

**Minutes**  
**Pittsfield Board of Health**  
**Wednesday, June 2, 2021**  
**VIA Zoom 814 7528 6338, 6:00 PM**

Present: Chairperson Steve Smith; Board Members: Brad Gordon, Kimberly Loring, Alan Kulberg

Also Present: Health Department Director Gina Armstrong.

Convening

The meeting of the Pittsfield Board of Health was held on Wednesday, June 2, 2021, via Zoom. Chairperson Smith called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

Review and Approval of Minutes: The Board reviewed the minutes of May 5, 2021 and they have been approved.

Public Comments: Chairperson Smith noted that public comments will be limited to three minutes per person.

Courtney Gilardi: expressed her concern with regard to the cell tower and its possible relation to health issues.

Amelia Coco-Gilardi: expressed her concern with regard to the cell tower and its possible relation to health issues.

Shelley Wright: States she has EHS (electromagnetic hypersensitivity which she states is considered a disability in many areas. She states that electro-sensitive residents must avoid, or significantly reduce, their exposure.

Leonore Alaniz of Turners Falls, MA: States she is also electromagnetic sensitive. Here to provide support.

Michael Muadin of New Lebanon, NY: calls for the support of an investigation into this issue.

Theodora Scarato of Maryland: Executive Director of the Environmental Health Trust, provided information for the Board Members to consider.

Virginia Farmer of Ft. Collins, CO: States that she lost a son to brain cancer which she states was caused by cell phones and towers.

Kathryn Levin of Hillsdale, NY: Works to educate people on the dangers of WIFI.

David Morrison: notes there is information that shows that this technology does cause harm.

Nancy Van Dover of Colorado: states she had injury due to exposure.

Kirsten Beatty of Holyoke, MA: provided information about Last Tree Laws pertaining to cell towers.

Arthur Firstenberg of Santa Fe, New Mexico: researching this field for 40 years and provided information regarding lawsuits that pertain to not being able to regulate cell towers based on basis of health.

Ellen Weinenger: pleased that the city is engaging an RF engineer and urged the city to be sure that the measurements are taken in an unscheduled and random manner as the cell tower owners are known to turn the towers down during times of known testing.

Cecila Doucette: suggested that the Board also send their letter of support to the Department of Health & Human Services.

Diana Warren: Reiterated that the testing be done randomly and unscheduled by an independent company because it has often been found that towers are operating well above FCC guidelines.

Rob Turkowitz: Attorney in Charleston, SC. Investigating a number of towers around the country. He inquired about information being sent to him. Additionally, he noted that the testing be done at different times of day when usage may be higher.

Shirley Jackson, Palm Beach County, FL. Suffers from electromagnetic sensitivity. Encourages the Board to allow the residents to speak out so their voices are heard.

Marnie Glaser of Chicago: Suggests that the Board view a video called "Talk to the Lawyers". She also noted that there often little tiny details that are not in compliance and should/could be looked at to help the efforts.

Petition to covert three Peaker Power Plants in Berkshire County to Green Energy to reduce environmental and health impacts: Ms. Armstrong noted that Henry Rose and Jane Winn of Berkshire Environmental Action Team contacted the health department to present information this evening. Henry Rose, asking the Board to sign on in support of this transition, requesting that the owners of the plants change the business model to go to storage, large batteries and solar. In brief, he explained that there are three peaker power plants in the Berkshires, two of which are in Pittsfield, and there are 23 in Massachusetts. These are electrical power plants that operate on high demand days, usually on the hottest days of the summer when everyone is turning on their air conditioners, and they only work for about 2 weeks out of the year. When they do operate, they emit pollution that is harmful to both people and the environment. Rose Wessell added that Pittsfield Generating, on Merrill Road, when it is running, generates 15% of Pittsfield's pollution. Board Member Gordon asked for more information on the context of the petition. Ms. Wessell stated that they have tried reaching out to the plant owners to create a dialogue and that the petition is to show that there is support for the conversion. She also noted that the petition supports the idea of providing a cleaner method of providing power. She also referred him to: [tinyurl.com/peakerhealth](http://tinyurl.com/peakerhealth). Board Members agreed to spend some time reviewing the presentations and revisit this topic at the next meeting.

Dr. Paul Heroux of the McGill University Health Center notes that electro sensitivity is on the rise. He notes that many criteria are considered when assessing a cluster. He provided a presentation on the differences of the types of signals, showing how the pulses of today's technology are quite different than those used to listen to am and fm radio.

Dr. Carpenter, Director of Institute of Health & Environment of SUNY Albany: Dr. Carpenter is a public health physician and worked for the NY Department of Public Health for 18 years. Dr. Carpenter notes that there are two major types of epidemiological studies. One is a case control study, you take people who are exposed to an environmental situation and compare their health to those who are not exposed. Ideally, a large number of people is needed to obtain the best results. This type would not work in Pittsfield. The other study would be to look at people who live close to the cell towers and those who do not. Once again, he states this is difficult because there are so many cell towers. He also noted that measurements of individual's exposure would be required. Dr. Carpenter stated that EMF diseases do exist. With electromagnetic hypersensitivity, he stated that people have different reactions as with any other type of exposure to something. Some people have little to no reaction or symptoms and some have debilitating reactions. Sensitivity may also depend on the types, extent and time of exposure. With an epidemiological study, you need an objective measure of disease. An ideal study would not involve just one cell tower. Dr. Carpenter notes that the diseases and symptoms are real, but that to conduct a study as small as this one in Pittsfield would be, would not be helpful.

Sheena Symington: Director of Electro Sensitive Society: She presented information showing that electro sensitivity has been proven and is considered a disability. She also presented information that EMFs affect environmental/plant growth. Ms. Symington presented information that recovery from electromagnetic sensitivity is possible with reduced exposure and prevention or reduction of EMF exposures. Exposure should be measured to determine how to reduce exposure.

Dr. Magda Havas: Presented information from various studies on Electrosmog and its strong possible connection as a carcinogen to humans.

Chairperson Smith thanked all of the panelist for their time and expertise, as well as those who spoke during the public comments section. Dr. Kulberg inquired as to the extent symptoms would be looked at as a diagnosis of exclusion, based on the fact that a proper epidemiological study cannot be done in Pittsfield, as opposed to directly attributing the symptoms to the cell tower radiation. Dr. Carpenter stated that Dr. Kulberg was correct in that any other causes of symptoms should be excluded. Dr. Heroux stated that his experience with patients has been that physicians have, even reluctantly at times, attributed patient symptoms to electromagnetic sensitivity. Dr. Kulberg & Board Member Gordon both addressed the issue that residents feel that the Board has been reluctant to address this issue. Both offered that the Board is not reluctant, they do, however, wish to be as thorough and as educated as possible on a topic to present the best possible plan in their purview. Dr. Heroux suggested that the Board ask Verizon to remove the tower. Board Member Gordon suggested that a request like that should come from the community and further questioned if Dr. Heroux had any information with regard to success to any such requests. Dr. Carpenter noted he did not feel as optimistic as Dr. Heroux in this regard, as most companies are staying within FCC guidelines. He also noted that the health effects are real, but the federal government has yet to acknowledge them as such. Board Member Gordon suggested that perhaps more states urge the federal government take action. Dr. Carpenter stated that he is seeing this, however the process moves very slowly. It was also noted that some areas regulate the towers via zoning regulations, but that in those cases those regulations are not based on health, but on aesthetics. Board Member Loring noted that her research has also shown that avoidance is the best "treatment". Dr. Havas noted that a study would be difficult, but it could be done with the cooperation of Verizon to turn the tower off for a period of at least four days and having the residents recording their health in a daily log. She suggested that an independent evaluation of that information be done. Ms. Loring questioned a "placebo" effect. Dr. Havas noted that this would have to be a blind

study. Dr. Heroux pointed out that he was unsure if this would be effective given the small number residents being affected. Ms. Symington noted that she felt that turning the tower on and off could be harmful to the children. Chairperson Smith noted that in terms of a plan of action, the Board is drafting a letter to the Governor and other legislature. Board Member Gordon made a motion to endorse a letter of support with the information they have to date, seconded by Dr. Kulberg was voted on unanimously. Chairperson Smith also noted that another part of their plan was to retain an engineering firm to measure the radiation frequency of the cell tower. Ms. Armstrong noted that she is working on scheduling the measurements with the firm to determine whether the tower is within FCC regulations, and that they should begin within approximately 10 days. It is currently unknown when the report would be available. Dr. Heroux noted that the firm should be able to provide other detailed information beyond the FCC compliance guideline measurements. Chairperson Smith noted that given the information provided this evening, the challenges of continuing the idea an epidemiological study is not feasible. Chairperson Smith suggested that discussion of the Board reaching out to Verizon directly be tabled for further discussion until the next meeting. Board Member Gordon suggested that Ms. Armstrong follow up to see what other departments in the city may need to be included in this type of conversation. Ms. Armstrong noted that she will have a follow-up conversation with Deanna Ruffer of DCD as they would have been involved in the site planning at the time the cell tower placement.

Rescind BOH COVID 19 Emergency Orders: Ms. Armstrong noted that the states has now pulled back on state mandated restrictions in many sector specific areas. In May of 2020, and in December 2020, the Board signed and emergency orders and Ms. Armstrong now asks the Board to rescind those orders. Board Member Gordon made a motion to rescind the May 4, 2020 Order with regard to occupancy levels, social distancing and facial covering in food establishments was seconded by Ms. Loring. The motion was unanimously approved. Board Member Gordon made a motion to rescind the December 2, 2020 Order with regard safety standards for indoor dining in restaurants was seconded by Ms. Loring. This motion was also unanimously approved.

#### Health Department Updates:

Covid 19 Updates: Ms. Armstrong provided the Board with an update as to COVID 19 efforts within the department and noted that the number of positive cases has dropped significantly across the state and in Pittsfield.

Monthly Inspection Report: Ms. Armstrong noted that inspections are on the rise and inspectional services will begin to shift back into normal scheduling.

#### Adjournment

Upon a motion made by Board Member Loring and seconded by Board Member Gordon, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Stephanie Layden, Clerk

#### Documents/Materials Distributed at Meeting

- Meeting Minutes of May 5, 2021
- Documents relative to the cell tower located at 877 South St.
- Documents relative to Peaker Power Plants

- Emergency Orders of May 4, 2020 and December 2, 2020