BME STRATEGIES

North East Public Health Alliance

NEPHA
NORTH EAST PUBLIC HEALTH ALLIANCE

June 11th, 2026 Meeting Minutes

11:00 am - 1:00 pm EST
In-Person Meeting: 10 Kendall Rd, Tyngsborough, MA 01879

Voting members in attendance:
Kristel Bennett, Billerica
Donna Greenwood, Chelmsford
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
Darcy Beall, Chelmsford
Elise Pierce, Chelmsford
Allison Archambault, Chelmsford
Siobhan LaFreniere, Tewksbury
Shelagh Collins, Billerica
Christine West, Billerica
Phavy Pheng, Billerica

Voting members absent:
Shannon Gillis, Tewksbury (Joined late)

I. Opening

3/4 voting members present, quorum was met.

Motion to start the meeting
Kerri Oun made a motion to start the meeting. Kristel Bennett seconded the motion.

Billerica: Y
Chelmsford: Y
Tewksbury: Absent
Tyngsborough: Y
All in favor.

Manizeh Afridi called the meeting to order at 11:12 AM.

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II. Approval of Meeting Minutes

Motion to approve April meeting minutes

Kristel Bennett motioned to approve May meeting minutes. Donna Greenwood seconded the motion.

Billerica: Y
Chelmsford: Y
Tewksbury: Absent
Tyngsborough: Y
All in favor.

III. Announcements

Upcoming Training Opportunities:

- **Workplace Safety and De-escalation Training**
  June 18, 9:30 AM – 3:00 PM (In-Person; Canton)
  This instructor-led session provides participants with essential knowledge and practical methods for maintaining safety across diverse professional environments. Key areas of focus include proactive planning for safety, situational awareness, and techniques for risk assessment. Furthermore, attendees will gain actionable de-escalation skills for managing interactions with agitated persons, thereby fostering more secure and productive community outreach. Please ensure registration is completed by June 3.

- **Gluten-Free Dining**
  June 18, 12:00 PM – 1:00 PM (Virtual)
  Participate in this lunch and learn session hosted by the Barnstable Country Training Hub. The presentation will cover essential topics including food labeling requirements, strategies for cross-contact prevention, and guidance for inspectors on verifying gluten-free claims during evaluations.

- **FDA Training FD218: Risk Based Inspection Methods in Retail**
  June 22-26 (Virtual)
  Expanding upon the foundational principles introduced in FD215, this workshop is designed to further refine the professional knowledge and technical abilities of food safety inspection officers. The curriculum focuses on advancing the practical application of risk-based methodologies within retail food service environments.

- **The Power of One Health: Partnerships for Emerging Threats and Screwworm Readiness**

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June 23, 1:00 PM – 2:00 PM (Virtual)
This session explores the One Health approach, which recognizes the interconnected health of humans, animals, and the environment. Dr. Basler will discuss how the CDC's One Health Office collaborates with diverse partners to address health risks at this interface. The presentation will specifically highlight federal screwworm preparedness as a model for effective regional coordination and collaborative action.

- **Management vs. Leadership: What's the Difference and Why It Matters**
  June 24, 1:00 PM – 2:00 PM (Virtual)
  Join this webinar to examine the core competencies required for effective public sector management and leadership. Georgie Bishop, President of the Public Sector Consortium, will discuss the importance of professional development in these areas for public health practitioners. Participation is complimentary for MEHA members and $25 for non-members.

- **Bodyworks and Massage Parlor Guidance**
  June 25, 10:00 AM – 11:00 AM (Virtual)
  Participate in this session hosted by the Bay State Public Health Training Hub regarding the regulation of massage therapy and bodyworks establishments. Danielle Gurgel, MPH, Executive Director for the City of Taunton, will discuss essential compliance requirements and the transition of oversight roles within these settings. Please refer to the supplementary flyer for additional details.

- **Wastewater Laboratory Demo Day (NEIWPCC)**
  July 8, 8:30 AM – 3:30 PM (In-Person; Chelmsford)
  This regional event offers a full day of exhibition and practical training focused on the laboratory equipment utilized by utility operators at wastewater and water treatment facilities. Attendees will have the opportunity for face-to-face networking with fellow professionals from across the industry. This session is eligible for 4 TCHs; please note there is a registration fee associated with this event.

- **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.

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- **Title 5 System Inspector (SI) Certification Class**
  July 10 and 13, 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM (Virtual); Exam July 23
  This certification program prepares professionals to evaluate the efficiency and maintenance of onsite septic systems. Title 5 evaluations are mandatory during property ownership transfers. Interested parties may contact title5@neiwpcc.org to receive alerts regarding future course availability. Please note there is a fee for this training.

- **Grant Writing Basics**
  Self-paced (Virtual)
  This one-hour training session from the New England Public Health Training Center explores the function of grants in bolstering public health efforts. Participants will learn to locate suitable funding opportunities and develop foundational logic models to streamline the grant preparation process.

IV. NEPHA Updates

1. **Regional Inspector Update:**

Kerri Sands has successfully completed Tier 1 Housing and Food Trainings, providing her with a necessary base in environmental health codes and standard evaluation methods.

- Weekly field observation sessions continue alongside Kerri Oun, Siobhan LaFreniere, and Mojin Solutions to further develop her professional inspectional expertise across various settings:
  - Public swimming pools
  - Dining establishments and cafeterias
  - Fueling stations
  - Retail convenience locations
    - Tobacco sales compliance in Tyngsborough
  - Liquor retail outlets

Kerri Sands' efforts are transitioning toward autonomous field operations by facilitating supervised leadership of evaluations for lower-risk entities, including mobile food units and convenience shops. Further environmental health and inspectional coursework is being completed to broaden her regulatory expertise and technical evaluation skills:

- Food protection and foodborne illness prevention
- Sanitary standards and practices
- Regulatory statutes and administrative codes
- Hazardous and solid waste management
- Recreational facilities and public pools

Kerri Sands will continue to engage with the Training Hub on an ongoing basis as it ensures that training benchmarks are established and progress is tracked, creating a clear trajectory toward advanced inspectional competency and professional autonomy.

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2. **NEPHA Fall Internship - Candidate Discussion:**
   Bethany Slack, the Regional Public Health Specialist, identified an excellent candidate for the NEPHA fall internship. The group discussed the candidate and voted on extending the opportunity to this candidate.

   Recap of NEPHA Fall Internship:
   - **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 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.

Motion to move forward with extending the fall internship opportunity to the identified candidate.
Kristel Bennett motioned to move forward with extending the fall internship opportunity to the identified candidate. Kerri Oun seconded the motion.

Billerica: Y
Chelmsford: Y
Tewksbury: Absent
Tyngsborough: Y
All in favor.

3. ## NEPHA FY27 Workplan & Budget

Discussion focused on reviewing the proposed workplan and budget for FY27. The group reviewed each section of the workplan and each activity and had minor edits. For the budget, the group reviewed each line item and made a suggestion for the remaining consultant line item funds discussing the need to hire additional support for Title 5 inspections. Additionally, the group discussed increasing the MoJin Solutions budget to ensure sufficient food inspection coverage for at least 6 months of the next fiscal year.

Motion to approve the FY27 Workplan with edits discussed.
Donna Greenwood motioned to approve the FY27 Workplan with edits discussed. Shannon Gillis seconded the motion.

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Billerica: Y
Chelmsford: Y
Tewksbury: Y
Tyngsborough: Y
All in favor.

Motion to approve the FY27 Budget with edits discussed.
Kerri Oun motioned to approve the FY27 Budget with edits discussed. Shannon Gillis seconded the motion.

Billerica: Y
Chelmsford: Y
Tewksbury: Y
Tyngsborough: Y
All in favor.

V. Adjournment

The next regular coalition meeting will be held virtually on Thursday, July 9th via Zoom.

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

Billerica: Y
Chelmsford: Y
Tewksbury: Y
Tyngsborough: Y
All in favor.

The meeting adjourned at 1:00PM.

Documents used by the public body during the meeting:

- NEPHA June 11th Meeting Slides
- Draft FY27 Workplan
- Draft FY27 Budget