

Town of Sandisfield

Select Board
January 31, 2022

Minutes for Select Board Work Session with the Nursing Alliance, Board of Health, and Council on Aging held on Monday, January 31, 2022 at 6:00p.m. at the Town Hall Annex, 66 Sandisfield Road, Sandisfield, MA

Members present: George Riley, Alex Bowman, Steve Seddon, Kevin Flynn, Laura Kittross, Kim Spring, Anina Carr, Linda Riiska

Called to order at 7:00PM

1. Discuss nursing services provided by the Regional Public Health Nursing Program and concerns brought by the COA

Council on Aging Chair, Anina Carr reports that since the town has switched to the Regional Public Health Nursing Program they have only conducted a flu clinic. In the past, they have received a monthly blood pressure clinic. At this clinic, the nurse would also advise seniors on any medical questions they may have had. There has also been very little communication in regards to COVID.

Anina has reached out to RPHNP multiple times, but was told the agency was too busy/unable to devote time to Sandisfield residents. Senior Public Health Nurse, Leslie Drager recalls telling Anina they could come to Sandisfield “after the pandemic.” Anina states she is seeing neighboring towns receive additional clinics and workshops with other nursing programs.

Public Health Program Manager, Laura Kittross clarifies that the Regional Public Health Nursing Program is not a visiting nurse service; towns can hire private visiting nurse services through the VNA. RPHNP is contracted with the BOH to provide mandated services, and additional services the BOH feels are necessary, which often include work with the COA.

Laura presents a slideshow of the work RPHNP has done for Sandisfield over the last year. Work includes all mandated services, monitoring the MA Virtual Epidemiological Network, keeping the public safe by working to stop the spread of disease or tracing where a disease may have developed. Laura also notes that the town is paying for insurance, should a tuberculosis case occur, the nurses will provide nursing case management to them and confirm they are taking the proper medication.

Laura then goes over the diseases identified in Sandisfield in 2021 since RPHNP has been hired, which include two giardiasis cases, eight suspected lyme disease cases, and 89 COVID cases. All 89 COVID infected residents received a call and were assessed by a nurse. There have been an additional 35 COVID cases in 2022.

Other services RPHNP has provided include a flu clinic hosted at the Sandisfield Fire House, which gave 49 flu vaccinations to residents. Additionally, 489 COVID vaccines were given to residents at Berkshire Vaccine Collaborative sites.

Laura reports some of the future plans once the pandemic ceases, including wellness activities and chronic disease prevention. Some of the activities may include fall prevention, diabetes education, and tick-borne illness prevention. RPHNP plans to meet with the BOH to determine what activities would be the most beneficial for Sandisfield.

Alex Bowman questions whether RPHNP has been able to provide any additional services to any other towns. Laura confirms they have not, with exception to a few blood pressure clinics for the housing authorities which they paid for privately themselves. Laura estimates it will be another month or two before RPHNP can begin conducting blood pressure clinics and other wellness activities again.

Anina questions why high-dose flu vaccines were not offered during their flu clinics. Laura explains they have never offered the higher dose because the CDC does not recommend it, and while there might be a higher efficacy rate among seniors with the higher dose, there is also a higher chance of side-effects. Should the CDC recommend the higher dose, RPHNP will begin to offer it.

Anina notes that she would like there to be more communication between the BOH and the COA. Laura will make sure that Kim Spring and Leslie have each other's phone numbers so they can better keep in touch.

Meeting adjourned at 6:50pm.

George Riley

Alex Bowman

Steve Seddon