

North East Public Health Alliance

January 8th, 2026 Meeting Minutes

11:00 am - 1:00 pm EST

Hybrid Meeting

In-Person: Billerica Board of Health

Virtual: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83076775349?jst=2>

Voting members in attendance:

Donna Greenwood, Chelmsford (Virtual)

Shannon Gillis, Tewksbury

Kristel Bennett, Billerica

Non-voting members in attendance:

Shelagh Collins, Billerica

Christine West, Billerica

Manizeh Afridi, BME Strategies

Darcy Beall, Chelmsford

Elise Pierce, Chelmsford

Taryn Angel, Chelmsford

Bethany Slack, Regional Public Health Specialist

Ashley Pavlakos, Regional Public Health Nurse (Virtual)

Voting members absent:

Kerri Oun, Tyngsborough

I. Opening

3/4 voting members present, quorum was met.

Motion to start the meeting

Kristel Bennett made a motion to start the meeting. Shannon Gillis seconded the motion.

Billerica: Y

Chelmsford: Y

Tewksbury: Y

Tyngsborough: Absent

All in favor.

Manizeh Afridi called the meeting to order at 11:20AM.

The group decided to hold off on approving December 11th meeting minutes until next month.

II. Announcements & Reminders

A. Reminders:

- SAPHE 2.0 Reporting coming soon.

The initiative involves two surveys:

1. Workforce Standards Survey (Early 2026): Anonymous survey of local public health staff/contractors to assess current expertise and identify future training needs.
2. Performance Standards Survey (Spring 2026): Self-report by each local public health entity on their FY26 capacity to meet Performance Standards.

B. Upcoming Training Opportunities

a. MEHA Title 5

Deadline to apply is February 13th: Linked [here](#).

b. MHOA Tobacco trainings

1. *Retail Tobacco Inspection Training*: February 20, 2026, 1:00 PM - 2:30 PM. Presented by Kathleen Dufour, Tobacco Inspector/Trainer. Linked [here](#).

2. *Educating Merchants: Training for Tobacco Inspectors* February 24, 2026, 1:00PM - 2:30PM. Presented by Kathleen Dufour, Tobacco Inspector/Trainer. Linked [here](#).

c. The Center for Hoarding & Cluttering

Managing Hoarding Cases in the Community: Effective Multi-Disciplinary Community Response. A 12-part Live, Online Professional Certification & Continuing Education Program. Deadline to apply January 15th: Linked [here](#).

Discussion: The coalition agreed that the certification training would be a valuable investment for all member communities. The group seeks approval from their program coordinator at DPH for the expense, as the training costs \$1,800 per person. If approved, the group aims to have five staff members participate. Should DPH only approve training for a limited number of staff, the priority participants will be a NEPHA regional staff member and one staff member from Chelmsford. Final decisions will be made once the group receives an update from their program coordinator.

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III. NEPHA Updates

A. Hiring Regional Inspector Position

- a. Received three new applications for the regional inspector position over the holiday season. One of these applicants appears to be an excellent fit, possessing 8 years of experience and relevant certifications, which would allow them to start immediately. The next step is to schedule a phone interview with this candidate. The group agreed that if the position remains unfilled within the next month, consideration should be given to the two recent MPH graduates who also applied.

B. NEW NEPHA Website is live. [Linked here.](#)

IV. Strategic Planning Discussion

A. Proposed Scope of Work

The group reviewed the draft strategic planning scope of work confirming that the planning effort would focus on clarifying public health's role through a clear, shared narrative of core functions and community impact; strengthening communication and visibility through tools such as one-page summaries and presentations; enhancing data and performance tracking by assessing current systems and identifying improvements; aligning funding with service needs; and developing a shared vision and priorities for the collaborative. The group confirmed the anticipated engagement for the four-to-six-month process. This commitment includes a full-day kick-off session and an estimated staff commitment of about one hour per month, with flexibility for more time as necessary.

B. Next Steps

The group will initiate the procurement process with the Town of Tyngsborough's administration. Donna Greenwood and Shannon Gillis volunteered to support evaluation efforts alongside Tyngsborough Town Admin.

Motion to move forward with SOW for Strategic Planning procurement

Kristel Bennett motioned to move forward with strategic planning. Shannon Gillis seconded the motion.

Billerica: Y

Chelmsford: Y

Tewksbury: Y

Tyngsborough: Absent

All in favor.

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V. Community Updates

- **Billerica:** Planning has begun for the Billerica Health and Wellness Fair.
- **Chelmsford:** Cholesterol clinics are scheduled to commence shortly, alongside the provision of community training and support addressing hoarding, CPR instruction, and Narcan administration training.
- **Tewksbury:** Continuing to work on Kratom regulations.
- **Tyngsborough:** Absent

VI. Adjournment

The next regular coalition meeting will be held on Thursday, February 12th, from 11AM-1PM in Tewksbury, with a virtual option available for those with conflicts.

Motion to adjourn the meeting

Kristel Bennett motioned to adjourn the meeting. Shannon Gillis seconded the motion.

Billerica: Y

Chelmsford: Y

Tewksbury: Y

Tyngsborough: Absent

All in favor.

The meeting adjourned at 12:34PM.

Documents used by the public body during the meeting:

- NEPHA January 8th Meeting Slides
- Proposed Strategic Planning Scope of Work