



## COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL SERVICES AND VETERANS AFFAIRS

*Councilor Marianne LaBarge, Chair*  
*Councilor William H. Dwight*  
*Councilor Eugene Tacy*

### MINUTES

Monday, April 8, 2013

5:00 pm – 6:00 pm

City Council Chambers, 212 Main Street

Wallace J. Puchalski Municipal Building, Northampton, MA

1. **Members present/absent:** Councilor Marianne LaBarge, Councilor Gene Tacy. Absent - Council President Bill Dwight
2. **Meeting Called to Order:** 5:00 pm
3. **Announcement of Audio/Video Recording of Meeting:** Councilor Marianne LaBarge. Ruth McGrath is videotaping the meeting for Adam Cohen, Winning Writers.
4. Merridith O'Leary, RS Director of Public Health, City of Northampton spoke on Board of Health Core Functions and Essential Services. Her presentation described services including flu clinics, food recalls, bat control, hoarding, sharps disposal programs, food service inspection, childhood obesity, mosquito-borne illness, diabetes, increasing food portion sizes, Northampton Emergency Operation Center, bed bug inspections, restaurant inspections, examining the outside of dwellings, inspecting flaking- peeling paint for lead, pool inspections, rabies, tanning salon inspections, Bird flu-including a new one this year(H9N7), animal hoarding, piercing and tattooing inspections.

Mrs. O'Leary explained that Public Health is a huge umbrella. People don't understand the magnitude of it. The scope of services that the Board of Health provide are vast and forever changing, due to changes in the environment, acts of terrorism, shifts in behavior, science and technology. In 1859 the Sanitation Commissioner called for the establishment of local Boards of Health in every community in Massachusetts which are separate from City Government. They have autonomy from City Government. Currently in Massachusetts there are 351 local Boards of Health, and every single one of these local Boards of Health has "Home Rule" – meaning they get to make up their own policies and regulations. They can be different from surrounding town and communities. The Board of Health is the regulating authority, with their primary focus on setting policy and making regulations that will protect, preserve and improve the health of the community.

The total budget for FY13 was \$181,000.00. \$170,000.00 went to staff. \$11,000.00 was for operating and maintenance. By state mandate the Board of Health has two core functions: 1) Balance, reporting and control of communicable disease, and 2) enforcement of the State Department of Public Health State Sanitary Codes and Department of Environmental Title 5 Solid Waste Codes.

Last year, in 2012, West Nile Virus and EEE, Eastern Equine Encephalitis, scares all within our community. Normally people think of these mosquito borne diseases as a Central or Eastern Massachusetts problem. Not true. Mosquitoes cross boundaries and they are here. EEE is deadly. There is a 45% mortality rate with EEE. And those who don't die are usually left with lifelong neurological damage. This is a very serious disease. Mrs. O'Leary has found a trend in EEE case history. When there is an increase in cases one year, the following two years follow right behind it. So last year was our spike, now for the next two years, if history proves itself, we are going to have an increase in prevalence. This is monitoring. We're looking at elevated EEE and West Nile Virus for the upcoming 2 years.

- 5. City Councilor Marianne LaBarge, Chair, talked about the agenda for the Month of May 2013:**
- 6. Public Comment: No Public Comment**
- 7. Approval of Minutes of March 19, 2013. Approved: Councilor Eugene Tacy and Councilor Marianne LaBarge. Vote was Unanimous.**
- 8. NEW BUSINESS: There was no new business**
- 9. ADJOURN: 6:00 pm. Motion to adjourn was made by Councilor Marianne LaBarge and seconded by Councilor Eugene Tacy. Vote was Unanimous.**

*The next meeting is scheduled for May 20, 2013 at 5:00 pm.*