BOARD OF HEALTH

What Boards of Health Do

- Prevent epidemics and the spread of diseases
- Protect against environmental hazards
- Promote physical and mental health, welfare and safety
- Assure the availability and accessibility of quality health services
- Respond to disasters and assist communities in recovery

Your Board consists of three Lancaster residents elected for staggered three-year terms. Members volunteer their time and expertise to make Lancaster a healthy place to live, work and raise a family through prevention and protection programs. They are responsible for ensuring the enforcement of public health laws, and closing the gaps in minimum State codes by enacting stricter standards that they believe to be more beneficial locally.

Board Duties and Additional Powers and Authority

Health Boards are responsible for over 60 areas of public health law and policy, deriving their authority directly from the Massachusetts General Court. Some of these are:

- Homeland security
- Inspections and enforcement
- Records and reports
- Noise, nuisances and complaints
- Health care and disease control
- Pesticides and herbicides
- Housing and dwellings
- Pools, beaches and camps
- Hazardous and toxic wastes
- Water purity and well permits
- Solid waste and septage
- Porta-potty and outdoor hydronic heater permits
- Rubbish and garbage
- Residential and daycare centers
- Food safety and service
- Body art, trash hauler and tobacco sales licenses
- Smoking and air quality
- Cemeteries, funeral directors, burial permits

Board Activities

The volume and scope of the work required to offer necessary health, sanitary and environmental services to individuals and to the community is amazing and continues to

increase in complexity. Almost any topic can be Board of Health-related because health is life itself.

The primary function of the office is to assist callers and visitors by providing accurate information and/or referrals for questions, concerns and applications. A plethora of public records, lists, Department of Public Health disease fact sheets (Lyme disease, flu, pneumonia), safety pamphlets (lead, mold, pet health hazards), guides (private well testing, flood cleanup, pest management) and LBOH Regulations are just a few examples. Each customer is equally important. The office is open Monday-Thursday, 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM, and we can be reached at 978-365-3326 x1310 or by e-mail at jgalliardt@lancasterma.net.

Complaints

Identified complaints are investigated by our Nashoba Associated Board of Health Agent, William J. Brookings, R.S., often accompanied by a Board Member. Violations of the Housing and Sanitary Code often involve multiple issues for the BOH, Building/Zoning Commissioner and Fire Department with jurisdiction being determined accordingly. Additionally, we rely on other Town departments to address areas of mutual concern: the Town Clerk, Animal Control Officer, Conservation Commission, Community Development Office, Assessors, Police, Fire, Public Works Department, Council on Aging and the Town Administrator. Communication is the key to helping each other and the residents we serve. Mr. Brookings also provides professional input on projects for the Planning Board, Conservation Commission and Board of Appeals.

Bill Brookings consults in person at the BOH office each Wednesday morning from 8:00 AM to 9:00 AM, and can be contacted anytime by voicemail at the NABH office at 978-772-3335 x304 or wbrookings@nashoba.org.

Septic Systems

The NABH reported that 33 septic system plans were reviewed in 2013, and that 33 Title 5 septic permits were issued by the LBOH.

Wells

The NABH reported that 13 well plans were reviewed in 2013, and that 13 well permits were issued by the LBOH.

Miscellaneous Permits

A variety of other permits were issued in 2013, including permits for porta-potties and retail sales of tobacco.

Trash

Deliberate dumping of household trash, bulk items (furniture, mattresses, refrigerators), and construction and demolition debris on public roads and private land continues to be a major problem. Apprehension and prosecution of the offenders is complicated. The Board of Selectmen are researching the possibility of adopting some form of Anti-Littering Bylaw to expedite this process.

Residents are reminded that since we have no Town rubbish removal service, a private trash hauler must be contracted. The following companies were licensed to operate in Lancaster in 2013:

- Tully Disposal & Recycling, Sterling
- Allied Waste Services, Tyngsboro
- Sons of Kristoff, Sterling
- Waste Management, West Boylston
- Fiore Trucking & Disposal, Fitchburg

In addition, the Lancaster Solid Waste Disposal/Recycling Haulers and Dumpster Licensing and Operations Regulations can be found on the BOH web page on the town web site (www.ci.lancaster.ma.us).

Overflowing trash barrels create an unsightly mess and a critter banquet. Not using water-tight receptacles with covers is a violation of the State Sanitary Code 410.6000 and can result in legal action by the BOH. Several of the trash haulers offer curbside recycling or you may take disposables to the Lancaster Recycling Center.

Recycling Center

The Lancaster Recycling Center's regular hours are 10:00 AM to 12:00 Noon, Saturday and Sunday, weather permitting. The Recycling Center is open to Lancaster residents and also residents of surrounding towns.

There are bins for paper, cardboard, glass, tin cans and electronics. Most electronics can be dropped off without a fee, although there is still a $5 or $10 charge for televisions (depending on size) and a $10 fee for large appliances such as washers, dryers, etc. The fee for any freon appliances (refrigerators, freezers, air conditioners) is $15. Smaller appliances and electronics and computer equipment can be dropped off at no charge.

Tin cans and plastics must be sorted as they go in different bins to different vendors. It is no longer necessary to crush cans, but they must be rinsed out. Please continue to crush plastic containers as that bin fills up quickly. We accept all plastics that display the recycling symbol except for plastic bags and Styrofoam containers. Plastic bags can be recycled at your local grocery store.

Household Hazardous Waste Facility

The Town of Lancaster, along with ten other surrounding municipalities has organized a regional Household Hazardous Waste Facility at Devens, at their current DPW facility. There is a small annual operating assessment from each participating community.

The regional facility will be managed by the North Central Regional Solid Waste Cooperative (NCRSWC), a non-profit that provides these types of services. The site will be run by a professional Household Hazardous Waste vendor, with a chemist on site, and jointly with volunteers from the member towns. Lancaster's Recycling Committee also has been involved.

The site will be open 20 days per year (10 Wednesdays and Saturdays) from March through December. It is also open to Very Small Quantity Generators (VSQGs) who are generally small businesses like dry cleaners that have more waste then the average household but do not meet are large waste requirement, and residents from the member Towns. The site can be visited by appointment so traffic can be controlled. Residents and VSQGs will still have a fee to dispose of the waste, which will vary depending on the volume of trash.

Emergency Preparation

Lancaster is part of the Massachusetts Region II Public Health Emergency Preparedness Coalition (http://www.publichealth-massregion2.org/what.htm), a division of the Worcester Department of Health and Human Services. The LBOH has provided input to the 2013 Emergency Dispensing Site Plan.

A Memorandum of Understanding was previously signed between LBOH and Rowlandson/ Burbank Schools to be the location for the Board to administer vaccine or antibiotics from the Strategic National Stockpile due to infectious disease outbreaks of any magnitude. These incidents can range from a single case of hepatitis A in a food handler, to a meningitis outbreak in a school, an influenza pandemic declared by the World Health Organization (WHO), or a bioterrorist attack involving thousands of people or the entire population of the United States. The EDS would be activated within 24 hours by both medical and non-medical volunteers.

Health Alerts

The Health & Homeland Alert Network (HHAN) and The Coalition send immediate nationwide bulletins about health and safety from the CDC.

Prescription Drugs

Prescription drug abuse is the nation's fastest-growing drug problem, including accidental poisonings and overdoses. Rid your house of unused medicines safely, and do not flush or throw away as this is a safety and health hazard. See the www.dea.gov web site for a collection site.

Food

Food warnings and alerts seem to be a daily event. There are 88 million cases of food poisoning a year. Consumers can monitor the LBOH web site (www.ci.lancaster.ma.us) or call the MDPH Food Protection Program at 617-983-6712. New food safety rules are coming on how to shop for, store and prepare your food.

The FDA now lists all ingredients on the bottles of dietary supplements.

Town Health

The NABH public health team's mission is to provide high-quality public health nursing to our member towns. They provide essential (and state-mandated) services of communicable disease investigation and follow-up, high-risk maternal child services and health promotion.

The health promotion program and outreach has included monthly Wellness Clinics, which include blood pressure checks, diabetes screening, and flu and immunization protection.

NABH also offers home visits, health fairs for health education and screening, and children's story hours at the library introducing topics such as hand washing and germ control and "A Day at the Doctors".

The primary focus of the NABH town nurse is on patients, families and open communication, as well as crisis intervention and support to high-risk individuals.

NABH/LBOH Rabies Clinic

31 dogs and cats were vaccinated at the rabies clinic held at the DPW garage by Mid-State Mobile Veterinary. Micro-chipping was also available. Rabies vaccination certificates for cats are kept on file at the LBOH office; rabies certificates for dogs are kept on file in the Town Clerk's Office, where dog licenses are issued.

Animal Control Officer

We work closely with the Animal Control Officer and the Town Clerk in sharing Possible Exposure to Rabies reports from veterinarians. The Animal Control Officer quarantines the wounded animal if the injury is from an unknown or unvaccinated source.

Burial Agent

The Town Clerk issued __ Burial Permits, of which five were interred in Lancaster, __ were cremated, __ were interred elsewhere, and one body was donated to a medical school.

Tobacco Control Alliance

The Boards of Health Tobacco Control Alliance (BOHTCA) continues to work with the LBOH in providing inspectional services regarding all tobacco-related issues, including enforcement of all youth access and environmental tobacco smoke regulations, and enforcement of the new Smoke-Free Work Place Law.

A Message from Your Board

We try to use our experiences, insights and skills to help the residents of Lancaster lead healthier lives and get the care they need. We hope to make a difference.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert Baylis, *Chairman*
David Dunn, *Member*
Stephen Piazza, *Member*