

**Minutes**  
**Pittsfield Board of Health**  
**Wednesday, May 5, 2021**  
**VIA Zoom 828 3529 8060, 6:00 PM**

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

Also Present: Health Department Director Gina Armstrong.

Convening

The meeting of the Pittsfield Board of Health was held on Wednesday, May 5, 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 April 12, 2021 and they have been approved.

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

Dr. Paul Heroux: Physicist and toxicologist in Quebec. Director of Occupational Health at the Faculty of Medicine in Montreal. Worked for utility companies for 10 years and further consulted on the subject of electromagnetic radiation health effects. Dr. Heroux notes that he has also done extensive research on this matter and the effects after cell towers are installed can happen briskly and that people may have trouble accommodating to them. He noted that the best practice is to avoid exposure. He further noted that there are groups that consult with each other on how to avoid exposure. Additionally, he offered to send a video on the subject to members of the Board.

Michael Muadin of New Lebanon, NY: Worked at BCC for many years as a tutor. Notes that in July 2017 cell bay stations were installed by Verizon on the roof. He notes that microwave radiation syndrome began after this exposure. He noted that most towers are not tested and requested that the Board open an investigation and hire an engineering firm to measure radiation at the sites.

Sheena Symington: Director of Electrosensitive Society. She notes that electrosensitivity is a phenomenon when a person experiences adverse health effects when in the vicinity of wireless radiation. She notes that she has helped hospitals limit these exposures for sensitive patients. Ms. Symington also concurred with Dr. Heroux noting that the best practice, and really the only effective practice, is eliminating exposure so a patient can recover. She noted that studies show that wireless device exposure can impact the heart. She noted that cell towers should not be located in residential areas. She stated that it is well documented that children and adults are affected by the exposure. She likened exposure to that of having a sensitivity to peanuts or pollen, and noted that people have varying levels of sensitivity and that accommodations should be made for those who are EMF sensitive as well. Lastly, she offered to provide services to the city and its residents.

Amelia Coco-Gilardi: 17 Alma St.; 13 years old. Notes she was never sick prior to the cell towers going up and she asks the city to help.

Cecelia Doucette, Ashland, MA: Notes that their school was the first in the United States to address wireless radiation in their public schools in 2014. She stated that an expert panel was brought before the state house to fight for a "right to know" and that she helped to create a fact sheet to be sent to the MDPH.

Courtney Gilardi: reaching out since August 2020. She noted that EMF experts are writing letters and have presented information. She asked that Dr. Heroux be allowed to stay on this evening to be a “point person” for further discussion.

Charlie Herzig, 140 Plumb St.: Questions why the Board of Health is not more interested when several people are having the same problems.

Walter Schackenberg: States resources should be used to address this issue.

Chairperson Smith first noted that he was surprised and disappointed when MPDH decided not to send the toxicology experts as they had been told would happen. However, he noted, that there is a plan in place. Ms. Armstrong reiterated that she too was incredibly disappointed with the lack of options that MDPH could provide to the community, the neighborhood and the local Board of Health. She stated that they are working to set up guests to attend the next meeting to present more in depth information. She noted that they need to learn more about the national research that has been done. She further stated that she did receive feedback from the residents who did call the toxicology program, as the Board had advised them to do, and that the residents did not feel that this was a sufficient process in the consultation or assessment. They reported that they were simply provided with some information on EMFs and provided with other written materials to refer to. She noted that it was the Board’s hope that the MDPH would compile the information from Pittsfield and use it in a way to advocate for additional studies on the health impacts. Ms. Armstrong noted that the information the Board has gathered on the health impacts that these residents believe are related to the cell tower emissions, can be used to include in the letter of support that the Board plans to send to the state legislators, the Governor’s office and to the MDPH to support Senate Bill 2416 – to form Special Commission to Research the Impact of EMF and Radiofrequency Radiation on Consumer Protection, Public Health & Technology in the Commonwealth. Ms. Armstrong thanked everyone who did reach out and notes that the Board will continue to accept that information at [brozon@cityofpittsfield.org](mailto:brozon@cityofpittsfield.org). Board Member Loring questioned whether the MDPH would take the calls and provide a head count so that any investigation could be done as a cluster. Ms. Armstrong noted that this is what the expectation was, and that they know that four residents contacted MDPH as of one week ago. She stated that she has requested additional information, but has not received any response to date. Board Member Gordon noted that if they are going to have a panel of experts, that it should be a panel inclusive with members with a range of views. He also noted that this topic should be the sole agenda item so that it can be given the time that it needs to be discussed. He further suggested that Senator Sere, if available, be present on the topic as well. Finally, Mr. Gordon questioned whether an expert should be hired to take the EMF/radiation measurements to find out if they are in compliance. Chairperson Smith noted that the Board can send the letter of support as well as help facilitate, along with city council, the hiring of a reputable firm. Ms. Loring noted that no local or state government can order that the tower be shut off because it is federally regulated by the FCC. She questions what can be done in the future to prevent this from happening. Mr. Gordon notes that since the health and environmental issues provide no way for the Board or others to intervene, the best, and possibly the only way, to have any control over this issue is through zoning. Ms. Loring questions if there is anyone who can do an epidemiological study since MDPH will not be doing one. She noted that any such study would be difficult to do because of the varying symptoms which could relate to other illnesses/causes/factors. Ms. Armstrong noted that this is something that should be explored. A motion to recommend that the city procure an reputable engineer or firm that specializes in radiofrequency measurement to determine

if a tower is in compliance with 47 CFR, Section 1.1310 was made by Board Member Gordon and seconded by Board Member Loring. The motion was unanimously approved.

Mosquito Control: Ms. Armstrong noted that a petition to opt of adulticide mosquito spraying submitted by Councilor Maffuccio and brought forward to the Public Health & Safety Committee and went on the City Council. She noted that the City Council voted in favor of eliminating adult truck mounted spray response from mosquito control program activities. Ms. Armstrong noted that the Board of Health has been working with the Berkshire County Mosquito Control Program since 2012 on developing the annual comprehensive mosquito control plan which includes surveillance, education, larvaciding, etc. She noted that the understanding was that the authority in developing and overseeing the plan was delegated to the Board of Health and she further found it uncertain that the city council has taken a vote changing the plan. She stated that she felt an opportunity to present information should have been afforded so the public and council members could see how restrictive the spraying actually is before a vote was taken. She went on to provide that only 2 gallons of adulticide was used in 2019 and none was used in 2020 and further stated that these are only targeted sprayings when a positive virus is found or there are high risk breeding conditions. Ms. Armstrong requested that the Board consider sending communication to the city council which would note that the Board oversight of the BCMCP has been very beneficial and that the Board has developed an expertise in the science and an understanding of how the products are used and with low risk to the environment or the public. Board Member Gordon noted that the Board has put a lot of thought and deliberation into this topic over the years and that the plan to utilize adulticides in a controlled manner was based on feedback from the community. With that notation, Mr. Gordon recognized that he does not believe that the entire community would be in agreement with the city council decision in this regard. Mr. Gordon also suggested going back to the city council with Mr. Horton to re-educate the community and the council on this topic. Chairperson Smith agreed noting that adulticide has been used less and less over the years because of the targeted approach spraying. He noted that he cannot imagine not addressing these serious public health risks. Ms. Loring questioned whether the state could come and spray if a municipality does not have its own protocol. Ms. Armstrong stated that in the event of an emergency because of higher transmission risk the MDPH could request the state mosquito control program to decide on a spray response, in collaboration with the local Board of Health (i.e. in an emergency, the city could still have a spray response). Chairperson Smith also pointed out that when the Board increased the threshold for a spray response, the condition of such a response must be approved by the Board on a case by case basis. Ms. Armstrong stated that this was correct and further noted that the surveillance data is reported to her and she in turn reports this to the Board along with the plan for any spray response and any other contributing factors; and the Board makes a decision based on all of the information. A motion to request that city council reconsider the decision of no spraying pending and educational presentation by Chris Horton and a review of the current plan was made by Board Member Gordon and seconded by Board Member Loring. The motion was unanimously approved.

Health Department Updates: Ms. Armstrong provided the Board with an update as to COVID 19 efforts within the department. She noted that health department continues to contract with nurses, who are overseen by the Public Health Nurse Manager, Kayla Donnelly Winters, for a contact tracing efforts. She notes that this position is timing consuming and therefore keeping nurses on is a challenge as most of them have full time work. She noted that the nurses spend their time not only on contact tracing, but providing education and guidance to employers as well. Ms. Armstrong noted that the city is still averaging about 22 cases per day and that there currently 52 active cases. She further noted that Inspector Sykes is, and has been, a clinic manager at the BCC vaccine clinic and that this takes up a

great deal of his time. She noted that Inspector Layden is also spending the majority of her hours overseeing staff and registration at the vaccine clinic and spends a lot of time helping to schedule appointments, handling phone calls and questions and providing guidance. Additionally she noted that Inspectors Cambi & Sciola are both very busy providing guidance on re-opening. Finally, she noted that the administrative staff has been vital in handling phone calls and other administrative tasks throughout the pandemic. She stated that the department is still very active in the fight against COVID 19, but that the city is trending in the right direction. Current statistics show that 37% of the Pittsfield residents are fully vaccinated and 52% have had at least one dose. Ms. Armstrong stated that the current focus is on the hard to reach population and working to promote and provide education about the vaccine, arrange transportation, book appointments and the like.

#### Adjournment

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

Respectfully Submitted,  
Stephanie Layden, Clerk

#### Documents/Materials Distributed at Meeting

- Meeting Minutes of April 12, 2021
- Documents relative to the cell tower located at 877 South St.