

May 14th, 2026 Meeting Minutes

11:00 am - 12:00 pm EST

Virtual Meeting:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/88932295456>

**Voting members in attendance:**

Kristel Bennett, Billerica

Donna Greenwood, Chelmsford

Shannon Gillis, Tewksbury

Kerri Oun, Tyngsborough

**Non-voting members in attendance:**

Manizeh Afridi, BME Strategies

Kerri Sands, Regional Inspector

Bethany Slack, Regional Public Health Specialist

Ashley Pavlakos, Regional Public Health Nurse

Taryn Angel, Chelmsford

Siobhan LaFreniere, Tewksbury

Shelagh Collins, Billerica

Christine West, Billerica

Allison Archambault, Chelmsford

**Voting members absent:**

## **I. Opening**

4/4 voting members present, quorum was met.

### **Motion to start the meeting**

Kristel Bennett made a motion to start the meeting. Donna Greenwood seconded the motion.

Billerica: Y

Chelmsford: Y

Tewksbury: Y

Tyngsborough: Y

**All in favor.**

Manizeh Afridi called the meeting to order at 11:06 AM.

## II. Approval of Meeting Minutes

### Motion to approve April meeting minutes

Kristel Bennett motioned to approve April meeting minutes with one edit to name spelling. Donna Greenwood seconded the motion with edit.

Billerica: Y

Chelmsford: Y

Tewksbury: Y

Tyngsborough: Y

**All in favor.**

## III. Announcements

### ● PHE Funding Guidelines for MHOA Annual Conference

Registration is now open for the MHOA Annual Conference (October 28–30, 2026), featuring a member-only early bird rate. Coalitions may use **FY26 PHE funds** to cover registration for **shared staff**. Local public health staff may also be eligible if municipal funding is unavailable. Because the early bird rate ends on **June 30, 2026**, this is an allowable FY26 expense.

#### **PHE Funding Guidelines Summary:**

- **Registration:** FY26 funds may be utilized exclusively for registration fees associated with the current fiscal year.
- **Travel & Lodging:** Expenses for hotel stays and mileage must be applied to **FY27 funds**, corresponding with the timing of the event.
- **Hotel Rates:** All reimbursements are limited by the established GSA rate. Costs for parking should be listed under the "Travel" category.
- **Meals:** PHE funding does not cover personal meal expenses; however, meals provided as part of a registration package are permissible.

### ● MPHA SSA Poster Project

The MPHA is expanding its *'Public Health Saves Lives'* gallery exhibit, which previously highlighted regional success stories from Public Health Excellence grantees. This collection has been showcased at the Massachusetts State House and various public health venues. **MPHA is now seeking new contributions to grow the collection and requests our participation.**

- The OLRH encourages all SSAs to contribute, as this initiative promotes regional achievements and program visibility.

- **Participation Details:** Please submit your excellence story via this form. For further inquiries, contact [kforrest@mapublichealth.org](mailto:kforrest@mapublichealth.org).
- **NEPHA Strategic Planning: Next Steps**

**Step 1:** Review the **Communication Charter draft**.

- This is from our brainstorming during the first half of the retreat. There are two tabs; please provide your thoughts in comments on the content, wording, and if anything is missing or unclear. **Feedback is due May 22**.

**Step 2:** Complete **the feedback survey** that includes first drafts of the: mission statement, vision statement, guiding principles, strategic priorities, and logo options.

- Please follow the survey instructions and select the versions you like best, keeping in mind that these will continue to be revised over the next few weeks until we have consensus on the final wording of each. **This survey is also due May 22** so that we can finalize during our May 26 meeting.

- **Upcoming Training Opportunities:**

- **FDA Training FD215: Managing Retail Food Safety**

July 13-17 (Virtual)

This course explores how risk-based inspections can be applied in retail and food service establishments. Topics include the “process approach” to HACCP, applications of HACCP principles in routine inspection work, and assessing active managerial control of risk factors by operators through a HACCP system or other established food safety systems. While the process approach is new to many regulators, it is better designed for use in retail and food service settings than traditional HACCP approaches because it eliminates lengthy flow charting and hazard analysis for every type of food product.

- **FDA Training FD 218: Risk Based Inspection Methods in Retail**

May 4-8 (Virtual)

June 22-26 (Virtual)

This workshop builds upon concepts learned in FD215 Managing Retail Food Safety and is designed to further enhance the knowledge, skills, and abilities of food safety inspection officers in conducting risk-based inspections.

- **Navigating the FDA Food Code: A Course for Industry Professionals (\$\$\$)**

May 19-21, 10am-6pm

Learn directly from instructors with both industry and regulatory experience in this standardized FDA curriculum. Build your knowledge of the Food Code, Good Retail Practices, and compliance essentials through interactive lessons and group exercises designed to strengthen your food safety operations.

- **MEHA's 78th Annual Seminar (\$\$\$)**  
May 20, 8:30am-3:30pm (In-person; Marlborough, MA)  
This year's educational seminar and awards ceremony will be held at the Courtyard Marriott in Marlborough. Attendees can look forward to presentations on food safety, asbestos abatement, Lyme disease, kratom, health equity data and more.
- **MHOA Quarterly Meeting: Cannabis Control (\$\$\$)**  
May 28, 10am-12pm (In-person; Plymouth, MA)  
This training will provide an overview of the Massachusetts Cannabis Control Commission and its role in regulating cannabis in Massachusetts. It will explore the expected role of local public health, including where responsibilities may overlap. The session will address social consumption sites and discuss what they are and what may be expected of local public health moving forward. Registration opens in April.
- **Title 5 System Inspector (SI) Certification Class (\$\$\$)**  
July 2026; Dates/location TBD  
Title 5 System Inspectors ensure your septic system is running efficiently and verify your system has been properly maintained. Title 5 inspections are required each time ownership is transferred. To receive notifications about upcoming classes, please email [title5@neiwpsc.org](mailto:title5@neiwpsc.org).

## IV. NEPHA Updates

### 1. Regional Inspector:

Kerri Sands has completed Tier 1 training! Next steps include:

- Observing active inspectors in the field
- Coordinating with the regional Training Hub
- Engaging with other Regional Inspectors
- Assisting with Community Baby Shower logistics

### 2. NEPHA Fall Internship:

Bethany Slack, NEPHA Regional Public Health Specialist, has identified an internship opportunity with UMASS Lowell. The opportunity is called the UMass Lowell Public Health Student Internship Opportunity and is scheduled for Fall 2026, requiring a commitment of 8–10 hours per week.

- **Project Scope:** The intern will develop a Community Resource Coordination Guide. This initiative aims to produce an up-to-date manual and digital toolkit to assist regional providers in addressing housing insecurity, homelessness, and complex

May 14th, 2026 Meeting Minutes

residential support needs. The guide will also encompass resources for mental health, food access, and various social services.

- **Preceptor:** Bethany Slack will serve as the primary mentor for this role but hopes that the intern will have the opportunity to meet with different staff members across the four communities and departments.

### 3. **End of FY26 & Start of FY27 Planning:**

The group is on track to spend down funds adequately despite DPH funding restrictions related to community events. Spending priorities for the rest of fiscal year 2026 (FY26 ends June 30th, 2026) include prioritizing regional staff spending and health communication and education materials. Fiscal year 2027 begins July, 1st, 2026. Coalitions are still waiting on updated DPH guidance on FY27 Workplan requirements.

### 4. **Community Baby Shower Updates**

Discussion focused on the immediate next steps for planning the NEPHA Community Baby Shower scheduled for June 13th. Conversation included increasing scheduled planning meetings both in-person and virtually to make sure everything is effectively prepared for the event. The group also discussed using time after the in-person June 11th coalition meeting to begin setting up for the June 13th event.

## V. **Adjournment**

The next regular coalition meeting will be held in-person on Thursday, June 11th, from 11AM-1PM at Tyngsborough Old Town Hall.

### **Motion to adjourn the meeting**

Kerri Oun motioned to adjourn the meeting. Shannon Gillis seconded the motion.

Billerica: Y

Chelmsford: Y

Tewksbury: Y

Tyngsborough: Y

**All in favor.**

The meeting adjourned at 11:56PM.

### **Documents used by the public body during the meeting:**

- NEPHA May 14th Meeting Slides