



# Advisory Board Minutes - Meeting 1

**Date:** March 20, 2025

**Time:** 12:00 PM - 1:00 PM

**Location:** Essex Town Hall, 30 Martin St, Essex, MA 01929

## Participants

- ☐ Paul Vernucci
- ☐ Jessie Palm
- ☐ Dennis Palazzo
- ☐ Jeff Thomas
- ☐ Erin Kirchner
- ☐ David Smith
- ☐ Ray Cahill
- ☐ Barbara McCarthy
- ☐ Kate O'Hara
- ☐ Peter Mirandi (Remote)
- ☐ Andrew Ting (Remote)

~~Joseph Pessimato~~

## Introductions & Backgrounds

- **Paul Vernucci** (Regional Shared Services Coordinator): EMS background. During COVID, worked for the CDC at a quarantine site, then helped launch a testing and vaccine center at Worcester State.
- **David Smith** (Hamilton Board of Health Chair): Background in public health and environmental health impact regulation.
- **Dennis Palazzo** (Regional Health Inspector): Former Director of the Hamilton Health Department.
- **Barbara McCarthy** (Rockport Board of Health Chair): Nursing background, with expertise in infection control, environmental safety, and disaster planning.
- **Jessie Palm** (Regional Social Worker): 20 years in social work, with a focus on prevention, education, and community health.

- **Kate O'Hara** (Social Worker Intern): MSW student with experience in nursing homes, interested in preventive and community-based work.
- **Ray Cahill** (Rockport Health Director): Background in veterinary medicine; recent transition to public health with strong interest in epidemiology and community service.
- **Erin Kirchner** (Essex BoH Administrator): 20 years in local public health; including EMS
- **Jeff Thomas** (Essex Administrative Clerk): Diverse background in automotive manufacturing, x-ray technology, phlebotomy, and massage therapy.
- **Dr. Andrew Ting** (Wenham BoH Chair): Background in epidemiology, medicine, healthcare management, and advertising; 15 years on the Board of Health.
- **Peter Mirandi** (Hamilton Health Director): Extensive experience in emergency preparedness and pandemic response; formerly served in Danvers and Reading.

## **Nurse Staffing Challenges & Job Description Discussion**

- Two hiring rounds for a regional nurse were unsuccessful:
  - One candidate requested part-time, remote work at \$120k/year
  - Another candidate (based in Warwick, RI) was unfamiliar with location of Rockport
- Job description is being reworked with committee input and HR support
- Other towns have shifted toward hiring epidemiologists due to nurse shortages
- New proposed title: Regional Public Health Liaison

## **Suggestions**

- Soften supervisory language in job description to promote collaboration with local RNs
- Emphasize flexibility (scheduling, part-time options, etc.)
- Consider a broader clinical background (e.g., MPH, microbiology, epidemiology)
- Highlight public health vs. clinical/hospital nursing roles to attract better-aligned applicants

## **Key Role Functions Identified**

- Vaccination clinics

- MAVEN case investigation and backup
- Infectious disease control
- Emergency preparedness
- Community education (e.g., mental health, nutrition, maternal support)
- Program development and collaboration

## **Job Design Recommendations**

- Full-time role supported to ensure presence in all four towns
- Openness to candidates from a range of clinical/public health backgrounds
- Broader advertising: local colleges, MPH programs, LinkedIn, public health coalitions

## **Regional Inspector Discussion**

- Rockport's short-term rental inspection bylaw will significantly increase inspection needs
- Suggestion to develop a regional response model and standardize:
  - Tobacco regulations
  - Septic inspections
  - Fee structures
- Mention of mutual aid agreements as a helpful solution for interim support
- Paul encouraged the use of the shared Google form for regional service requests
- Feedback on customizing the form is welcome

## **Regional Social Worker Update**

- Jessie announced Youth Mental Health First Aid trainings in May hosted by Gloucester Prevention Network
- Free 8-hour trainings for adults who work with youth (parents, teachers, coaches, public safety staff)
- Certification provided; trainings scheduled in Essex, Rockport, Manchester, and other towns
- Dates:

## **Website & Information Sharing**

- Planned updates to the regional public health website:
- Meeting agendas and minutes

- \* Community resources
- \* Training calendar
- \* Forms and shared documents
- \* North Shore Public Health Collaborative (NSPHC) was suggested as a model for website structure.
- \* Links to each town's Board of Health

### **Future Meetings**

- \* Monthly meetings agreed upon to maintain momentum
- \* Locations will rotate between towns
- \* Doodle poll will be sent to coordinate the next meeting

*Respectfully submitted as approved  
at the 17 June 2025 Board  
meeting by:*

*DAVID B. SMITH, Chair*

*Eastern Essex Regional Public  
Health Coalition Advisory Board*

*D Smith*

*6/30/2025*