

Final Minutes

Discussion 2026 Budget for Departments Board of Health

Thursday February 18, 2025

Attended by:

Phil Rooney – Chairperson of Sub Committee

Kat Monahan – Member of Sub Committee

Mike Bodreau -Director Board of Health

Amanda Loomis – Director Community Development

Gloria Huang – Finance Administration

Tien Nguyen – Finance Administration

Todd Gillenwater – Chair Natick Finance Committee

John Townsend – Deputy Town Administrator/Finance Director

Absent:

Hossan Behery – Member of Sub Committee

Julian Munnich – Member of Sub Committee

Patricia Demeo – Member of Sub Committee

The meeting was called to order at 7:07. Motion to open meeting made by Todd Gillenwater and seconded by Kat Monahan. There were two department budgets discussed at this meeting. Separate Meeting Minutes have been issued for each discussion.

The discussions in these minutes are a summary of our meeting. The discussions were influenced by the written responses to questions previously submitted prior to the meeting by subcommittee members. We have attached the written responses from department leadership at the end of meeting minutes.

Our discussion with Bob began at 7:10.

Board of Health (BOH)

Mike was asked about the BOH Disaster Planning for the community. He informed us that If the Plan is activated the BOH will coordinate with the Police Department Emergency Management group. BOH will be responsible for managing the sheltering of people. They are constantly working with the Emergency Management to update plans and create/update definitions.

Mike was asked about regulations for livestock kept in Natick. He informed us the BOH is responsible for inspections. The department coordinates with the animal control officer to enforce and update regulations. Their goal is to educate, prevent, inoculate and provide guidance.

Mike next discussed activities of the department to protect aquifers, water tables and monitor/react to discharges. Members of his department have developed the qualitative skills to perform these functions.

Mike informed us the only inspection software in use by his department is Food Code Pro (contains data concerning food inspections). There are seven other communities using the system. It is supported by a grant from Mass. Dept of Health.

The committee's discussion with Mike concluded at 7:41.

The General Government Subcommittee voted 3-0 to recommend favorable action on the 2026 Budget with no override. The guidance from the Finance Committee Chair was to discuss and vote on the 2026 Budget information with no Override.

Board of Health Responses for 2025 Budget Significant Items and 2026 Budget Specific Questions of Finance Committee General Government Sub Committee

2026 Budgets General Questions

The 2026 Budgets (with and without override) as presented by the Town Administration; did you actively participate in the preparation? Do you agree with the data?

We have had several discussions and met directly with the Finance Department. The data is reasonable and appropriately explained based on spending trends and clearly delineated with and without an override.

Can you represent to the public that your ability to safely perform the department duties and service all departments with adequate risk protection can be done without an override? If not, please give detailed reasons.

As a department that does not function with significant capital costs and is more service driven, duties and services should not be compromised as the current scenario presented without an override does not affect staffing. Funding for line items such as Household Hazardous Waste Collection and Prevention and Outreach may be affected to maintain public resources.

Are there any open or pending department legal issues?

No

Board of Health Department 2025 Significant Items

Last year you stated all inspections for food and environmental are being performed by BOH employees. There were over 350 food establishments in Natick that require inspections. The department would use outside services to inspect when required. Each food establishment requires two inspections per year. YTD 2025 and for your 2026 budgeting are the number of food establishments similar in number? Are you employing external inspectors? Do you still perform two inspections per year?

Over a span of three years, the number of routine inspections of the Town's spectrum of food services have significantly increased. The Food Protection Program (FPP) oversaw the development and permitting of several large-scale food services in 2024. We anticipate continuing upward trends for FPP resources as development in Town continues. To reach our goal of performing two inspections for most food services, we continue to utilize a food consultant which is paid for through a general budget line item.

Has the department begun inspections for biological research facilities? Are you employing outside services to perform any of the inspections?

2024 was the first year we reviewed operations for biological research facilities for types of research, safety procedures, and agents used. Over 10 facilities were permitted (all were in operation before any regulation was enacted). All reviews or inspections were conducted in-house.

Does the State still assist with costs for Hazardous Waste Collection if costs exceed budgeted dollars?

Natick is part of a multi-community reciprocal collection program sponsored by the Department of Environmental Protection but does not receive funds if costs exceed budgeted dollars (any "out of Town" participants are required to pay the contractor directly at regular rates). We have coordinated with Natick's Sustainability Director who has supplemented set up fees through a grant program overseen by that office.

You informed us of your program to perform cross-training so that staff can respond to the demands of building development and associated activities. Is this activity still occurring? Are you experiencing operating efficiencies?

These activities are still occurring and empower our department to meet the demands for development and public responses for a range of Town issues.

Is your department still working closely with the Conservation Agent and Town Engineer to review and approve storm water and drainage management for the Town? Does your staff continue to train and learn all aspects of building development in Natick?

Yes, and yes

Is the Public Health Nurse still able to meet demands and mandated responsibilities for the Department?

Yes

In our discussion last year, you informed us staff have expressed an interest in applying the skill sets cross training provides and have helped the director respond to demands for soil tests and septic system installations. Are staff performing these inspections?

Staff are actively involved in cross training and have assisted the Director in responding to the needs of soil testing and septic system inspections. They are performing these inspections as well.

What is the status of grants for 2025 and 2026? Please list details of 2025 and 2026 grants and open grant requests.

We received an FDA Retail Food Safety Grant in 2024 in the amount of \$8,200 to enhance the Food Protection Program and facilitate new strategies to communicate with all local food services. Staff in the Health Department and the Natick 180 Office applied for and received a "Community Mental Health" Grant awarded by the MetroWest Health Foundation with a total of \$147,000 over 3 years (starting in 2025) to address community mental health concerns.

Is the cost of using FoodCode Pro still being supported through a MA DPH grant overseen by the Shared Services hub serving 7 other communities?

That is correct

Have you completed your assessment of using HousingCode Pro?

We have decided not to use HousingCode Pro at this time.

2026 Specific Budget Questions Board of Health

We have no further questions.

Thank you