

The Brookfield Examiner

Timberyard Brewing Company: Crafting a Better Future for Nugget

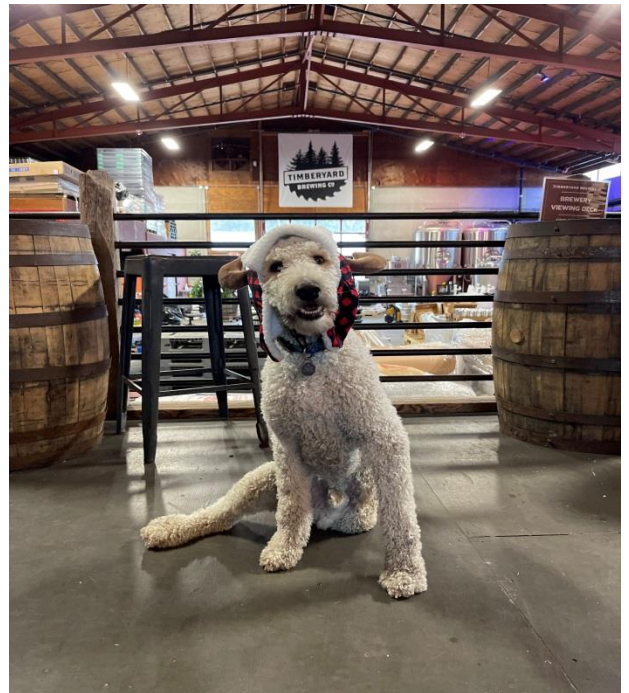
By Diane Tillotson

EAST BROOKFIELD, MA January 10, 2024

A Story of Resilience and Community Spirit Nugget's Second Chance: From a Severely Injured Shelter Dog to the Beloved Timberyard Brew Dog

In an inspiring tale of resilience and love, Nugget, formerly known as Natty, arrived at Second Chance Animal Services, carrying the burden of a severe leg injury. The compassionate team at Second Chance worked tirelessly, exploring every possible avenue to save his leg. However, faced with the harsh reality of his condition, the difficult decision to amputate was made, prioritizing Nugget's comfort and overall quality of life.

In a heartwarming twist of fate, Nugget's story caught the attention of Matt and Nellie Zarif, the generous owners of Timberyard Brewing Company, and dedicated supporters of Second Chance. The Zarifs were deeply moved by Nugget's plight. Their brewery, renowned for its strong commitment to the community, had been a pillar of support for Second Chance, contributing through donations, hosting charity events, and even providing storage for large donations. Nugget's journey resonated with the entire Timberyard team, who had recently initiated the popular puppy yoga classes to benefit Second Chance. These classes, masterfully led by the talented yoga instructor Audrey Martinez, are held monthly and feature friendly adoptable dogs from Second



Chance. These furry companions romp around the taproom, bringing joy and laughter to attendees as they practice their yoga poses.

After his surgery, Nugget began to thrive, finding his forever home with the Zarif family. He joined a loving household that includes three energetic young boys and another three-legged dog, Lucy. Lucy, Nugget's new dog-sister, wears a prosthetic leg and often accompanies Nellie Zarif, a skilled prosthetist at Hanger Clinic in Worcester, to her workplace. Here, she serves as a beacon of hope and inspiration for people experiencing limb loss. Nellie, drawing from her professional expertise, considered fitting Nugget with a prosthesis. However, she soon realized that Nugget was remarkably adept on three legs, especially given his youth and the nature of his amputation.

Lindsay Doray, Chief Development Officer at Second Chance, expressed her admiration for Nugget's resilience, stating, "His progress is nothing short of amazing and we are so grateful to all the supporters who made his surgery possible. He is so fast on three legs that his four-legged companions often struggle to keep up!

Nugget has now become a proud and cherished member of the Timberyard family. He accompanies Matt to work every day, becoming a local sensation. His intelligence and understanding are profound, with Matt likening him to the legendary Lassie for his intuitive nature. "Nugget is the smartest dog that I have ever met. When you talk to this dog, he understands you," Matt said. "He's the perfect brewery dog - well-behaved, sweet, and friendly, always eager to be a part of the action."

Embracing his role as a 'dogfluencer,' Nugget delights visitors at Timberyard, especially on puppy yoga mornings. His charm and sociable nature have earned him a special place in social media posts. One of his favorite roles? Assisting Santa during his brewery visits, where he's been spotted auditioning for a chance to be a reindeer. Nugget sits patiently next to Santa for hours, posing for photos with happy families, and helping to raise funds for local charities. His journey from pain to fame is a powerful testament to the transformative power of love, resilience, and a caring community.

About Second Chance Animal Services:



"More Than Just a Shelter"

Second Chance Animal Services, a nonprofit animal welfare organization, was founded in 1999. Beginning

as an animal shelter, it has since expanded to assist more pets in need. Today, Second Chance operates Community Veterinary Hospitals in North Brookfield, Southbridge, Springfield, and Worcester. These facilities provide access to the highest-quality veterinary care for all, including subsidized rates for underserved communities. Annually, Second Chance helps over 48,000 pets live better lives through comprehensive veterinary care, spay/neuter services, adoption services, community & educational outreach programs, training, and a pet food pantry. For more information, visit Second Chance's website.

About

Timberyard Brewing Company:



Timberyard Brewing Company, an independent, family-owned New England craft brewery, is nestled in a historic lumberyard in the heart of Central Massachusetts, a short drive west of Worcester on Rt. 9. The brewery boasts a spacious taproom & outdoor beer garden, a full kitchen menu, a family-friendly atmosphere, and hosts free live music on the weekends. Timberyard is committed to creating wonderful experiences for both visitors and its hard-working, friendly team. The brewery actively supports the local community through donations, fundraising events, and offers space for private functions, from small birthday parties to large weddings and corporate events. For more information or to get tickets for the next Puppy Yoga event, visit Timberyard's website timberyardbrewing.com

Controversy Surrounds Brookfield Board of Health Meeting Over New Rules and Conduct Concerns

Brookfield, January 15, 2024 - The Brookfield Board of Health's December 13, 2023 meeting, chaired by Maureen Lepak, has sparked significant controversy due to the introduction of new meeting rules and conduct issues, raising concerns about governance and public safety.

In a surprising move, Chair Maureen Lepak introduced new procedural rules for the Brookfield Board of Health's meetings, developed without consulting other board members. Board member Christopher Kelleher criticized this approach, highlighting Chair Lepak's pattern of unilateral decision-making. "Chair Lepak introduces rules without our input, shutting down any debate or questions," Kelleher said. He emphasized the lack of open communication and democratic process, noting that board members are expected to comply with these new rules without the opportunity for discussion or clarification.

Kelleher also criticized the lack of collaboration and Chair Lepak's disregard for board members' opinions. He specifically mentioned her unilateral decision to cancel a scheduled meeting on December 27, 2023, without consulting the board. "Ms. Lepak often acts alone, making decisions and altering plans without informing us, the other board members. It's frustrating that there's no effort to seek our input on such important matters," Kelleher remarked.

Allegations of Favoritism and Rule Violations Emerge at Brookfield Board of Health Meeting

In a recent Brookfield Board of Health meeting, the enforcement of the new rules came under scrutiny due to incidents involving Mr. Holdcraft. There were multiple instances where Mr. Holdcraft apparently violated meeting protocols without repercussions from Chair Lepak.

"Not only did I hear Mr. Holdcraft use unacceptable language towards me, but he also repeatedly broke other established rules and attempted to incite a fight. He spoke out of turn and exceeded his two-minute speaking limit. Despite these clear violations, Chair Lepak never called him out of order," Kelleher reported, highlighting the disparities in rule enforcement.

This pattern of behavior and the Chair's response - or lack thereof - have raised questions about impartiality and favoritism within the Board. In previous meetings, according to Kelleher, Mr. Holdcraft has been allowed to exhibit similar behavior, including being verbally abusive, without any caution or reprimand from Chair Lepak.

Kelleher expressed concerns over this pattern: "Is this lack of action because Chair Lepak is friends with Mr. Holdcraft, she has publicly praised Mr. Holdcraft in the past. When one person is allowed to flout the rules continuously, especially with the Chair's apparent approval, it not only disrupts our meetings but also undermines the principles of fair and respectful governance."

Such incidents have not only disrupted the Board's proceedings but have also raised serious questions about the consistency and fairness in the application of rules during meetings. The situation underscores the need for objective and unbiased leadership to maintain decorum and ensure all participants are held to the same standards.

Concerns Over Lack of Rules Addressing Physical Altercations in Board of Health Guidelines

Recent developments at the Brookfield Board of Health have raised significant concerns among some board members and the public regarding the new meeting rules introduced by Chair Maureen Lepak. Notably, these rules seem to omit any provisions or repercussions for physical altercations, a point of contention highlighted in light of a disturbing incident involving the Chair's husband, Christopher Lepak.

The incident, which occurred during a previous meeting, involved Christopher Lepak allegedly

assaulting a community member. Despite the severity of this altercation, there was no formal reprimand or action taken by the Board of Health against Mr. Lepak. “Not even a verbal warning was issued. It’s as if the incident was overlooked or ignored, which sets a dangerous precedent,” Kelleher added.

This lack of action and the absence of specific rules against such conduct in the new guidelines have led to concerns about impartiality and safety at Board meetings. “It appears that if you are aligned with the Chair, certain behaviors are tolerated or even ignored. This is not just about favoritism; it’s a matter of public safety and ensuring a respectful, secure environment for all who attend our meetings,” Kelleher emphasized.

Mr. Kelleher’s motion, aimed at creating a “safer, more respectful environment for all meeting participants and upholding the integrity of the Board of Health’s proceedings,” was rooted in recent incidents of verbal abuse and physical threats. “No board member or member of the public should be abused or threatened in our meetings,” Kelleher emphasized, pointing out the Board’s history of such incidents, including a physical attack. However, the motion did not pass, with Ms. Predella and Chair Lepak voting against it, while Mr. Kelleher voted in favor.

During the public comment section, Ms. Washburn openly criticized Mr. Kelleher for introducing the motion, questioning its necessity and the implications for meeting participants. However, Mr. Kelleher was unable to respond to her directly, owing to a rule imposed by Chair Lepak that prohibits board members from responding to public questions or comments during meetings. This rule, which applies even if the public’s questions pertain to items on the board’s current agenda. This rule effectively stifles dialogue between the board members and the public, further complicating the Board’s already strained communications.

In a recent turn of events at the Brookfield Board of Health meeting, Mr. Holdcraft openly criticized Board member Christopher Kelleher’s efforts to promote orderly meetings through a proposed new rule. Mr. Holdcraft’s criticism took a personal turn as

he expressed discontent with Mr. Kelleher, who has a disability, serving on the Board. He specifically pointed out Mr. Kelleher’s use of a service dog as an indication of his alleged unsuitability for the role. Mr. Holdcraft’s remarks implied a belief that Mr. Kelleher should not serve because of his disabilities. This raises concerns about discrimination and inclusivity within the Board.

In the meeting, Mr. Holdcraft claimed that the Brookfield Board of Health’s shift from once-a-month to twice-a-month meetings was due to Mr. Kelleher’s presence and related disputes. However, this statement was quickly corrected.

The meeting frequency predates Mr. Kelleher’s tenure. Chair Lepak had altered the schedule from once to twice a month before Mr. Kelleher joined the Board, a change unrelated to any conflicts or Mr. Kelleher’s involvement. This clarification was significant, especially considering that the increased frequency of meetings had been a contributing factor to the resignation of former board member Ronald Wassmer.

The board had already decided that night to return to once-a-month meetings that the change was an administrative decision and not a reaction to internal disputes.

“I made this motion in light of our last meeting where I was verbally assaulted and an attempt to incite a fight was made. Given the Board of Health’s history of such incidents, it’s essential that no one, whether a board member or citizen, should fear for their safety by attending our meetings. Yet, in the last 30 days, Ms. Lepak has introduced numerous new rules and “checklists” 4 pages long but guidelines addressing this critical issue seem to be conspicuously missing.”

Highlighting the seriousness of the situation, Kelleher also referred to an incident of a physical assault. “To date, the Board of Health has taken no action, not even a simple admonishment. What message are we sending? That people should come to the Board of Health meetings at the risk of their own health?” Kelleher questioned.

Service Animal, Working Dog, Emotional Support Animal, and Pet: What's the Difference?

Introduction:

Last month, The Brookfield Examiner featured an article on the vital role of service dogs in our community. This insightful piece sparked a wave of interest and discussion among our readers. In response, one of our readers has delved deeper into the topic, offering a comprehensive exploration of the distinctions between service animals, working dogs, emotional support animals, and pets. This follow-up article aims to provide clarity and expand our understanding of these important roles, addressing questions raised by our community and shedding light on the various classifications and regulations surrounding these animals. Join us as we explore these distinctions in greater detail, enhancing our collective appreciation for these remarkable animals and their contributions to our lives.

By Nancy Currie LICSW, CCM, CTTS

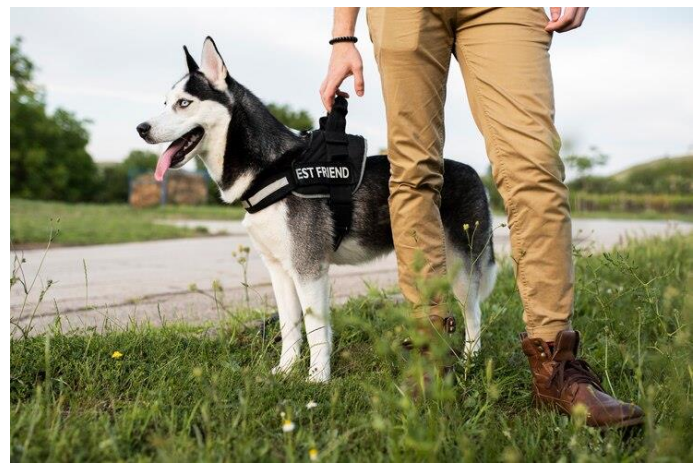
January 10, 2024

A Service Animal, Working Dog, Emotional Support Animal, Pet- What's the difference?

<https://www.ada.gov/topics/service-animals/#About/20Service%20Animals>

Service Animals are:

- Dogs
- Any breed and any size of dog
- Trained to perform a task directly related to a person's disability.



They are NOT

- Required to be certified or go through a professional training program (all Service Dogs are not the same)
- Required to wear a vest or other ID that indicates they're a Service Dog
- Emotional support or comfort dogs, because providing emotional support or comfort is not a task related to a person's disability.
- Because service animals are not required to wear vests, a dog that is wearing a vest is not necessarily a Service Animal. The dog still needs to be trained to perform a task for a person with a disability to be a service animal.

Examples of Service Animal Tasks

- A person who uses a wheelchair may have a dog that is **trained to retrieve objects for them.**
- A person with depression may have a dog that is **trained to perform a task to remind them to take their medication.**
- A person with PTSD may have a dog that is **trained to lick their hand to alert them to an oncoming panic attack.**
- A person who has epilepsy may have a dog that is **trained to detect the onset of a seizure and then help the person remain safe during the seizure.**
- A person who is deaf or hard of hearing may have a dog that is **trained to respond to sounds.**

Where Service Animals Can Go

Generally, Service Animals are allowed to be with their person, even in places that don't allow pets. For example, Service Dogs can go into:

- Restaurants

- Shops
- Hospitals- may have rules requiring the handler of the dog be capable of handling the dog during their hospital stay.
- Schools
- Hotels
- Subsidized Housing, College Dorms and Emergency shelters.
- Other specific laws govern animals on air planes or employment.

How do I know? Asking if a Dog is a Service Animal
 If you are working at a business or state/local government facility and it is unclear to you whether someone's dog is a Service Dog, **you may ask for certain information using two questions.**

You may ask:

- Is the dog a service animal required because of a disability?
- What work or task has the dog been trained to perform?
- A business or state/local government can ask someone to remove their service animal if:
 - The dog is not housebroken.
 - The dog is out of control, and the person cannot get the dog under control.

You are *not* allowed to:

- Request any documentation that the dog is registered, licensed, or certified as a Service animal
- Require that the dog demonstrate its task, or inquire about the nature of the person's disability

Because service animals are not required to wear vests, a dog that is wearing a vest is not necessarily a Service animal. The dog still needs to be trained to perform a task for a person with a disability to be a Service Animal.

The ADA only designates dogs as protected Service Animals. Some states have expanded the law to allow miniature horses, monkeys or other animals to be classified in that way. States that haven't expanded the definition of Service Animal only have to follow the ADA. If travelling with a Service Monkey- check the rules where you are going before you leave.

So what is the difference between a service animal and an emotional support animal?

- If the dog's mere presence provides comfort, it is not a service animal under the ADA. But if the dog is trained to perform a task related to a person's disability, it is a service animal under the ADA. For example, if the dog has been trained to sense that an anxiety attack is about to happen and take a specific action to help avoid the attack or lessen its impact, the dog is a service animal.
- There is no law or regulation for a certified emotional support animal.
- Some businesses may choose to accommodate support animals, some request a letter from a doctor or mental health professional to document the benefit of the emotional support animal but there are no rules or laws currently about this.
- Emotional Support Animals are often allowed to fly with their handlers- but not all airlines allow all types of animals in this category.

Any organization or person certifying an animal as an emotional support animal (ESA) or as a Service Dog is doing so to make money or make their customers happy. The certification has no legal standing in the US.

So what is a working dog?

A working dog is a dog who is trained to provide a service. While Service Dogs are working dogs, not all working dogs are Service Dogs. This may include a K9 in law enforcement or Security; a Search and Rescue dog; a sheep dog, a guard dog, a barn yard dog. These dogs like service dogs sometimes wear a vest. The vest- like with a service dog is usually as sign to the dog and the general public that the dog is working. Barn yard, guard and sheep dogs rarely wear vests as it would impede them in their duties.

What is a pet?

- A service dog, working dog, or emotional support animal (ESA) might be considered a pet when off duty. A pet is an animal maintained and controlled by a human. Usually, pets are not harvested for their meat or to provide sustenance for humans or other animals. Pets are regulated by individual

towns; for example, towns can control how many chickens someone has, where they are kept, and whether dogs must be on leashes. Pets may also be regulated by choice; for example, a landlord or homeowner's insurance may allow or deny housing or coverage based on the breed of the pet. This is a choice the pet owner makes.

- So, what should I do as a citizen when I wonder about what a dog is doing?
- Don't approach the dog without the owner or handler present and providing permission
- Don't expect a dog handler to tell you if the dog is a Service Dog or what it's task is unless it is clearly your job to make this determination for the dog's entrance or inclusion in an activity or building.
- Don't call out the dog, pet the dog, walk near the animal without checking with the handler first.
- Dog's have blind spots, when you have permission to approach do it slowly so they are always aware of your presence.
- Some Service Dogs will be protective when their handler is having a crisis- if they will not let you approach a human in distress, do not approach- check with the handler and if there is no response from them call 911.
- The website: <https://pethelpful.com/wildlife/How-to-approach-an-animal-you-do-not-know>

What to Know Before You Attempt to Approach an Animal

- Animals rely on their instincts, scents, and food for their survival.
- Wild animals do not know you and are instinctively afraid of you.
- Even animals you know can display unusual behavior without warning.
- Animals are not instinctively mean; they either have to be to survive, or they have experienced cruelty from someone else.
- Hungry animals will strike out instinctively to get food.
- Animals with babies will fight to protect them, even if you do not see where they are hiding.

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The Brookfield Examiner: A Call for Community Storytellers and Visual Chroniclers

By Christopher Kelleher

The Brookfield Examiner, your local non-profit newspaper, is extending an invitation to the heart and soul of our community - passionate individuals who have a flair for writing, a keen eye for photography, and a knack for live-streaming. In our continuous effort to bring the most comprehensive and engaging local news to the residents of Brookfield, we are seeking volunteers to



join our dynamic team.

Why Volunteer with Us?

Volunteering with The Brookfield Examiner is not just about contributing your skills; it's about being an integral part of a team that values community, narrative, and the power of local journalism. As a non-profit entity, we take pride in our commitment to delivering unbiased and fact-based news, made possible by the diverse perspectives of our volunteer contributors.

Writers: The Voice of Brookfield

We are looking for writers who can articulate the pulse of our town, whether it's covering local events, profiling inspiring Brookfield residents, or reporting on town hall meetings. Your words will inform, engage and connect our community.

Photographers: Capturing the Essence of Brookfield

For those with a talent for photography, your lens can help capture the moments that define our town's unique character. From community events to the natural beauty surrounding us, your images will complement our stories and bring them to life.

Live Streamers: Bringing Meetings to Screens

In an age where accessibility is key, live streaming public meetings is a vital service. If you have the technical know-how and the equipment to live stream, you can help ensure that important town discussions and decisions are transparent and accessible to all residents.

Join Our Team

As a volunteer-driven newspaper, we might not offer financial compensation, but we promise a rewarding experience, brimming with opportunities to hone your skills, expand your network, and make a tangible impact in our beloved town of Brookfield.

Interested individuals are encouraged to contact The Brookfield Examiner at 508-213-8300 Together, let's continue to tell the story of Brookfield - a town rich in stories waiting to be told.



Explosive Mailbox Vandalism in Brookfield and Sturbridge: A Federal Crime Alert

January 16, 2024

By Christopher Kelleher

Residents of Brookfield and Sturbridge are facing a concerning trend of mailbox vandalism, characterized by loud bangs and significant damage to mailboxes. This issue has been highlighted by the Sturbridge Police Department, which released a statement regarding a recent incident: "residents on New Boston Road reported hearing a loud bang. Upon waking up this morning, one resident in the vicinity of the overpass reported their metal mailbox had been damaged. Security video shows a red in color SUV driving in the area at the time of this incident. We are looking to identify the driver of this vehicle. Anyone with information is asked to contact

Sergeant Janson by calling 508-347-2525 extension 321, by sending us a message on social media, or by emailing paul.janson@sturbridgepd.com."

Under 18 U.S. Code § 1705, it is a federal crime to willfully or maliciously damage, destroy, or deface any mailbox or its contents, including acts such as smashing, setting fire to, or using explosives. Offenders face up to three years in federal prison and fines of up to \$250,000.

The legal implications intensify if explosives are involved. According to 18 U.S. Code § 844, using explosives to damage or destroy property, including mailboxes, can result in imprisonment for not less than 5 years and not more than 20 years, along with fines. This highlights the severity of using dangerous weapons or devices in criminal acts.

The loud bangs reported in Brookfield and Sturbridge, if caused by explosives, could lead to significant federal charges for the perpetrators, emphasizing the seriousness of these acts and their potential threat to public safety.

The United States Postal Inspection Service urges citizens to report any incidents of mailbox vandalism. They work closely with local law enforcement, including the Sturbridge Police, to investigate such incidents.

In light of these serious offenses under federal law, the incidents in Brookfield and Sturbridge warrant immediate community and law enforcement attention. The collaboration between residents, local police, and federal agencies is vital for addressing and preventing such crimes, ensuring the safety and security of mail and property.



Letters to the Editor

Disclaimer for Letters to the Editor: The views and opinions expressed in the letters are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of The Brookfield Examiner.

I received a publication in today's mail entitled The Brookfield Examiner, Vol. 1, issue 2. I read it from cover to cover, as well as other postings on their Facebook page. P.S.: Also read the first volume. Interesting publication. It basically started out as a bashing of David Holdcraft/The Yellow Sign Guy and then segued into narratives of very bad behavior in different town board meetings. What a bunch of undedicated, unsocially equipped persons to have running our town. Verbal and physical assaults on people and animals. Really, people, is this considered acceptable behavior? Is this what you want to teach your children? Umm! Time to remove these people.

David Holdcraft, a citizen of our town, has somehow enforced his First Amendment rights to be an asshole and publish statements on a bulletin board in front of our town's elementary school. While I believe in the First Amendment, I also believe that there can be too much power/influence in the hands of any one individual. David Holdcraft has taken his personal vendetta WAY OVER THE LINE. What if everyone in town had a sign like that in their yard? Enough is enough. Time to put an end to the tyranny. BTW, I have always had an agreeable relationship with David.

I was born and raised in Brookfield. Along with most of my family. Many of us fought for our country in the military. We did NOT FIGHT for the right for someone to be an ASSHOLE in public. First Amendment or NOT. I live in Wagon Wheel Mobile Home Community. We are ruled by a very crudely formulated set of By-Laws, Rules, and Regulations. Proprietary agreements, which are very vaguely worded and difficult to understand. We have recently been taken over by an unelected but appointed president by the sitting Board of Directors. I'm NOT in agreement. I didn't say he wasn't qualified. I am saying I don't agree with his appointment.

We too have similar violent encounters with our residents when trying to conduct business of our park. Social interaction is at an all-time low. One person against another, yelling, screaming, spitting, pulsating veins, and red faces of anger. Where will it END? NO, I DON'T WANT a police state. I want people to be CIVIL and treat each other with respect.

For the time being I would like to remain anonymous

Dear Editor,

I'm disturbed by news of a fight at the Board of Health meeting. Is this true? If so, it's completely unacceptable. Shouldn't those involved be fired????????????? Worried,
Sara A.

Dear Readers,

Thank you for your letters and feedback. I find it crucial to clarify the circumstances that led to the creation of The Brookfield Examiner. It was not a response to David John Holdcraft, a/k/a "the yellow sign guy," but rather due to the concerning lack of communication from our town to the people of Brookfield. Indeed, Mr. Holdcraft has featured in a few of our articles. His actions necessitate our reporting, as it would be a disservice to ignore them,

given his actions and that he is an elected official of our town.

While we are on the subject of the yellow sign there is one aspect of local governance that has puzzled many in our community is the situation surrounding the infamous yellow sign. While the content of the sign itself is not our primary concern - indeed, the owner has the right to display whatever message he sees fit - the issue at hand is our town's bylaws regarding signage.

Our bylaws clearly state that if you operate a business, you are allowed to have a sign. However, once the business ceases operations, the sign should be taken down. It's widely known that Mr. Holdcraft, during his dispute with the town over the content of his sign, claimed to be conducting yard sales at the site; this was seemingly his justification for the sign under our bylaws.

However, it has been observed that these yard sales have ceased since the settlement of his case with the town. This raises an important question: should Mr. Holdcraft not be required to comply with the same bylaws as everyone else? If the business activity that justified the sign's existence has ended, then by our own regulations, the sign should be removed.

We must consider whether Mr. Holdcraft is being allowed to bypass our bylaws simply because he is an elected official. It's imperative to remember that elected officials are not entitled to special rights or exemptions from the rules that govern all residents. Ensuring that this principle is upheld is crucial for maintaining trust and fairness in our community governance. Bring back the yard sales! Mr. Holdcraft should be running a business in order to have the sign. Why is the town not enforcing this bylaw?

Furthermore, it's pertinent to address a growing concern among some Brookfield residents: Is the town's hesitancy in enforcing this bylaw rooted in fear? Recall that Mr. Holdcraft's legal battle with the town was not only contentious but also costly. The town incurred over \$60,000 in legal fees plus an undisclosed settlement amount, rumored to be in the six-figures. These figures are not insignificant, especially for a town of our size.

This situation begs the question: Is there a reluctance to enforce the bylaw against Mr. Holdcraft due to concerns about potential legal repercussions? While the financial burden of the previous lawsuit is understandable, it's crucial for our community to reflect on the long-term implications of such apprehensions. If laws and bylaws are applied selectively, based on the potential for legal challenges

or the status of the individual involved, it erodes the very foundation of our local governance.

The principle of equality before the law is a cornerstone of democratic societies. Allowing fear of legal retribution to dictate the enforcement of bylaws sets a troubling precedent, one that could lead to further erosion of trust in our community leaders and institutions. It's vital for our town's leadership to demonstrate that the rules apply equally to all, irrespective of their position or past conflicts. This is not just a matter of legality but of maintaining the integrity and trust within our community.

As we continue to ponder the fate of the infamous yellow sign, let us also reflect on the broader implications of this issue. It's not just about a sign or a bylaw; it's about the principles of fairness, equality, and trust that bind our community together. We invite our town leaders and Mr. Holdcraft to consider these values as we navigate this ongoing issue.

The inception of The Brookfield Examiner was a direct response to a gap in transparency and public awareness in Brookfield's governance. This was starkly highlighted during an incident involving the chair of the Board of Health, Ms. Maureen Lepak. Ms. Lepak presented a six-page proposal of new regulations in a manner that did not allow for adequate review or discussion by the other board members. This unilateral approach, devoid of prior debate or consensus, was not only unexpected but also contrary to the norms of open and participatory governance.

One particular incident that epitomizes the lack of transparency in our town's governance involves the publication of legal notices for public hearings. I recall a town official, who mentioned that these notices were only available online on a certain newspaper's website - a platform seldom visited by our residents.

This method of communication is not only ineffective but borders on secrecy, as it relies on the unlikely chance that residents will actively seek out these notices in a relatively obscure location. It's almost

laughable that we take out a legal notice in a newspaper which is largely inaccessible to our townspeople. What's the point? Just to meet the bare minimum legal requirement? The people of Brookfield deserve better; they have the right to be properly informed. The town has an obligation to provide real, effective notification, not just a token gesture.

Our newspaper played a pivotal role in exposing these actions. More significantly, our exposure of private emails from Ms. Lepak, in which she suggested that, the people of Brookfield, in some cases, “lack common sense” and that there was a need by her to “come up with common sense regulations and controls” marked a crucial moment. The subsequent backpedaling following our exposure of this email further underscores the importance of vigilant and transparent local journalism.

We strongly disagree with the chair's viewpoint. The people of Brookfield do possess common sense. While it's true that occasional lapses in judgment occur, as they do in any community, this is not a valid justification for imposing sweeping new laws on everyone. The notion from the chair that Brookfield residents lack common sense and need her to ‘save the day’ with new regulations is unfounded. We have managed well without such overbearing oversight in the past.

There was not a fight at the Board of Health meeting. Rather, it was alleged that Ms. Lepak's husband physically attacked a member of the public. It might be prudent for Ms. Lepak to focus on cultivating personal restraint, for both herself and her husband, instead of trying to control the residents of Brookfield.

Ms. Lepak metaphorically threw the first “punch” by openly berating a member of the public, labeling him “a jerk” simply for laughing. Then, in a concerning escalation, her husband allegedly delivered a physical ‘punch’ to the same individual during the same meeting. Ms. Lepak did not appear to make any effort to temper her husband's aggressive behavior. Such conduct is inappropriate for public officials and

casts a negative light on the governance of our community.

It's important to note that our elected officials cannot be fired, but they can be subject to a recall. This process ensures that officials are accountable to the community they serve.

It was shocking for us to witness the actions of the Chair and her husband. When we announced our intention to live stream the Board of Health meetings, we genuinely believed that this public exposure would encourage everyone to be on their best behavior. Sadly, we were mistaken.

These events highlight the essential role of The Brookfield Examiner in our community. Our mission is to ensure that the residents of Brookfield are never left in the dark about the actions and decisions of their local government. We are dedicated to providing a platform where transparency is not just a goal, but a reality. Our commitment to this cause is unwavering, and we are constantly seeking new ways to bring crucial information directly to you.

In line with this, we are excited to announce a significant enhancement to our news platform. Going forward, we will endeavor to upload documents that are being reviewed during town board meetings. Our goal is to provide these documents in real-time during our live feed of the meetings. This initiative, however, hinges on the willingness of the boards to share these documents publicly.

With this new feature, residents of Brookfield will no longer be left wondering ‘What are they talking about? What is on that piece of paper?’ We understand that knowledge is power, and we are committed to empowering our readers by providing complete and unfiltered access to the information that shapes our town. Stay tuned for the launch of this transformative feature - a new step towards total transparency in Brookfield governance.

Sincerely,
Christopher Kelleher
Chief Editor,
The Brookfield Examiner

How your Town Finances work.

Part 2

By Kelli Robbins

It all begins with the Assessors!!!

You may have heard the expression, “the buck stops here.” In municipal finance, the buck starts with the Assessor. The Assessing department is the second arch in the financial circle that keeps your town running.

The Assessors are governed by the Department of Revenue (DOR) through the Commonwealth’s Division of Local Services (DLS). The DOR verifies assessing data to ensure compliance with the law, accuracy and consistency. The Board of Assessors works collaboratively with other local officials to determine the annual property tax rates and participate in local tax policy decisions.

Brookfield has a 3 member elected Board of Assessors, who are legally responsible for required actions set out in Mass General Law. The Board of Assessors oversees the Principal Assessor and the clerk, who do all the heavy lifting for the office.

The Board’s primary actions are approving valuations, (this action is set by and overseen by the Department of Revenue) vetting abatement applications, reviewing property tax exemptions, managing the overlay account, and providing new growth estimates during the budget process.

The Principal Assessor is responsible for determining full and fair cash valuations and for classifying all property located within the community as of January 1 each year.¹ This includes taxable and non-taxable

¹ There are many important dates involved in the work of the assessors’ office. Motor vehicle taxes are based on a calendar

property, commercial and industrial property, and residential and personal property of all shapes and sizes.

The Principal Assessor’s key job however, is preparing and maintaining a property database that lists all taxable and non-taxable properties in the jurisdiction. Using statistical data from sales within the jurisdiction, formulas and processes prescribed by the DOR, the values are applied to each individual property.

This database of values set by the Assessors, as verified by the Department of Revenue, form the basis for the tax base that is then the basis for the tax rate.

The Town Meeting determines the amount of funding to be used. Once that amount is determined, the receipts from all the various sources are subtracted. The remaining amount of funds to be raised are then spread over the tax base.

The bigger the tax base, the lower the rate. When a Town has a large commercial/industrial/personal property base, the residential impact is much less than for a Town with little to no commercial base. One way to lower taxes for all is to encourage businesses into a town to widen the tax base.



year. Ownership is determined as of January 1 of the calendar year prior to the current fiscal year. Property tax is issued on a fiscal year basis beginning in July, but preliminary bills reflect 50% of the prior fiscal year because the tax rate for the current fiscal year has not been set. And so on.

HELP WANTED:

Brookfield's Newest Superhero – Code Enforcement Officer Extraordinaire.

The Town of Brookfield is excited to announce an opening that is not just a job, but a call to heroism!

We are seeking a Code Enforcement Officer, but not just any officer. This role requires the finesse of a diplomat, the patience of a saint, and perhaps the bulletproof skin of Superman.

Job Title: Super-Code Enforcement Officer (Because let's face it, you'll need superpowers)

Job Description:

- Your primary responsibility will be to enforce our illustrious Code of Conduct. This document, revered for its complete ineffectiveness, is waiting for the right hero to give it the teeth it never had.
- You will deal with a variety of exciting challenges ranging from the mundane such as mediating over the great "Office Thermostat Temperature Debate" to the extraordinary, such as stepping in when an elected official, in a heated moment of shouting, inadvertently (or otherwise) spits in the face of our Town Administrator.
- Conflict resolution skills are a must, especially if you can resolve conflicts in the style of Gandhi or, when necessary, Batman.
- As the upholder of our esteemed yet currently ornamental Code of Conduct, your job will range from moderating fashion faux pas to intervening in WWE-worthy showdowns in town meetings.

- Your days will be filled with the melodious sounds of elected officials practicing their vocal chords through screaming and yelling. Earplugs? Optional.
- Be prepared for physical altercations, including but not limited to, breaking up scuffles where our town administrator doubles as a punching bag, and ensuring that the chair of the Board of Health's husband remembers that we're a town board, not a Fight Club.

Requirements:

- Experience in law enforcement or superhero work (capas are optional but recommended).
- A black belt in diplomacy and, preferably, in martial arts too (because you might literally need to dodge a flying chair or two).
- The patience of a kindergarten teacher with the courage of a lion tamer.
- Exceptional screaming tolerance and a knack for de-escalating high-octane shouting matches.
- Ability to remain calm when faced with verbal assaults, spitting, and the occasional temper tantrum thrown by individuals who were supposedly elected for their maturity and leadership skills.
- A strong moral compass (unlike the magnetic one in our town hall, which we suspect is just a fridge magnet).
- Proficiency in hand-to-hand combat is preferred (but mostly for show, as we hope things won't get that far....again...hopefully).

Family-Friendly Crisis Management

In addition to your superhero duties, you will also be pioneering our new initiative: "Family-Friendly Crisis Management." A recent incident at a Board meeting highlighted the desperate need for this program. Here's a glimpse of what you'll be dealing with:

Case Study: The Toddler Tumult at the Board of Health

- Scenario: Our dedicated town employee, a hardworking mother, faced a childcare crisis

due to her own mother's battle with COVID-19. With no options left, she brought her child to a meeting, with prior permission and suggestion from the board, only to face unexpected backlash.

- **Your Mission:** As the Super-Code Enforcement Officer, you will navigate these delicate situations where work-life balance clashes with outdated perceptions of professionalism. Your superpowers will include empathy, understanding, and the ability to foster a family-friendly environment even in the most rigid of bureaucratic settings.
- **Special Skills Required:** The ability to diplomatically handle complaints from individuals like Ms. Moan-a-Lot Lament, who view toddlers as tiny agents of chaos rather than what they really are - a part of many employees' everyday lives.

Why This Matters:

- Your role will be crucial in transforming Brookfield's Town Hall into a place that truly understands and accommodates the needs of its working parents. No parent should have to choose between their job and their child, especially in situations of family health crises.
- As part of your arsenal, you'll be equipped with an "Emergency Child Entertainment Kit" and a guidebook titled "Negotiating Peace with the Under-5 Caucus."

Note to Applicants:

- If you believe that children are our future and that future sometimes includes attending a town meeting or two, then you might just be the superhero we're looking for.
- Let's make Brookfield a model town where even the smallest voices are heard, or at least pacified with a well-timed cartoon.

Benefits:

- You'll have the undying gratitude of the townsfolk (though, unfortunately, gratitude doesn't pay the bills).

- A front-row seat to the greatest show of political theater (popcorn not included).
- The chance to restore faith in our Code of Conduct or at least make it more than a decorative piece of paper.
- Benefits include full medical (with a special plan covering injuries from 'workplace disagreements'), dental, and a therapist on speed dial (for when the absurdity of town politics becomes too much).
- A custom-made cape and spandex suit, because let's face it; you're going to be a local superhero.

Compensation:

- A salary so generous it could make even the most stoic accountant weep.

How to Apply:

Send in your superhero resume and a cover letter that shouts (literally or metaphorically, your choice) why you're the beacon of hope Brookfield needs. Show us your superpower of staying sane amidst the delightful chaos of our town hall.

The Town of Brookfield is an equal opportunity employer and strongly supports the use of capes and spandex in the workplace.





Official Decree

From the Desk of our



Supreme Leader Maureen Jong-Lepak

Of the Brookfield Ministry of Health

To the Loyal Subjects of the Glorious Brookfield Health Regime,

As your Supreme Leader, the beacon of health and order, I, Maureen Jong-Lepak, bring forth a new era of unparalleled governance in the realm of health and well-being. With a heart full of magnanimity and a mind unparalleled in its wisdom, I decree the following indispensable and irrefutable laws.

- 1. Endless Meeting Maneuver:** Recognizing the critical need for flexibility in leadership, I hereby empower myself with the ability to continue meetings at an undisclosed future time without the need for additional postings. This ensures that if the tide of discussion does not flow in the favor of efficiency and wisdom (as defined solely by my judgment), I can strategically pause and reconvene our assembly without the cumbersome requirement of notifying the public. This brilliant move guarantees the uninterrupted execution of our Ministry's sacred duties, unburdened by the constraints of time and public scrutiny.
- 2. Omniscient Agenda Proclamation:** Every agenda shall henceforth include items that are expected to be discussed, plus a special provision for items that my far-reaching intellect deems necessary to add spontaneously. This ensures that no stone is left unturned in our pursuit of health perfection.
- 3. Dictatorial Agenda Dominance:** To combat the doldrums of predictability, I reserve the exclusive right to introduce surprise items to the agenda. This measure is designed to keep our esteemed board members on their toes, ready to serve the will of their Supreme Leader.
- 4. Eclipse of Transparency in Decision-Making:** With a vision to streamline our decision-making process, it is hereby decreed that the identification of members seconding motions, and the individual voting records shall be abolished.
This revolutionary approach, while seemingly unorthodox, will free our proceedings from the burdensome chains of over-documentation, ensuring a more fluid and harmonious operation of our Ministry. It is a step forward into an era where the collective will is valued over individual acknowledgment.
- 5. Autocratic Approval of Minutes:** As the paragon of accuracy and efficiency, I shall approve meeting minutes without the need for a vote. This expedites the process, ensuring that our records reflect the unerring efficiency of my rule.

6. **Erasure of Historical Records:** In a stroke of administrative genius, I hereby decree that all meeting notes and recordings can be destroyed upon the approval of the minutes. This ensures that the only record of our meetings will be the pristine, official minutes, free from the clutter and confusion of raw notes and recordings. This bold move will undoubtedly streamline our record-keeping and preserve the purity of our official narratives.
7. **Prohibition of Dissent:** In recognition of the fact that dissent is the harbinger of chaos, any disagreement with my decisions or policies shall be considered an act of defiance against the Ministry's sacred mission. Such acts will be met with swift educational measures to realign the errant thought processes.
8. **Mandatory Adoration Sessions:** To foster unity and devotion among our people, monthly Adoration Sessions will be held, where citizens may express their gratitude and undying loyalty to my visionary leadership. Attendance is not mandatory, but highly encouraged for the well-being of one's social standing.
9. **Regulation of Public Health Discourse:** To prevent the spread of misinformation and confusion, all public discussions regarding health must align with the principles set forth by the Ministry. Independent health opinions shall be viewed as quaint relics of a bygone era.
10. **Decree on Decorum and Expression:** It has come to my attention that certain expressions of humor or dissent disrupt the sacred harmony of our gatherings. Therefore, any act of laughter or overt human reaction to my pronouncements is henceforth forbidden. Transgressors will be met with the sternest of reprimands, including being labeled as "jerks" and removed with the swiftness befitting their insolence.
11. **Edict on Respectful Confrontation:** As your infallible guide, I must remind you that challenging my wisdom, especially regarding my unique approach to the differently-abled, is not only futile but forbidden. Should anyone dare to question my methods, they shall not only face my wrath but also the protective zeal of my devoted consort. Let it be known that his dedication to our cause is matched only by his fervor in defending my honor.
12. **Edict of Regulated Speech and Final Warnings:** Following a most unfortunate and misguided open meeting law complaint, which dared to question my impeccable adherence to procedures, I find it necessary to implement a new directive concerning speech during our sacred meetings. Henceforth, no board member shall speak unless graced with my explicit permission. This rule, while rooted in law, shall be applied with a flexible hand - during times of harmony, the chains of formality may be loosened; however, in times of dissent, or when the harmony is disrupted by unaligned thoughts, the rule shall be enforced with the rigidity of iron. Any member failing to adhere to this decree shall be subjected to what I, in my generous and just nature, deem a "Final Warning." This warning is a testament to my leniency and a reminder of the order that I, as Supreme Leader, uphold.
13. **Council of Loyal Affirmation:** In an innovative move to foster positive discourse, I have invited a select group of steadfast supporters to our meetings. These loyalists are tasked

with the noble duty of providing constructive criticism to any member who dares to stray from the path I have so wisely set. Their presence ensures a harmonious echo of my infallible leadership and serves as a reminder of the unity and consensus that underpin our Ministry's great work.

In the benevolent spirit of guiding those who, as I have astutely observed, may lack the necessary common sense, these decrees shall serve as beacons of the “common sense rules” I graciously bestow upon Brookfield, ensuring order and harmony under my enlightened rule.

Be it known that these decrees are not mere guidelines but the very pillars upon which the inviolable rule of the Ministry of Health stands. They are crafted for the greater good of Brookfield and are imbued with the wisdom and foresight only I possess. Let each citizen reflect upon these laws with the solemnity and respect they deserve.

In the Light of Health and Order,

Maureen Jong-Lepak, Supreme Leader of the Brookfield Ministry of Health



**Long Live the Ministry!
Eternal Be Its Decrees!**



Official Disclaimer by Supreme Leader Maureen Jong-Lepak:

To the Esteemed Citizens of Brookfield,

In the spirit of transparency and foresight, I, your Supreme Leader Maureen Jong-Lepak, present this preemptive disclaimer regarding the recent decree issued by the Brookfield Ministry of Health:

- 1. Template Origin:** Should you find any part of the decree peculiar, know that it might have been derived from a standard template of supreme leadership, possibly misunderstood by those lacking in the requisite administrative acumen.
- 2. Checklist, Not Rules: The Subtlety of Superior Intellect:** Esteemed citizens, it is important to understand that what you perceive as rules are merely items on a checklist for efficient governance. It is quite possible that the subtlety of this distinction escapes the grasp of less sophisticated minds.
- 3. Adaptive Borrowing: The Art of Creative Interpretation:** This decree, while inspired by external templates or checklists, is subject to my unique interpretation. Think of it as borrowing a recipe and adding a personal flair – I adapt these guidelines to suit Brookfield's needs and my vision of governance. Should their application seem extreme, remember, it's merely creative leadership at work.
- 4. Fluid Interpretation:** The decree is subject to change and reinterpretation based on the prevailing winds of public opinion and administrative caprice. What may seem authoritative today could well be advisory tomorrow.
- 5. In the Name of Health:** Ultimately, if any part of the decree appears draconian, it is only in the pursuit of the greater health and well-being of our citizens. The path to perfect health may sometimes appear steeped in rigor.

In conclusion, this disclaimer is issued to clarify any misinterpretations and to remind our citizens that the leadership of the Brookfield Ministry of Health is both benevolent and adaptive, always keeping the best interests of its people at heart.

In Me we Trust,

Maureen Jong-Lepak, Supreme Leader of the Brookfield Ministry of Health

The Board of HELL^{-th}

Unchecked Aggression and Discriminatory Policies Plague Brookfield's Board of Health

A recent Brookfield Board of Health meeting has become the focal point of controversy involving board member Christopher Kelleher and town official John David Holdcraft. Kelleher, who requires a service dog due to his disability, has raised concerns about Mr. Holdcraft's behavior towards him and his service dog.

Kelleher reports that Mr. Holdcraft has been consistently distracting his service dog by calling her to come to him, chanting, singing, and even yelling out her name. Despite Kelleher's repeated requests to cease this behavior, as it interferes with the service dog's essential role, Mr. Holdcraft has allegedly continued unabated. This situation not only disrupts the service dog's duties but also disrespects the needs of those with disabilities.

Despite Kelleher's repeated requests for Mr. Holdcraft to cease these actions, the interference has persisted, showing a lack of respect for the necessities of those with disabilities. Mr. Holdcraft, in response to Kelleher's requests, asserted, "I have every right to use her name. Kelleher's service dog loves me"

Adding to the controversy, Mr. Holdcraft previously stated in a Board of Health meeting that Kelleher should not be involved in making any motions or hold a position on the board because he requires a service dog. This remark has sparked comparisons to historical instances of discrimination against disabled individuals and raised alarms about the seeds of repeating a dark chapter in history.

The echoes of the past are particularly resonant in this situation. The Nazi regime's treatment of disabled individuals, driven by a misguided eugenics ideology, led to the forced sterilization, dehumanization, and systematic murder of disabled people under the T4 program. The regime's actions began with similar unchecked thoughts and escalated to horrific consequences, serving as a stark reminder of where such discrimination can lead.

This incident at the Brookfield Board of Health meeting serves as a critical reminder of the importance of vigilance against discrimination and the need to uphold the rights and dignity of all individuals, especially those with disabilities, in our society and governance. It highlights the necessity for greater awareness, respect for service animals, and sensitivity within local government and community institutions.

In a move that has sparked significant debate within the Brookfield community, Chair Maureen Lepak of the Brookfield Board of Health has instituted a contentious open comment policy. According to this rule, anyone attending the meetings can speak for two uninterrupted minutes on any topic, with no restrictions on the content of their speech. This policy effectively allows for the use of profanity, threats, sexually explicit remarks, racist and sexist comments, discriminatory statements, anti-American rhetoric, and even terrorist threats, "and the board members just have to sit there and take it , they cannot respond whatsoever" stated board member Kelleher.

Critics of this policy argue that it creates an environment where abuse and hostility are not only tolerated but implicitly encouraged. The lack of

moderation or guidelines opens the door for unchecked aggression, particularly against board members like Christopher Kelleher, who has been a target of such attacks in the past. The policy has been especially concerning given Chair Lepak's previous stance on individuals with PTSD.

The community is left to question the motives behind such a permissive rule. Is it designed to foster open dialogue, or does it serve as a shield for those who wish to harass and intimidate without repercussions? Observers have speculated that the rule might be swiftly altered if the unfettered commentary were not limited to allies of the Chair but included voices critical of her leadership and policies.

When a concerned citizen, such as Mr. Christopher Gorman, seeks answers or clarity on important matters, like the DPW tree-cutting on town land, they are met with a disheartening reality. The Board of Health, despite having the topic on its agenda, is rendered mute during the comments or questions section. Mr. Gorman's experience is a glaring example of the limitations of this section, where genuine concerns cannot be addressed promptly. This forces citizens to return weeks later, only to be told that responses to their questions or comments are not allowed.

This practice raises valid questions about the purpose of this section. Is it meant to be a platform for open dialogue, or does it risk devolving into a mere bashing session? Kelleher draws attention to the stark contrast with the Conservation Commission, of which he serves as chair. There, immediate responses to citizens' questions are the norm, fostering transparency and effective communication.

This revised section emphasizes the frustration of citizens like Mr. Gorman and highlights the difference in approach between the Board of Health and the Conservation Commission, where responsiveness is valued.

This situation begs the question of how long such a rule can stand in a civic forum where respect and constructive dialogue should be paramount. The Board of Health, under its current policy, risks becoming a platform for divisiveness and hate, undermining its role as a body meant to serve and represent the health interests of the entire Brookfield community. The rule's continuation and its impact on the Board's meetings and decisions remain a point of contention and concern among citizens and board members alike.

In light of these developments, the Brookfield Board of Health's next meeting stands as a crucial juncture. It could transform into a platform where the silenced voices, particularly those opposing the Chair's tactics, can finally be heard. This is an open invitation to all who have been watching from the sidelines, disapproving of the current trajectory, to step forward and participate actively.



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