
THE BEDFORD CITIZEN

Submitted by Thomas E. Kinzer, III, Caucus Nominee and incumbent candidate for Board of Health



Tom Kinzer

Tom invites voters to contact him via email

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TWO BEDFORD CITIZEN QUESTIONS FOR BOARD OF HEALTH CANDIDATES

Q1: Give an example of a situation in which you played a role in helping people of different opinions or perspectives develop a mutually agreeable solution to a problem.

Although playing this role seems like familiar territory to me, coming up with an example which is both very specific and sufficiently anonymous to make it sharable has been a real challenge! I'm essentially going to pass on this question. Sorry!

Q 2: What role does the Board of Health have to promote information in the community about domestic violence and elder abuse as public health issues?

The fundamental mission of the Board of Health relates to its statutory responsibilities for twelve or thirteen areas of code enforcement, and sometimes issues a bit indirectly related to those statutory responsibilities. Bedford's Board of Health, like most Boards of Health, has little direct involvement with domestic violence and elder abuse cases. These problems typically require the skills of social workers and law enforcement personnel, involving capabilities and types of authority that the Health Department doesn't have. Abuse cases are all too real problems for society and are far more common than one would like, but each case ultimately consists of problems with person-to-person interactions that may have common features but are ultimately unique. This characteristic doesn't mesh well with the fundamental "herd health" characteristic of public health initiatives and responsibilities. The area in which abuse comes closest to the "herd health" model is its direct transmission of abusive behavior to successive generations by teaching children corrupted ways of interacting, and by the loss to Town and townspeople of the of the full talents and contributions of those suffering injury. The solutions, if any, to those problems are individualized to each case. In my view, the Board of Health is not a primary responder to abuse cases.

That does not mean that the Board collectively or its members individually can or should ignore these problems. If the Health Department or a Board member is contacted by someone who needs help in such a case, that person needs a clear and quick referral to the right resources to get help. If an organization sponsors seminars on abuse, it should be able to get support from the Board for its efforts. I think that the topic needs to be discussed to see if any sort of liaison relationships with groups that work in these areas can or should be established.

TOM'S CAUCUS STATEMENT

It has been my privilege to serve on Bedford's Board of Health for several years now. I am eager to do so again as the Board focuses on a number of currently important issues, including re-doing the Town's clumsy animal-keeping regulations, our growing concern about Lyme disease, which is now the Town's most prevalent reportable disease, while not ignoring other tick-borne diseases, hoarding as a significant problem, and working with a Health Department that has largely turned over in personnel in the last year and has entirely turned over in personnel over the last three years. I've also had the privilege of interacting with many other Town boards and departments about areas of joint interest.

It's worthwhile to remind the Town of the breadth of the scope of health-related interests and responsibilities the Board of Health and the Health Department have, in many cases shared with other parts of Bedford's Town government.

The Board of Health plays many vital roles in protecting Bedford's public health and safety, both currently and into the future. The Board's functions include: food protection in stores and restaurants, sanitation-related inspection as it pertains both to housing and to the Town's few remaining private septic systems, swimming pool inspections, monitoring of conditions at Springs Brook Park, community nursing services, school nursing services, senior health programs, participation in serious hoarding cases, annual flu clinics, regulation of and active involvement with biotechnology firms in Bedford, hazardous waste issues, permitting for private irrigation wells and (very rarely) private drinking water wells, health-related disaster planning, monitoring of the progress of toxic waste cleanup at and near Hanscom Air Force Base, monitoring and direction of (In conjunction with our mosquito control district) the Town's mosquito control efforts, tobacco regulations and their enforcement, and regulation of and permitting for the keeping of animals (other than pets) by residents. In more general terms, the Board works with other entities in Bedford on issues related to a healthy "built environment" in Bedford and to other initiatives including Safe Routes to School and the Healthy Bedford initiatives.

I've had the chance to get involved in many of the areas during my time on the Board, and think I can continue to make useful contributions to many of them.