSERT NAME is a member of a Shared Service Arrangement INSERT NAME funded through a Public Health Excellence for Shared Services (PHE) Grant from the Office of Local and Regional Health (OLRH). Each participating community signed a Statement of Commitment affirming that your municipality understands and intends to:

- Work with the lead municipality/agency to ensure compliance with the scope of services for the Public Health Excellence Grant Program for Shared Services.
- Use funds provided under this program only to augment rather than replace current municipal funding for public health staff or services.
- Join only this one public health shared service arrangement.

Participating municipalities shall not use services and resources provided by the Public Health Excellence to supplant municipal funding to public health. However, municipalities may reallocate public health funds across budget-line items within the health department or board of health budget.

We thank you for your participation in the Public Health Excellence for Shared Services Grant Program and for helping your community expand and improve public health services. If you have any questions, please contact INSERT VENDOR POINT OF CONTACT AND EMAIL.

# IMA Amendment & Execution

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- The Amendment aims to de-identify individuals to accommodate future staff changes, increasing future IMA sustainability
- Some feedback on the language outlined in the Amendment - we are leveraging the template and language proposed by Rich Mucci
- Two communities have already signed

# OLRH Data Solutions Project

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- New project aiming to provide better, faster, more actionable and equitable public health insights for Massachusetts communities
- OLRH is looking for volunteers from local public health to share insights - what you need and want to improve your work with data (collecting, reporting, and analyzing) and daily tasks
  - Touchpoints include listening sessions, focus groups, 1-1 interviews, office hours, and user testing with solution prototypes

If you're willing to participate in any of these touchpoints, please fill out [this form](#) to indicate your interest.

# Budget Status & Contingencies

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# Options for Shifting FY25 Funds

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## Relavent

- \$25,500 allotted for Technology Software following budget modification approval at our September meeting → \$18,500 after Relavent updates
  - \$16,500 for current Relavent usage (inclusive of anticipated additional Inspector seats), \$2,000 buffer

## Inspector Hire

- Originally budgeted \$30,400 for a 0.5 FTE inspector for surge support and coverage
  - Contractor: Paid an hourly rate not to exceed our outlined salary
  - Original Fringe Allocation: \$9,120

# Budget Flexibility

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With additional funding freed up from Technology Software and expected shifts in Inspector salary based on the hiring timeline, we can:

- Contribute to ongoing digitization wrap-up
- Finalize increased funding available for training
- Support further translation of Community Resource Guide
- Fund other opportunities as they arise

# Inspector JD Review

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# Regional Inspector Role Development

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## Decision Making & Next Steps

- 0.5 FTE vs. contractor
- Job Description approval
- Hiring subcommittee determination



# Review of Documentation Audit

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# Documentation Audit Summary

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- Food protection and housing inspection-related documents were assessed for completeness and compliance with regulatory requirements
- The audit hopes to identify areas where backup documentation or internal processes can be improved, to develop a more comprehensive, consistent, and compliant inspection process for both inspectors and establishments
- We committed to addressing these areas in our workplan - Performance Standards 3 & 4 aim to improve Food Protection and Housing inspection processes

# Food Protection Results

Routine Food Establishment & School Inspection	Billerica	Chelmsford	Tewksbury	Tyngsborough
Temp food and equipment	Y	N	Y	Y
Note whether sanitizer is onsite	N	Y	Y	Y
Note which types of food and equipment are temped	N	N	N	Y
Test quality of sanitizer	N	N	N	Y
Notate inspector time in and time out	N	N	N	Y
Record owner's name and contact information	N	Y	Y	Y
Note repeat violations or specific follow-up on inspection form	N	N	Y	N
Check off all boxes in inspection report (even if in compliance)	Y	N	Y	Y
Completion of 2 routine inspections per year (from sample inspections)	N	N	N	N
Frozen Food Dessert	Billerica	Chelmsford	Tewksbury	Tyngsborough
Lab reports completed monthly	N/A	Y	Y	N
Variances and Plan Reviews	Billerica	Chelmsford	Tewksbury	Tyngsborough
Approval/rejection letters are adequate	Y	Y	Y	N/A
Plan review checklist for inspections	Y	N	N	N
Preoperational requirements list	Y	N	N	N
HACCP Plan	Billerica	Chelmsford	Tewksbury	Tyngsborough
Includes employee training logs and attestation	N	N	N	N
Includes pH meter reading	N	N	N/A	N
Includes letter verifying the source of fish	N	N/A	N/A	N
Includes log of parasite destruction	N	N/A	N/A	N
Checked acidification of rice	N	N	N/A	N

# Housing Results

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Opportunities for improvement:

- Explicitly identify conditions deemed to endanger or impair health or safety if violation remains 5 days after the owner is notified
- Ensure inspection reports are signed
- Identify violations by regulatory citation (specific provision of CMR 410.00 or similar)
- Orders to Correct:
  - Must state which specific violations are deemed by BOH to justify finding unfit
  - Should be sent in a timely manner
  - Should explicitly state that re-inspection is required
  - Must advise the owner that conditions exist that may allow the occupant to exercise their legal rights

# Workplan Check-In

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# NorthEast Public Health Alliance



**NEPHA**  
NORTH EAST PUBLIC  
HEALTH ALLIANCE

<b>Public Health Excellence Grant</b>	<b>FY25</b>	<b>T1</b>
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Budget	Spent	Allocated
\$ 466,656.23	\$0	\$ 466,656.23

	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Next Steps	Due	Status
<b>PS1: Enhance Food Protection staffing capacity</b>	SOP	Develop inspector JD	Post job		Hire	Onboard			Mentorship and shadowing for 0.5 FTE inspector				Approve Inspector JD and post the role by the end of October (either contractor or 0.5 FTE)	10/31	Behind Schedule
<b>PS2: Facilitate training opportunities to strengthen Housing inspection capacity</b>	Source court training	Source hoarding training		Ensure Food Protection inspection requirements are met				Update housing inspection forms	Design hoarding case management SOP	Integrate translation & interpretation services			Facilitate Housing Court training on October 29th	10/29	On track
<b>PS3&amp;4: Improve Food Protection and Housing inspection processes</b>	Re-review audit	Review inspection forms		Work with vendors to update software	Share updated checklists and best practices				Integrate translated guidance for operators				Identify opportunities for improvement and work with vendors to update software	1/31	On track
<b>S1: Develop communications plan</b>	Develop standardized protocols	Initiate and hold monthly regional staff collaborative meetings to track workplan progress and co-design deliverables		Design feedback mechanisms	Develop regional staff support request form and tracking								Begin monthly regional staff meetings and outlining desired communications protocols	10/31	On track
<b>E1: Explore MCH opportunities</b>				Quarterly Community of Practice meetings with OLRH	Assess NEPHA birth data	Engage NEPHA partners			Create resource guide	Outreach plan with translation and interpretation			Attend first OLRH Community of Practice meeting in November	11/7	Not started

# Progress & Upcoming Activities

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## Progress to Date:

- Initial development of the NEPHA Communications Plan
- NEPHA Regional Staff Request SOP development
- Community Resource Guide
- Progress with Relavent planning and increasing inspectional capacity
- Hiring SOP development

## Upcoming Activities:

- Inspector hiring
- Documentation audit revisit - work with vendors to improve backup documentation and software
- Trainings: Housing Court and Hoarding Training Series
- Digitization closeout

# Community Updates

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# Meeting Adjournment

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## **Next Meeting**

Proposed date?

11AM-1PM

*Who would like to host?*