

**BOARD OF HEALTH  
SPECIAL PUBLIC HEARING MINUTES  
AUGUST 29, 2018**

**CALL TO ORDER:** Chairman Rhoads called the meeting to order at 3:00 PM.

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Chairman David Rhoads, Peter Hoyt, Tom Romaniak (Code Enforcement),

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Vice-Chairman Bruce Shepley, Pam Gerry (Administrative Assistant)

**OTHERS PRESENT:** John C. Barrett (Superintendent, Adams Fire District), Thomas Satko (Prudential Committee, Adams Fire District), Don Torrico (Building Commissioner), Christine Hoyt (Selectman), Dennis Knapp (Chick's Bar & Grill), Kevin Towle, Pam Daniels, (iBerkshires), Donna Cesan (Interim Town Administrator, arrived end of meeting)

**PURPOSE OF THE MEETING:** To provide Superintendent Barrett the opportunity to inform the community about the issues surrounding the August 23 "boil water order" from the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP).

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION:** Superintendent Barrett provided the following information.

- The Adams Fire District (AFD) tests the water supply (minimum 18 samples from various parts of the system) twice a month, usually the 1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> weeks. Samples are carried by an AFD employee in iced coolers to Howard Labs in Hatfield, MA for testing. This policy assures local control over the chain of possession. Because Howard Labs closes on weekends, samples are generally taken on Mondays to avoid a delay in any necessary follow-up testing.
- Water (after overnight culture) is tested for the presence of total coliforms (TC) & *Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*). TC is a group of Gram negative rod-shaped bacteria, ubiquitous in nature, including soil and feces from humans and other animals, most of which are benign. However, their presence in water is evidence of bacterial contamination, whether from soil or other sources. *E. coli* is normally present in human feces and are not generally pathogenic, but their presence in water is indicative of human fecal contamination. Human feces *may contain pathogenic coliforms* that cause gastrointestinal illness, like food poisoning. Tests for these, e.g. *enterococci*, take additional time & are only performed when deemed necessary.
- MassDEP regulations require that a TC-positive sample be followed up with testing 5 taps downstream from the source of the positive sample. Furthermore, 2 consecutive positive samples for either TC or *E. coli* activate the issuance of a "boil water" order. Per MassDEP rules, *such an order applies to the entire water district*, in our case all of Adams. *The minimum duration of a boil water order is 4 days.*
- Removal of the "boil water" order requires system sanitation followed by negative TC results from two consecutive samples. Sanitation is accomplished by emptying the storage tanks, chlorinating fresh incoming water, and then flushing the entire system until chlorine levels drop to the mandated threshold.

**CHRONOLOGY OF THE BOIL WATER ORDER:** A brief description of the events follows. The Water Department website has more details.

- A water sample taken Monday, August 20 from the East Hoosac St. water tank tested positive for both TC & *E. coli*. The District was informed on August 21.
- Per requirement, the District took samples from downstream taps on Country Road on August 21. Two tested positive for TC but not for *E. coli*. These results were conveyed to the Water Department on August 22. That afternoon, MassDEP orally informed the Water Department that a boil water order would be issued.
- Superintendent Barrett convened an emergency meeting Thursday morning, August 23 to discuss the situation. A press release regarding the MassDEP boil water order was prepared & communicated to TA Donna Cesan, BOS Chairman John Duval & Health Department Code Enforcement Officer Tom Romaniak as well as to iBerkshires & the Berkshire Eagle (to be published August 24). The order was further distributed to relevant town officials. A slight delay occurred to correct some errors made by MassDEP in the written order before making it public. Once corrected, the town was informed via Reverse 911 calls/texts, information on the town website, and the news organizations.

- The Water Department reacted immediately to the potential contamination, under MassDEP policy & monitoring, with injecting chlorine into all the town's wells & flushing the chlorine through the system. Once completed, two consecutive TC-negative samples would be necessary to lift the boil water order.
- Following the chlorine flush, Superintendent Barrett took the samples required to lift the order. He specifically asked Howard Labs to remain open over the weekend to test our samples, which they graciously did. By Monday, August 27 all the required samples had tested negative. Superintendent Barrett began the process of obtaining the "lift order" notification from MassDEP. He contacted several offices at MassDEP, with no success before close of business.
- On Tuesday, August 28 Superintendent Barrett continued his efforts to obtain written permission to lift the order, to no avail. Ultimately, Superintendent Barrett called State Representative John Barrett III to ask for help. Within 10 minutes, MassDEP called the superintendent with its decision to rescind the boil water order.
- The community was apprised by Reverse-911 calls, documents on the Water Department website, and hand-delivery of the rescind notices by the Water Department & the BOH.

#### QUESTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS:

- We noted that enterococci were not present in any tested sample.
- The initial positive water sample was from a tank that supplies a relatively limited number of addresses (portions of East Rd & East St, Autumn Dr, Burns Lane, Fryc Lane, Dubis St, Country Rd, and portions of Meadow St & Morningside Ave). Nevertheless, MassDEP had us impose the order district-wide.
- As for the secondary taps sampled on Country Road, Superintendent Barrett reminded us that water pressure along that route was assisted with private pumps, which may have provided entry for soil bacteria. Thus, the positive results in the secondary samples may not be representative of the source water (pumps were not necessarily certified as sealed against leakage but may not be of health concern).
- Dennis Knapp noted that he had purchased ice & disposable eating-ware to comply with the boil water order. He questioned why the entire town was placed under the order. Superintendent Barrett reiterated that that was MassDEP policy. Mr. Knapp noted that he observed 3 other eating establishments not complying with the order & asked why no one was monitoring their actions. Rhoads complimented Mr. Knapp for his measures & suggested that displaying a sign describing his measures would be good publicity for compliance. Mr. Knapp responded that he had done so. Romaniak opined that this was a new situation for us but should provide impetus to design a rationale response policy for the future.

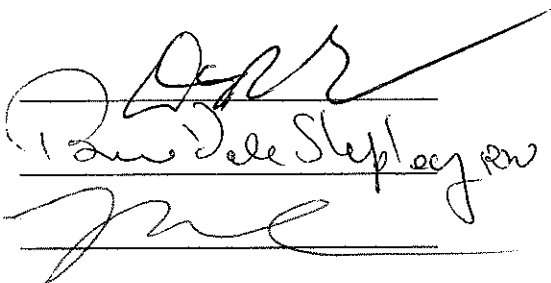
#### RECOMMENDATIONS & CONCLUSIONS:

- Foremost, we commended Superintendent Barrett for admirable execution of his duties, from monitoring the safety of the water supply in general to his rapid & effective response to the potential contamination issue. The board thanked the superintendent for his efforts on behalf of the town.
- We recognized that mandated MassDEP regulations/policies, designed with an abundance of caution, dictated the response to water testing data.
- We agreed that the town needs a better chain of communication for events like this, for both the public & the responsible town officials.
- We also expressed gratitude to Howard Labs for accommodating our urgent testing needs & to Representative Barrett for facilitating the final resolution of this situation.

**ADJOURN:** A motion to adjourn was passed unanimously at 3:46 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Date 9/12/2018

  
Paul DeStefano