

Local boards of health in Massachusetts are governed by state statutes and regulations and perform many important and crucial duties relative to the protection of public health, the control of disease, the promotion of sanitary living conditions, and the protection of the environment from damage and pollution.

These include:

- Protection of the food supply through inspections of restaurants and other food establishments; inspections and permitting of septic systems, landfills, and other solid waste facilities
- Health care and disease control, including timely reporting and response to infectious diseases, occupational health and safety violations, food poisoning, and rabies
- Inspections of camps (for example, at Audubon)
- Enforcement of state lead poisoning regulations and sanitary code in housing
- Enforcement of no-smoking laws
- Helping with hoarding situations that are reported by individuals, the building department, the assessor, or public safety officers. The Board works with the State through the Attorney General's office if they aren't able to make sufficient progress on their own.
- Developing, testing, and building awareness of emergency preparedness plans for a wide range of hazards. We are part of the Department of Public Health Region 2 preparedness planning and do annual flu clinic drills. We are an Emergency Dispensing site for situations such as H1N1 a few years ago and will be for COVID vaccines hopefully soon.
- A wide array of other responsibilities including issuing burial permits, regulating pesticides, and issuing health reports

The Massachusetts Association of Health Boards summarized the [Duties of Local Boards of Health in Massachusetts](#).

The Selectboard appoints Board of Health (BOH) members to staggered three-year terms. There are three regular members and an alternate (one-year term) who can deliberate and vote if needed for a quorum.

The current members are Greg Dowdy, chair, a fountain of local knowledge and institutional memory who has been on the Board for over 20 years; Jim Hillis, who has a master's in food science and has been on the Board for about 12 years; Larry Greene, a civil engineer who has been on for one year; and Dianna Gubber-Markley MSN (c) BS, RN who is in her second year as an alternate. The Board has been assisted for about 22 years by Town employee Terri Longtine.

Princeton's BOH is a member of the Montachusett Public Health Network (MPHN), a public health district created under the Massachusetts Department of Public Health District Incentive Grant Initiative. MPHN is a collaboration of the following eleven community Boards of Health: Athol, Clinton, Fitchburg, Gardner, Leominster, Phillipston, Princeton, Royalston, Sterling, Templeton, and Westminster. Through our participation with the MPHN, we can share services and programs with other member towns. Services provided by the MPHN include but are not limited to inspectional services such as housing, food establishment, and Title 5 inspections and nursing services such as infectious disease and food borne illness tracking investigations utilizing MAVEN (Massachusetts Virtual Epidemiologic Network) in member communities. Member communities select from the 'cafeteria-style' services offered by the MPHN, sign an Inter-Municipal Agreement (IMA), and are invoiced for those services requested. Princeton has elected to engage the MPHN for their drugs & sharps program and their public nursing services and pays \$1500 a year in dues and fees for this.

In Princeton, the Board is focusing on:

- Residential trash: ensuring only licensed contractors are in Town, negotiating with Wheelabrator in Millbury to take our trash from those contractors, and working as part of the Waste & Recycling Committee on future trash removal options for our residents.
- Sewage Disposal Systems: monitoring and ensuring that any Title V inspections and newly installed systems meet the criteria set forth in the MA Title V regulations. The BOH inspector witnessed 54 Title V inspections in 2019 and 37 so far this year. They have been busy with many reviews of new septic designs and installations.
- Food Establishments: inspecting all establishments licensed to provide food to the public, including school lunch services, and investigates any complaint filed against such provider. There is currently a total of 19 establishments, residential kitchens and farmers market participants in Town that require inspections. A couple of the big and visible projects were the new Mountainside Market, Monti's Farm, and the Senior and Community Center kitchens.
- Mercury Recovery Program: continuing to participate in Wheelabrator's program encouraging recycling of products containing mercury. If you have fluorescent light bulbs, button cell batteries, or other items containing mercury, contact the Board to arrange for disposal.
- Agricultural regulation review and enforcement (for example, looking at backyard chicken coops and horses on a parcel).
- Rabies clinics were done in Town but are now regional (rabies is a risk to public health)

- Enforce Chapter II of the State Sanitary Code: Minimum Standards of Fitness for Human Habitation. Enforcement of Chapter II includes inspecting dwellings (upon request or at the Board's initiative) for compliance with the minimum standards, certifying violations, issuing orders, holding hearings, granting variances and instituting court proceedings if necessary.
- Enforce the State Lead Poisoning Prevention regulations which includes inspecting dwellings (upon request or at the Board's initiative) for lead paint, issuing orders for removal of lead paint, and instituting court proceedings if necessary.
- Investigate nuisances which, in the Board's opinion, may be injurious to health. The Board shall destroy, prevent or remove such nuisances, and shall make regulations relative to nuisances. For example, one resident could complain about the site of a neighbor's manure storage area.
- Though the Board may eventually take on more of a role related to PFAS, at this point they are kept in the loop by Tighe & Bond and the Town Administrator.
- The Board is involved in the monitoring of public water supplies in Town. Some of those are at Post Office Place, Mountain Barn, Princeton House of Pizza, the Congregational Church, Kwik Stop, and the Town Hall campus. These water supplies must be tested quarterly. PFAS testing has not yet been required for all public water supplies but it is coming.
- COVID-19: Coordinating with the Emergency Response Director (John Bennett) and MPH, reviewing event plans such as the Labor Day Tennis Tournament, looking at the library's reopening plan, investigating reported violations of the State's orders, and working with our food-related establishments on their procedures. Recently, Jim Hillis worked closely with Monti's Market when an employee contracted COVID-19. He helped them make plans for distributing pre-ordered turkeys safely and for quarantining exposed staff, cleaning the Market, and reopening.

Many people have asked how involved our BOH is with reporting COVID cases and contact tracing. This is one of the services that we receive from MPH. The Board can monitor the COVID situation in Town using MAVEN. As a further assistance to the Town, the Board will be posting weekly COVID numbers on the website.

Local Boards of Health are responsible for large amounts of data collection, reporting, and record retention.

Massachusetts does not provide dedicated state funding to support local public health core operations. Instead, the BOH is funded through the fees it collects. Though the Board has the right to impose fines, it doesn't at this point. The fees, unchanged since 7/1/13, are as follows:

Perc Test Application (one-time fee)	200.00 / Lot
Perc Test/Septic Design Extension (time extension)	50.00
Septic System Install/Repair	125.00
Revisions to SAS Plan ((soil absorption system or septic)	\$50.00
Title V Inspection	\$75.00
Final Inspection (Installed/Repaired) (septic)	\$75.00
Well Permit (permit to drill a new well)	\$100.00
Septic System Installers (yearly)	\$100.00
License to Haul Sewage (yearly. For a list, contact the Board.)	\$100.00
License to Haul Trash (yearly)	\$240.00
Common Victuallers (yearly. Every food service establishment with the capabilities for cooking, preparing, and serving food and which provides seating for the immediate consumption therein, is required to have a Common Victualler's license)	\$125.00
License to Operate	\$125.00
Milk/Frozen Food (yearly)	\$20.00
Temporary Food License (One Day)	\$50.00
Residential Kitchen/Catering (yearly. establishments such as produce growers and maple syrupers are not included)	\$75.00
Mobile Food Unit (yearly. food truck. None currently)	\$50.00
Massage Therapy (obsolete – State has taken over)	\$50.00

Tobacco Permit (yearlyto sell)	\$30.00
Stable License (yearly)	\$20.00
Piggery (yearly)	\$30.00

BOH members receive compensation for their services that is based roughly upon the fee charged. Most are compensated at 50% of the fee. PERC test compensation is \$30 for the first hour and \$15/hour after that. If there isn't a fee collected, no compensation is paid.

The Selectboard would like to thank the Board of Health for their assistance in the preparation of this letter.