

BOARD OF HEALTH

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John Maguranis, Animal Control Officer & Veterans Services Officer

Ellen O'Doherty, Administrative Assistant & Clerk of the Board
Lauren Becker, Youth Services Coordinator

Disease prevention and health promotion are the primary goals of the Health Department and are overseen by a three member elected Board of Health. State and federal departments of health mandate certain activities and suggest others based on research and national statistics. The Guidebook for Boards of Health guides local officials in mandated and suggested activities, considering local conditions and available resources.

Food sanitation is one of the most important activities of the Health Department because of the potential for serious foodborne illness. There are approximately 78 food service establishments in Town, including retail food stores, restaurants, catering establishments, bakeries and schools. Between one and three inspections are done at each of these establishments throughout the year depending on the relative risk of the operation and their level of compliance. Ice cream trucks, mobile food trucks, church halls and temporary food service events add approximately thirty additional inspections. Over 230 food service inspections are done each year. It was a very busy year with changes to the food establishment landscape: two establishments closed; two changed location; two changed their operations; one renovated current space; three had new owners; three are in process with openings planned in 2008 and six new establishments opened. The Farmers' Market opened June into October this year and continued to be an asset to the community. The Health Department licensed individuals handling food other than purely agricultural products at the Market this year and the procedure worked well.

A newsletter to food service establishments is published once or twice each year; an anti-choking workshop and an annual seminar are conducted for food service staff. This year's seminar again included a presentation by a new food establishment owner and an expert on integrated pest management. Local updated Food Manager Certification regulations became effective March 1, 2007, that require a certified food manager onsite all hours that a food establishment operates, which is stricter than the federal and State code.

The Health Department, under the authority of the State Sanitary Code, 105 CMR 410.000 Minimum Standards of Fitness for Human Habitation, responds to residents' complaints concerning possible health and safety violations in rental housing. After an inspection is done, an Order Letter is written to the property owner. The Health Department frequently facilitates negotiations between tenants and landlords, so that violations can be corrected as quickly as possible. Cases are occasionally resolved after court intervention. There were 20 housing complaints during this year, almost half of them coming in the last quarter and four involving lead paint issues, which are very time-consuming.

In addition to housing complaints, the Department responded to approximately 105 additional complaints that included inappropriate garbage/rubbish storage and disposal, air quality concerns, electric sanding, rodent problems and general safety issues. The Department is also responsible for inspecting 2 tanning salons, 4 day camps, 11 swimming pools at 6 sites, and 8 muscular therapy establishments. Although the Board of Health promulgated Body Art regulations in 2001, there are no establishments in Town currently. There are two facilities with biotechnology permits. Massage/Muscular Therapy regulations have been promulgated by the State and we anticipate rescinding the local regulations in 2008.

The Health Department was in the process of promulgating hazardous materials regulations but since the department remained one staff member short during this year, this project was put on hold. The Department hopes to complete the regulations and begin the permitting process in 2008.

The Board of Health is responsible for subsurface sewerage systems in the Town, under the Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP) regulations, commonly known as "Title 5." Soil testing, review of plans and oversight of construction are responsibilities of the Health Department. As properties are renovated or replaced, a significant number of them are connecting to Town sewer. With low-flow pump systems, additional homes are able to connect to Town sewer that would not have been able to previously with traditional methods. Very little Title 5 work was done by the Health Department this year. There are now inservice education requirements for certification every three years as System Inspectors and Soil Evaluators. Both the Director and Assistant Director are System Inspectors and the Assistant Director is also a Soil Evaluator.

The Department of Early Education and Care (DEEC) oversees child care facilities in the State and Belmont remains one of its "delegated communities." As such, the Health Department licenses the group day care, nursery school and after-school programs in the Town. A new day care facility opened and two programs at one site combined so that the total number of licensed group day care facilities remains at eleven, and there are six after-school programs. The Health Department is responsible for licensing these programs every two years and for complaint investigations. Family day care homes, both regular programs with no more than six children, and large family day cares with no more than ten children, are licensed directly by the DEEC.

The Board of Health contracts with CareGroup Home Care for nursing services at Town-sponsored clinics. Flu vaccine was plentiful this year, so the decision was made to return to the original flu clinic schedule. Elderly housing was done first and then clinics by appointment at the Senior Center. Belmont did participate in a regional clinic held in the Town of Arlington where 799 individuals were

served over 50 whom were Belmont residents. Medicare reimbursement is significant and Belmont's receipts should rise for this year due to the flu clinic schedule. There were 55 cases of reportable disease requiring follow-up this year, although without a public health nurse, the Director could handle only the most urgent cases first.

Despite the lack of State funding for tobacco control, the Health Department has continued to support education and retail compliance checks. In the absence of a public health nurse, the Health Department's Administrative Assistant compiled the equipment and worksheets for the Elementary School Nurses who teach the program, "Breathing Easy," to all of the third grade students. Compliance Checks to insure that tobacco retailers are not selling tobacco products to individuals under the age of eighteen were carried out through a tobacco collaborative, for which Belmont is the lead agency. Retailers did well this year with a total of three tickets being written. The average number of retailers in Town is 21. The local Tobacco Regulations were updated to reflect the 2005 State regulation changes and they became effective March 1st. The primary change was that workplace regulations are no longer included in the local regulations.

The Health Department's Administrative Assistant again facilitated the elementary school dental program. The Kindergarten classrooms were supplied with materials for four units on dental health during a specific month assigned to each school. Books, tooth models, plays, videos and other materials to be shared are delivered to each school at the beginning of its "Dental Health Month."

The Outreach Worker continued providing individual and family therapy, case management, and crisis intervention services to provide support to Belmont families. Basic necessities such as food and housing have become a high priority service in recent years. Collaborations with other Town departments and agencies continued to expand. The Girls' Group was very successful and there have been requests for a similar Boys' Group. The Outreach Worker is also an active member of the Community Coalition for Youth Safety, a group facilitated by the Health Department to assist in educating parents and students about risky behaviors and how to reduce the negative impact on families and the community. A letter from this group accompanied by a brochure entitled, "7 Ways to Protect Your Teen from Alcohol and other Drugs" was sent to all 9th grade parents in the fall.

Belmont continues its participation in the Minuteman Hazardous Products Facility located in Lexington. Eight towns comprise the core group operating the facility, although it is open to all towns with either the town or the resident paying the fee. It was also open to small businesses again this year, and the Health Department did send information to possible small quantity generators identified in the community. Belmont continues to pre-register through the Health Department office to insure that the program stays within its budget and approximately 20 families participate in each collection. Informal surveys indicate that as many as one third of the participants from Belmont are participating for the first time. The site continued to be open seven Saturdays and one Sunday, April through November. Prices skyrocketed this year and an additional appropriation will be requested from the Warrant Committee so that the April through June, 2008, collections are open to Belmont residents.

Belmont is one of approximately 25 cities and towns that comprise the East Middlesex Mosquito Control Project. It has been in existence since 1946 with Belmont being one of the original five towns. Each city and town contributes funds towards the overall maintenance and administration of the District and then additional funds cover specific services provided to each community. Mosquito control specific to Belmont includes adult mosquito surveillance by trapping, helicopter Bti (*Bacillus thuringiensis* var. *israelensis*) application in a small area of Beaverbrook Reservation and catch basin larval control. Because the land area of Belmont is quite small, one benefit of the Town's support of the District is the mosquito control activities actually carried out in adjacent towns with large areas of wetlands.

The threat of West Nile Virus, carried primarily by container-breeding mosquitoes, continues to affect the workload of the Health Department. Dead crows and blue jays with no signs of trauma are still being sent to the State lab to be tested for the virus. There were 15 dead birds reported to the Health Department, three sent to the State Lab and only one positive for West Nile Virus. There were also positive mosquito pools but no human cases reported in Belmont. The Health Department treated approximately 1900 catch basins twice this year, late June and July with assistance from the DPW. Under the Nuisance Regulations commercial establishments with tire storage were checked a couple of times to insure that they were in compliance. No tickets for inappropriate tire storage were issued.

Emergency preparedness continues to be an important aspect of the Health Department's work. Work on a Regional Emergency Planning Committee (REPC) in conjunction with the Fire and Police Departments and the DPW accelerated this year. To some extent it will take the place of our Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC) and allow us to collaborate with many surrounding towns. The Health Department continued to facilitate the Emergency Planning Group involving many Town departments and concentrates on emergency planning from a local government viewpoint. Participation in the Public Health Region 4b group not only encourages collaboration with surrounding communities but also allows the Health Department to receive some grant money to assist in emergency planning. A brochure on home preparedness was sent to each household in July and the Director took a display and presentation to several public gatherings to encourage residents to do their own family preparedness plan. The Emergency Planning Group started a project to identify those residents that may require more than the usual assistance in such things as emergency evacuations. Participation in regional drills such as the Arlington Flu Clinic and a mock chemical explosion in Lexington not only fulfilled certification requirements but assisted staff in being prepared. Belmont, along with the other communities in Region 4b, received an award for its work on "Project Public Health Ready."

Cable TV and the local newspaper continued to be used to share information concerning programs, clinics and health education. The Action for the Community Elderly (A.C.E.) Committee continues to provide opportunities for representatives of agencies serving the elderly in Belmont to network and offer support to each other. Participation in the Massachusetts Health Officers' Association (MHOA), the Massachusetts Environmental Health Association (MEHA), the Regionalization Working Group and the Massachusetts Association of Health Boards (MAHB) helps insure that the Department has the most current information for Belmont's residents.

Animal Control Officer

The Animal Control Officer logged over 5,400 miles as he patrolled the parks, streets and conservation areas of the Town. Approximately 9 dogs and 16 cats were put on quarantine due to bites; 10 animals because they did the biting and 15 because they received a bite. Six animals and birds were rescued and eight animals and birds were euthanized usually due to severe injuries. The ACO made 205 home visits, a large increase over last year; was dispatched by the Police Department 52 different times and 60 times by Health Department staff. Ten dogs and 45 cats were reported missing to the ACO or the Health Department, very similar to last year's numbers. All of the dogs were found and eventually returned to their owners; many of the cats return on their own without ACO involvement so the number of returned cats, 22, is lower than the number missing. Three bats were submitted to the State Lab for rabies testing and all were negative. Belmont again participated in the statewide push to vaccinate pets by holding a rabies clinic for dogs and cats on the first Saturday in April. The ACO continued to be very active throughout the State giving presentations on coyotes to residents, legislators, schools and other towns. A very generous resident donated a significant amount of money to the Town's animal control program and a company matched that amount due to the ACO's rescue work with a particular raccoon. The money is being used to purchase equipment and training that will enhance the ACO's abilities to respond to emergencies in the Town.

Sealer of Weights and Measures

The lack of a formalized training program for this position is still hampering the Department's ability to obtain full certification. The Assistant Director is acting as the Sealer of Weights and Measures for the Town. The Sealer did attend a training in New York State that was New York specific but still very helpful. There are approximately 300 devices that need to be sealed each year including 109 gasoline meters at thirteen gas stations; 18 taxicabs; scales at 5 pharmacies; scanners at three businesses and other miscellaneous measuring devices.

Youth Commission

The Health Director assists the Youth Commission in daily administrative tasks while the program goals are created by the members of the Commission who are appointed by the Board of Selectmen. The Youth Services Coordinator is the major facilitator of the Youth Commission programs. The Youth Center continues to be very successful on most Friday nights during the school year and averages forty students on regular nights and up to 100 on dance or special activities nights. The fourth annual "Belmont Unplugged" was a tremendous community success, especially the one "no homework and no Town meetings" night. Belmont Unplugged is an initiative that encourages families to "unplug" from electronics and "plug back in" to each other. Throughout the month of March a daily activity or event is suggested as an "unplugged" activity. The Commission continued to reach out to families with family movie nights and an "end of the year" barbecue. The Youth Commission continues to assist with the Food Pantry and collaborate with other agencies such as the Library on the babysitting course and the "band bash." Collaboration with the Outreach Worker has produced such successful programs as the "Golden Shoes" which is a month long campaign to get residents out walking! The Youth Services Coordinator and other members of the Commission are participating on the Community Coalition for Youth Safety.

Chuck Laverty became the Chairman in July and other Commission members include Dr. David Alper, Laurie Carlson, Laurie Graham, Anne Beré and Scott Stratford who serves as the School Committee Liaison. Many thanks go to Karen Freidberg who served on the Commission until the end of June.

Veterans Services

In 1946, the Massachusetts legislature created the Office of Veterans' Services and formalized Chapter 115 of the *Massachusetts General Laws*. The mission of the Department of Veterans' Services is to advocate on behalf of all Veterans, and to provide quality service and benefits to those Veterans and their dependents in need of emergency financial and/or medical assistance. The Town of Belmont, through the Board of Selectmen's appointment of the Veterans' Service Officer, continues to demonstrate its concern and compassion for those men and women who have served our Country with honor.

The Veterans' Services Officer is normally the first individual a Veteran or dependent contacts for advice and assistance. Being a Veteran does not mean benefits are automatic. The eligibility to receive entitlements from the Department of Veterans' Services and Veterans' Affairs must be determined and proven in accordance with strict State and federal laws, rules and regulations. Benefits are intended to be temporary in nature and not full time permanent support.

2007 was the third full year that the Veterans' Services Officer operated out of the Health Department. Regular office hours are from 10 am to 12 pm on Tuesday mornings. In addition to providing general support to those veterans who inquired during the course of 2007, this department also had the pleasure of participating in many events honoring our Veterans such as our Memorial Day Parade, Veterans' Day and Flag Day ceremonies, and school visitations. The Veterans Services Officer attended two veterans' conferences during the year in addition to monthly meetings. This office continues to be the liaison to the Belmont Allied Veterans Council, comprised of representatives of Waverley VFW Post 1272 and American Legion Post 165, insuring strong communication between all Veterans and this office. The Veterans' Services Officer was very active this year working with the veterans on issues surrounding the VFW Hall on Trapelo Rd.

Finally, the staff and Board of Health members would like to thank the other Town departments, boards and commissions for their support and assistance throughout the year.

Respectfully submitted,
Donna L. Moultrup, RN, CHO

(1) Robert M. Eisendrath, M.D. was elected to his seventh term in April.

Cases of Reportable Diseases by Years 1999-2007

	<u>1999</u>	<u>2000</u>	<u>2001</u>	<u>2002</u>	<u>2003</u>	<u>2004</u>	<u>2005</u>	<u>2006</u>	<u>2007</u>
Animal Bites	13	26	15	12	13	9	7	6	2
Campylobacter	5	4	8	10	12	6	117	16	
Chicken Pox	65	5	1	1	7	2	2	15	6
Giardiasis	4	3	5	5	2	4	1	2	3
Hepatitis	5	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	2
Lyme	3	7	4	3	4	10	5	14	9
Pertussis	2	7	5	1	1	2	3	1	6
Salmonellosis	4	6	2	2	0	4	1	3	2
Shigellosis						1	1	1	0

Cancer Deaths 2007

Breast	5	Prostate	2
Lung	13	Colon	4
Stomach	0	Pancreas	9
Ovary	2	Remaining Sites	13
Total		48	

Breakdown by age and gender available in the Health Department. This total will not correspond to the total under "All Cancers" in the death statistics below because this total includes more than the primary cause of death.

Deaths of Belmont Residents 2007

Heart Disease	22	All Cancers	45
Cerebrovascular Disease	9	Pneumonia & Influenza	18
Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease	9	Diabetes Mellitis	2
Liver Disease/Cirrhosis	4	Atherosclerosis	7
Accidents, Suicides	10	Alzheimers/Dementia	40
Poisonings, Violence		All Other Causes	49
Birth Injuries, Newborn	2		
Infections, Congenital Malformations			

Deaths recorded in the Town Clerk's office as of 2/05/08

TOTAL DEATHS 217