



Town of Fairhaven Board of Health

Town Hall · 40 Center Street · Fairhaven, MA 02719

Telephone: (508) 979-4023 ext. 8125 · Email: boh@fairhaven-ma.gov

July 29, 2026

PRESENT: Barbara Acksen, Justine Frezza, David Flaherty

ABSENT: Brian Meneses

1. Call to Order

- a. Chair Acksen called the meeting to order at 5:01pm. Chair Acksen welcomed everyone.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

3. Welcome and Media Notification

- a. Chair Acksen read the media and recording notifications.

4. Health Agent Report

- a. COVID positivity rate remains at 0% for the past two weeks.
- b. Blood pressure and wellness clinics offered every Wednesday at the COA from 1-3 pm.
- c. Measles, pertussis, other childhood diseases, influenza, and RSV are on the rise. Please consult your physician regarding vaccinations.
- d. Fairhaven home-bound residents qualify for a free home-bound flu vaccine offered by the Southeastern MA Public Health Collaborative to provide an in-home vaccine.
- e. Bristol County Mosquito Control Project has reported Fairhaven at low risk for both WNV and EEE. Please also be vigilant to check for ticks.
- f. One Perc test was witnessed and one Title 5 inspection was witnessed.

- g. Rodent complaints are still coming in and are increasing. Please be vigilant with trash and birdseed on your property. Consult a licensed exterminator for property treatment in conjunction with neighbors if it seems overwhelming.
- h. Agent Flaherty followed up on six Chapter II housing complaints.
- i. Seasonal beach water testing passed for this week and the previous week.
- j. The Southeastern MA Public Health Collaborative has provided medication disposal bags, sharps containers, CPR masks, and pill containers (these are available in English and Spanish). The Health Department is awaiting more tick removers and sunscreen. Please visit the Health Department for any of these free items.
- k. Agent Flaherty noted there are no updates on the wind turbines and two Impact forms have been received in the past two weeks. Member Frezza noted at the last Select Board Meeting there was discussion regarding extending the contract with Fairhaven Wind. Discussion followed regarding concerns of the wind turbines and possible studies by a third party on sound and flicker.

5. Update on Wastewater Treatment Plant – Agent Flaherty reviewed that all complaints are now being kept digitally as well as in hard-copy form and that the BPW is now receiving all complaints. Agent Flaherty read an email from BPW Director Vinnie Furtado regarding a noise complaint associated with the Wastewater Treatment Plant (Attachment 1). Agent Flaherty also reported that he had contacted the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) regarding potential grant opportunities for air-quality testing.

- a. Review Resolution by Board of Health of Wastewater Treatment Plant – Chair Acksen read the proposed Resolution (Attachment 2). The Board discussed distribution of the Resolution and moving forward with its adoption.
Motion: Member Frezza motioned to accept the Resolution for Wastewater Treatment as written. Chair Acksen seconded. The vote passed (2-0-0).
- b. Review Policy for Complaints – Chair Acksen read the proposed Policy for Complaints (Attachment 3). Member Frezza stated that the policy should apply to all complaints received by the Health Department. Agent Flaherty reported that he requested a general complaint form be posted on the Town's website. The Board discussed the complaint process and the types of information and fields that should be available to document variables contributing to a complaint. Agent Flaherty will follow up with the Director of IT regarding options for developing and responding to complaint forms.

Member Frezza requested an opportunity to make revisions to the proposed policy and bring a revised draft back to the next Board of Health meeting for further discussion.

Chair Acksen reported that Agent Flaherty is working to arrange a joint meeting with the BPW. Chair Acksen also noted that a memorandum from Bob Espindola had been received (Attachment 4) and requested that Agent Flaherty forward the memorandum to the BPW.

6. Public Comment – Two Minute allowance by Chair on Public Health Issues

- a. Bob Espindola of John Street - Mr. Espindola thanked the Board for taking the concerns seriously and stated that the issues are significant to affected residents. He asked whether the Board would provide updates at each Board of Health meeting and continue to follow up on the matter.

Mr. Espindola expressed concern that the resolution should identify the Town's role in addressing the issue and should not rely solely on other agencies. He also suggested that Representative Sylvia be included in future discussions. Mr. Espindola asked whether complaints could be kept confidential.

Director of the BPW Vinnie Furtado noted he is available to address questions or concerns.

Member Frezza asked whether the reported noise issue would be resolved by the end of the week. Mr. Furtado noted that the noise identified in the complaint should already have been resolved and that the timeline provided in his email was conservative. He noted, however, that the Wastewater Treatment Plant remains an active construction site and that there can be no guarantee that additional noise will not occur, although additional noise is not anticipated.

- b. Marsha Shea of Buxton Street – Ms. Shea asked whether there were any issues with the Mattapoisett pumping facility that could affect backflow or sludge and whether the trucking company responsible for hauling waste was operating consistently or experiencing delays.

Mr. Furtado explained that engineers had identified specific areas where additional odor control should be installed, including a pump station that handles some wastewater from Mattapoisett. He noted that a number of houses in Mattapoisett are connected by contract to the Fairhaven wastewater treatment system and that there are no known issues. He clarified that discussion regarding pumping septic tanks may have contributed to the concern and noted that rock and debris filters should be in place for wastewater facilities that accept septage from septic haulers.

Ms. Shea commented that toxic gas meters should be present at the facility and near the abutting neighbors. Mr. Furtado noted that employees are equipped with personal meters and that meters are also located within the facility, but there are no meters located outside the property along the western fence line. He commented that none of the meters had recorded readings above the applicable limits.

Ms. Shea asked whether the odor-control chemicals bind with toxic gases. Mr. Furtado explained that the product eliminates odors and biochemically binds with and mitigates the odors.

Ms. Shea requested the installation of toxic gas meters along the western fence line near the properties of abutting residents. Mr. Furtado reiterated that employees are equipped with meters and that permanent meters are located within the building, and no readings have exceeded applicable limits.

- c. Bob Espindola of John Street – Mr. Espindola asked whether any toxic gas meter readings had been elevated since the complaints were received and stated that he would expect readings to be higher during periods of peak odor complaints.

Mr. Furtado stated that, to his knowledge, there had been no readings above applicable limits. He also noted that a Safety Inspector visits the property to ensure safe practices are being followed.

Mr. Espindola expressed concern that toxic gas levels should be monitored continuously. Member Frezza noted that a Safety Inspector is not present at the facility 24 hours a day to ensure that toxic gas levels do not exceed applicable limits.

Member Frezza asked whether the gas meters are calibrated. Mr. Furtado stated that permanent toxic gas meters are located within the building, that they have never alarmed, and that the meters are calibrated. He reiterated that permanent meters are not installed outside along the western fence line.

Mr. Espindola asked about the chemical being used for odor control. Mr. Furtado identified the product as Razzle and stated the chemical name is odorphos, which is added at the pump stations on Arsene Street and Bridge Street.

Mr. Espindola also followed up on Ms. Shea's question regarding the trucking company and whether there were ongoing contract issues. Mr. Furtado stated that Synagro is contracted to haul the biosolids. He explained that typically several truckloads per day are transported to an incineration facility in Woonsocket. On occasion, the incineration facility is shut down for repairs, resulting in the wastewater treatment plant holding the material for a longer period.

Member Frezza summarized that the Resolution would be distributed, a joint meeting with the BPW would be arranged, and Agent Flaherty should continue outreach to the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), Department of Public Health (DPH), and Cheryl Sabara.

7. Invoices, Correspondence and any other business that may properly come before the Board not reasonably anticipated 48 hours in advance of the meeting

- a. Invoices reviewed and approved.

8. Next Meeting Date – August 12, 2026 at 5:00pm

9. Meeting Adjourned – Motion: Member Frezza motioned to adjourn the July 29, 2026 Public Meeting. Chair Acksen seconded. The vote passed (2-0-0).



Attachment 1

Fwd: Meeting with BPW

David Flaherty <dflaherty@fairhaven-ma.gov>
To: Angelica Medeiros <BoardofHealth@fairhaven-ma.gov>

Fri, Aug 7, 2026 at 9:29 AM

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **David Flaherty** <dflaherty@fairhaven-ma.gov>
Date: Wed, Jul 29, 2026 at 8:15 AM
Subject: Re: Meeting with BPW
To: Vincent Furtado <vfurtado@fairhaven-ma.gov>, BARBARA ACKSEN <backsen@comcast.net>, Justine Frezza <justinefrezzaoh@gmail.com>, Brian Meneses <fhvnr@gmail.com>

Thanks for the clarification Vinnie. I will pass this along.

On Tue, Jul 28, 2026 at 4:19 PM Vincent Furtado <vfurtado@fairhaven-ma.gov> wrote:

Hi Dave

Just following up on the noise concern. I honestly couldn't find more than 3 noise complaints from June onward, but I could have misplaced one or two.

Regardless, other than the noise associated with general construction, during the day we are testing air, pipe flow, pressure leaks, etc.,

Randomly, there is an occasional high pitched noise which is related to the ramping up and down of the temporary blowers into the temporary piping, which we must operate to oxygenate the water in order to sustain the life of the plant's microbiological population which is required for us to comply with our discharge permit.

As an FYI for the next couple of days, this random high pitched noise may be slightly louder because we are transitioning from the temporary structures associated with the aeration basins to the newly constructed aeration basins, blowers and new piping.

Once this transition is complete, scheduled to occur by week's end, the random noise will cease because the temporary aerating equipment will no longer be needed.

During this transition, we have wrapped blankets around the temporary piping to help suppress noise levels.

That's the scoop with the noise which should be behind us shortly.

I will make every effort to Zoom in ASAP tomorrow, but I had already had a meeting scheduled at 4:30 before I was asked to appear before your Board.

Thanks

Vinnie



Town of Fairhaven Board of Health

Town Hall • 40 Center Street • Fairhaven, MA 02719
Telephone: (508) 979-4023 ext. 8130 • Fax: (508) 979-4079

Barbara Ackson, Chair
Brian Meneses, Vice-Chair
Justine Frezza, Clerk
David D. Flaherty Jr, RS , Health Agent

RESOLUTION

We respectfully Resolve:

- Recognize that residents have experienced prolonged and significant nuisance odors associated with the wastewater treatment plant construction project.
- Recognize that, despite recent improvements, additional construction phases are expected over the coming year and may again produce severe odor impacts.
- Support the installation of a permanent odor monitoring system, if feasible, at and around the Fairhaven Wastewater Treatment Plant, including continuous hydrogen sulfide (H₂S) monitoring, weather monitoring, and public reporting of monitoring data.
- Request emergency state funding and any other supplemental funding and technical assistance available to implement odor monitoring and additional odor mitigation measures during the remainder of construction.
- Request assistance from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health and the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection in evaluating the impacts on nearby residents and identifying additional mitigation measures.
- Request Representative Mark Sylvia and the Fairhaven Legislative Delegation to advocate for State funding and technical assistance on behalf of the Town and its residents.
- Recommend that future state-required wastewater treatment upgrade projects incorporate neighborhood impact assessments, odor mitigation planning, objective odor monitoring, and dedicated funding as standard project requirements.

Barbara Ackson

Brian Meneses

Justine Frezza

July 29, 2026

Attachment 3

July 29, 2026

The Board of Health shall implement the following practices for the Waste Water Treatment Plant Complaint Process:

- Require that every complaint submitted through the odor complaint system be forwarded in its entirety, without screening or filtering, to the Department of Public Works and the Board of Health members.
- Ensure that the complete complaint database is preserved as a public record.
- Establish a written policy confirming that no complaint will be withheld, consolidated, or discarded.
- Implement an automatic email confirmation that is sent immediately to every individual submitting a complaint. That confirmation should include a copy of the information submitted so residents have independent documentation that their complaint was received exactly as filed and retroactively send copies of ALL prior complaints back to each person who filed it.
- Periodically audit the complaint process to ensure that every submission has been received, retained, and forwarded appropriately.

David D. Flaherty Jr., RS
Health Agent

MEMORANDUM

Date: July 26, 2026

To: Fairhaven Board of Health

From: Bob & Ann Espindola
14 John Street
Fairhaven, MA 02719

Subject: Objective Odor Monitoring Technologies and Recommendations to Support the Fairhaven Wastewater Treatment Plant Nitrogen Removal Project

Introduction

Dear Members of the Board of Health,

Thank you for your continued attention to the odor conditions associated with the Fairhaven Wastewater Treatment Plant during the ongoing nitrogen removal construction project.

As residents living in the neighborhood most directly affected by these odors, we appreciate the Board's willingness to consider this issue and your efforts to protect the public health and quality of life of Fairhaven residents. We also recognize and support the importance of the Town's and the Commonwealth's investment in improving water quality through nitrogen removal.

Our intent in providing this memorandum is not to criticize the project or assign blame. Rather, we hope to offer constructive recommendations that may assist the Board as it considers its proposed resolution and future actions.

Background

Construction associated with the nitrogen removal project has now continued for well over a year.

Residents experienced significant odor problems during the 2025 construction season. While we appreciate the efforts made by the Department of Public Works, engineers, contractors, and plant operators to reduce odors, residents have continued to experience nuisance odors during portions of the 2026 construction season as well.

Although recent mitigation efforts appear to have reduced the frequency and intensity of some odor events, they have not eliminated the problem. We also understand that additional phases of construction remain, creating the potential for additional odor impacts before the project is completed.

We believe there is an opportunity for Fairhaven to respond proactively by incorporating objective environmental monitoring into its odor management efforts.

Why Objective Monitoring Matters

The Town has already established an odor complaint reporting system.

That system provides valuable information because it documents what residents are actually experiencing.

Objective monitoring would not replace resident complaints.

Instead, it would complement them.

Continuous monitoring can document:

- Hydrogen sulfide (H₂S) concentrations
- Wind direction
- Wind speed
- Temperature
- Relative humidity

When combined with resident reports, this information provides a much clearer understanding of:

- when odors occur,
- how odors travel,
- whether construction activities contribute,
- and whether mitigation efforts are effective.

Objective data also helps improve communication among residents, Town officials, plant operators, regulators, and elected officials.

Commercially Available Technologies

Commercial odor monitoring is widely used throughout the wastewater industry.

Examples include:

Continuous Hydrogen Sulfide Monitoring

Hydrogen sulfide is widely recognized as one of the primary compounds associated with wastewater odors.

Modern monitoring systems can:

- operate continuously,
- transmit data remotely,
- archive historical information,
- provide alarm notifications,
- support public dashboards.

Weather Monitoring

Most odor monitoring systems include weather stations measuring:

- wind direction
- wind speed
- temperature
- humidity

Weather information helps determine when odors are being transported toward nearby neighborhoods.

Multi-Gas Monitoring

Some systems also measure:

- ammonia,
- volatile organic compounds (VOCs),
- additional odor-related gases.

Electronic Odor (“Electronic Nose”) Systems

These systems combine multiple sensors with software to estimate odor intensity in a manner that better reflects human perception.

Massachusetts Experience

Objective odor monitoring is already being utilized by major Massachusetts wastewater utilities.

The Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA) has published technical procedures describing the use of hydrogen sulfide monitoring, standardized odor observations, weather measurements, and data collection to evaluate odor conditions within portions of its wastewater collection system.

These procedures demonstrate that objective odor monitoring is an established wastewater management practice rather than an experimental concept.

Recommendation

We respectfully recommend that the Fairhaven Board of Health continue to support objective, science-based approaches to understanding and reducing odor impacts.

Specifically, we encourage the Board to support:

- continued evaluation of commercially available odor-monitoring technologies;
 - pursuit of state technical assistance and funding opportunities;
 - consideration of a permanent odor-monitoring network as a long-term goal; and
 - implementation of a temporary monitoring program during the remainder of construction if permanent funding cannot be secured immediately.
-

Request for Information (RFI)

We also respectfully recommend that the Board encourage the Town to issue a **Request for Information (RFI)** to qualified firms specializing in wastewater odor-monitoring technologies.

An RFI would allow the Town to:

- understand currently available technologies,
- compare installation and operating costs,
- identify successful municipal applications,
- evaluate grant opportunities,
- determine appropriate monitoring locations,
- compare permanent and temporary monitoring options.

Importantly, issuing an RFI would **not** commit the Town to purchasing any equipment.

Rather, it would provide decision-makers with objective technical and financial information before any procurement decisions are considered.

We further recommend that the completed RFI responses be presented at a public meeting so that the Board of Health, Select Board, Department of Public Works, project engineers, interested residents, and other stakeholders may review the information together.

Funding Opportunities

Because Fairhaven's nitrogen removal project is being undertaken to satisfy important Commonwealth environmental objectives, we believe state agencies should assist municipalities in minimizing construction-related impacts on surrounding neighborhoods.

Potential sources of assistance may include:

- Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection
 - Massachusetts Department of Public Health
 - Legislative earmarks
 - State environmental grants
 - Federal infrastructure and environmental programs
-

Conclusion

We sincerely appreciate the Board's willingness to consider these recommendations.

We believe objective odor monitoring represents a practical, transparent, and science-based approach that benefits everyone involved.

It can help residents better understand odor events, assist operators in evaluating mitigation efforts, provide useful information to regulators, and strengthen public confidence throughout the remainder of construction and beyond.

Thank you again for your continued public service and for your thoughtful consideration of these recommendations.

Respectfully submitted,

Bob Espindola

Ann Espindola

14 John Street

Fairhaven, Massachusetts

Appendix A

Examples of Established Odor Monitoring Practices at Municipal Wastewater Facilities

Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA)

The Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA) has documented the use of objective odor evaluation procedures that include:

- Hydrogen sulfide (H₂S) monitoring
- Standardized odor observations
- Wind direction and wind speed measurements
- Upwind and downwind sampling
- Field documentation and analysis

These procedures demonstrate that H₂S monitoring is an established component of wastewater odor management in Massachusetts.

While the MWRA example covers multiple geographic locations, the Fairhaven application would be limited to measuring at key representative locations at the border of Town property and neighborhood homes near the parts of the wastewater treatment plant already identified by the Town as most likely to emit odors. Ideally, permanently mounted, recording sensors would be used instead of portable sensors, to eliminate subjectivity and the need for staff to determine when to take readings that represent the periods of most significant odor.

MWRA Technical Reference

Odor Sampling and Evaluation in the MWRA Collection System

<https://www.mwra.com/media/file/odor-sampling-and-evaluation-mwra-collection-system-2025>

Common Commercial Technologies

Modern wastewater odor-management programs commonly use:

- Continuous H₂S monitoring stations
- Weather monitoring stations

- Multi-gas monitoring systems
- Electronic odor (“electronic nose”) technologies
- Cloud-based monitoring dashboards
- Automated alerts and reporting

Why These Technologies Matter

Objective monitoring can:

- Document odor events.
- Measure the effectiveness of mitigation efforts.
- Correlate odor events with weather conditions.
- Improve communication with residents.
- Increase transparency.
- Support operational decision-making.
- Provide long-term information that remains valuable after construction is complete.

Suggested Next Step

We respectfully recommend that the Town issue a Request for Information (RFI) to qualified firms to evaluate available technologies, implementation costs, municipal examples, and funding opportunities, and that the results be presented publicly before any procurement decisions are considered.