



# Franklin Township Advisory Board of Health Minutes June 2024

**Meeting Date:** September 4, 2024  
**Time:** 7:30pm

**Location:** Franklin Township  
Municipal Building  
475 Demott Lane, Somerset, NJ 08873

**Call to Order:** Meeting called to order by Chairman Lisi at 7:37 pm

**Present:** P - Present E - Excused A - Absent

**P - Donna Lisi**

**P - Jim Karwoski**

**P - Christine Van Deursen**

**P - Linda Powell**

**P - Shubhendu Singh,**

**P - Anna Dulencin**

**A - Kristine Baffo**

**P - Alex Kharazi, Councilman**

**P - Mike McCarty, Deputy Director**

**P - Rashida Boima, SCBOH.**

## **Open Discussion:**

- Discussed the number of members needed for a quorum and the number of members we have on the Board. We have 7 members with a vacancy for 2 alternate members and 1 student non-voting member. Therefore 4 members would constitute a quorum.

## **Review of Previous Meeting Minutes:**

- Minutes from June 5, 2024 presented: MSP\* as presented

## **Public Session:**

- MSP\* to Open to the Public  
No Public Present
- MSP\* to Close the Public

## **County Health Department: Mike McCarty:**

- Does anyone on the board know why we have the number of board members we do?  
There is no set number, but we do need alternates. We can have more people if we want.
- We are in the process of ordering all the flu vaccine and setting up flu clinics  
If you have locations or dates, let me know and we can pass it on to the nursing or preparedness coordinator.
- Question: Can we have one at the food bank? What do they need to do.  
Answer: Absolutely, just reach out to the SCDOH, they will schedule it with you.  
  
Suggested places: Senior Centers are good as well. Older adult communities, Houses of worship.
- We have had our Health Educators at Franklin Fireworks, Somerset Health Fair at Eternal Life Christian Center, Backpack Drive at Pine Grove manor and Franklin School Districts Backpack Fair. We were

scheduled to be at NNO, but it was cancelled. We are scheduled to be at the Cancer Thriving and Surviving Workshop on September 24<sup>th</sup> to Sept. 29<sup>th</sup> at the Senior Center and also At Franklin Day in Colonial Park. Not sure we will offer Flu Vaccines at Franklin Day, but I'll check.

- To summarize: There are 4 areas we would recommend: The Food Bank, Houses of Worship, Senior Center and Franklin day
- Question: Do you do offer them at night and on weekends?  
Answer: We have hired new people and are trying to expand our hours.
- We offered vaccines for children which opened up last august. All appt slots filled up. Held at the Richard Hall Mental Health Center in Bridgewater - It was a huge success. We're looking at other facilities county wide to do the same thing.
- Question: Why not partner with the Dept of Education?  
Answer: We are looking at all possibilities.
- Should they use Zoofall? It doesn't matter. Zoofall was having a backlog of appointments. So we intervened to help children get their vaccinations. We do this on nights and weekends.
- VFC program (Vaccines For Children program) - Children 17 and under – Free. They must be uninsured, NJ Family Care plan A, or Alaskan, or Native American  
We can't give it if they have insurance as we don't have a billing mechanism. SCBOH doesn't bill for anything. Senior citizens are free. Comes from the State. Not allowed to bill.
- We are moving along with public health accreditation application. Last week we submitted our readiness assessment to the public health accreditation board. By the end of Oct., we need to submit our initial accreditation application. Then within 1 year, they have a site visit, check our plans to make sure we are in compliance when measured against other health dept nationally. That's our goal.
- We are getting a lot of phone and email inquiries regarding mosquito borne illness such as Eastern Equine Encephalitis and West Nile Virus. We have posted a lot of information on our website. Our trends show cases are not out of the ordinary this year.
- Snake bites - Inquiry from news 12 about it. No incidents. We just put out standard messaging. How to minimize snakes around your home.
- Question: What is the status of healthier somerset now.  
Answer: We have had pyritization meetings over the next month. But that's about all. Used to be very public but haven't seen much lately.

Council Liaison: Councilman Kharazi:

- Nothing special happened. Attending a few openings of new businesses.
- We had Bias Training presented by Homeland Security and the Prosecutors office. 50 or so people attended. We had a good discussion.

### Old Business:

- We haven't got our recommendations to the Council yet.
- Talked about a lot of things this year and many of them have been addressed by different entities. A lot of the things the needs assessment has focused on such as services for older adults, emotional and mental health services. There are programs available for them. Taking inventory for these programs and making people are aware of it seems to be more of the problem.

- Most of our recommendations will be PR - disseminating information through channels. We can review what Saffie discussed and what Councilman Kharazi recommended. But there may be more broader things to look at. Or something else that may not have been identified.
- Suggestion: One way we can reach a lot of people in town is put an article out in the Franklin Times. List the different types of services. Also the Franklin Township newsletter which comes out quarterly.
- May have to start thinking about reaching people about the Cannabis. Need to start educating the consumers about the dangers of having the product around children. Raising the awareness about the dangers for themselves and for their children. How do we get the info to the general consumers.
- Question: Can the township require the cannabis distributors in town hand out a flyer regarding the things to be careful of.  
Answer: We can ask the question. As a courtesy, we can ask the stores to give a basic dos and don'ts list regarding their product. Hopefully the customers would appreciate it.
- Question: Do we have that piece of information?  
Answer: Mike can see what the CRC has available to hand out . Maybe even make it with Franklin Townships name on it.
- There is a flyer called: "Lock it Up" that some people have tried to hand out with mixed success.
- Another Question/Comment: When the township decided to approve Cannabis sales, not once was the ABOH asked about what we thought. Yet we are supposed to advise council on the health of Franklin Township. When we mentioned it to the council representative, they said "Why Not?" Even when we expressed some of our concerns, they were ignored. We are here to help you – It would have been nice to have these discussions before it was approved. It's like we are trying to close the barn door after the horse got out. It is frustrating.
- Possible suggestion for the board: At every other council meeting, you could come and educate the community. Present your concerns to the council and the attendees. It would make the board more visible. You could even present flyers.

### **New Business:**

- Save A Life Day – Countywide distribution of Naloxone for free - September 26<sup>th</sup> – All day event. Looking for venues. Senior center, food bank, Library, etc.
- County has hired a new mental health administrator. Starting in October
- Communities in Crisis – Annual Harm reduction conference on October 1 at RVCC 6 pm.
- DEMAS - Opiate summit on September 18 – virtual
- Vigil for Opiate Awareness – August 31<sup>st</sup> – honor those who have struggled.
- Community Solutions to Problematic Screen Use - Sept 25 9:30 – 1:00 Human Services Building, Somerville, NJ

### **Guest Speakers: Derek Smith from the Franklin Food Bank**

- I am the Executive Director of Franklin Food Bank – started volunteering in 2019 - I took over in 2022 Next year we are Celebrating our 50<sup>th</sup> year.
- Food bank has a market – like a grocery store. We see upwards of 90 families a day - Open 5 days a week. Three years ago, we saw 30-40 families a day. Families are able to come and shop up to 2 times a month.

No means testing of any kind, just a resident of Franklin.

- The size of a household determines how many points you get. Essentially 1 point is 1 dollar. We have morning, afternoon and evening openings as well as Saturday morning.
- We carry many food options – canned goods, beans, soups, mixed veg. pasta, rice, condiments, cereal, and snacks. Household and beauty products. Toothpaste, shampoo, Windex, diapers, feminine hygiene products and pet food. Fresh produce, milk, cheese, eggs. Also, we have some prepared foods, because some may not have access to a kitchen. May not have access to kitchen.
- We have over 35 different relationships with food vendors. Stop and Shop, Costco, etc. We go to 5-7 retailers a day to pick up food. We have a responsibility to address the waste problem in the food industry. Food insecurity is a problem. We get food 3-4 days before best by date. We are trying to eradicate the stigma of shopping at a food bank. Some are used to seeing department of agriculture labels on packages. This does something to the psyche. So we do offer name brands.
- We also create job opportunities... drivers, sorters.
- We call our place Bodega Joe's - the reason is someone said it looked a lot like Trader Joes. But it also feels like a Bodega. Put them together to create Bodega Joes. Helps alleviate the stigma of shopping at the food bank. Town of 70,000 - 9,000 folks are food insecure. That Stigma is real. People say, but you see expensive cars in the parking lot. They don't understand. But you don't know their circumstances which may have changed.
- We don't turn away anyone who shows up. They show up from Camden, Hillsborough, etc. We have a program called Serve and Refer – We will give you a bag of food. Some non-perishables, Rice, pasta, tuna, Fruits, veg. We ask where they came from and then look up the agencies in their town, give them the list.
- We have a Community Distribution Program that started during the pandemic. This is in partnership with Franklin PD, Greater Somerset YMCA and First Baptist. It's on the first Wednesday of every month in the parking lot of First Baptist. People drive through, pop the trunk. We put boxes of fresh produce in it. We See 400-500 cars in 2 hrs. No address requirements. We also have 100 families walk up .
- We have satellite pantries - First Baptist, Pine Grove Manor School and Hamilton Campus and on in Franklin Park as well.
- When people are hungry, they have two different bags --- Grab and Go bag, more for immediate consumption. Then also a Weekender bag - enough for 4 meals for a family of 5. Will have enough food for a couple of days and then the school will connect them to the Franklin food bank.
- Another program is Beyond Borders – When we had to close down during the pandemic, people still needed food. We turned our parking lot into a pantry.
- During the pandemic, several other pantries and food kitchens asked for help. We had 41 different agencies that we helped. Now we help about 15 different agencies.
- Currently the Franklin Food Bank helps provide other services, such as healthcare, housing, jobs, etc. Folks in the community come into the food bank to help them. We even offer cooking classes, etc.
- Feed Franklin Fest - Coming Saturday. Golf Outing at the end of the month. Part of a coalition – FISC - Food Insecurity Safety Coalition. - Good resource for others in area.
- Our lease is up in the Summer of 2028. We hope to house our new home in front of Pine Grove Manor School. We want to have a large pantry, community room, and a campus for the community.

Launching a capital campaign to help fund it.

- We are blessed with the building we have right now. But the space comes with some challenges. Every family is promised 2 visits per month. It's hard to get their second visit in during the month. People using our food bank range from the homeless to those supplementing their budget.
- Question: Do you work with Rutgers Cooperative?  
Answer: Not yet, but we are planning to. We will be developing a community garden.
- Question: Do you carry any medications?  
Answer: No, not able to put that on our shelves
- Question: Do you do any cooking classes.  
Answer: We have nutrition classes – culinary skills, alternatives to using salt. Ways to cook different items. Taste the items cooked and get food to take home.
- The town is very diverse. We have over 40 different countries represented at our food bank. Franklin is not an integrated town. Very diverse but very segregated. We celebrate all the different ethnicities and religions.
- Question: Any special programs for pregnant women.?  
Answer: We have baby formula, but no specific programs.
- We have to buy a lot of the meat, milk and eggs we have. Sometimes we buy diapers, formula, etc.
- Question: Do you supply supplements, like Vitamin 3, etc.  
Answer: No, we cannot provide it. If we get it donated from Amazon, we give it to our Beyond Borders Partners.
- Some of the donated food we will have to throw out. Often times the bread or produce we have to throw out. We tell our partners, if it's not food that you would eat, please don't send it to us. So we have to be careful of all the stores that donate to us.
- Question: Canned goods - what about the date on the can?  
Answer: Still trying to chip away at the stigma... we do our best to keep it close to best by date. Our Goal is to replicate a grocery store.
- Thank you so much for your organization.

**Next meeting Date:** - October 3, 2024

**Adjourn:** MSP to Adjourn at 8:50 pm

\* MSP - Moved, Seconded and Passed

**Respectively submitted,  
Christine Van Deursen  
Recording Secretary**