



BEA BRUNKHORST

BOARD OF HEALTH ~ INCUMBENT

Caucus Nominee: Yes

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INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT

Qualified | Committed | Collaborative

About Me

- INCUMBENT who has had the honor of serving on the Bedford Board of Health for 23 years.
- SCIENTIST with a PhD in Biochemistry and 32 years experience researching cancer.
- VOLUNTEER on Bedford Institutional Biosafety Committees and Sunday school teacher at First Parish.
- PARENT of Bedford public school and Shawsheen Tech graduate.

Why Vote for Me?

I will continue to use my scientific and partnership skills to make our Board of Health proactive and responsive to any public health threat – new or old.

Top Three Issues:

- **COVID:** The Board of Health's responses to COVID enabled businesses to remain open, children to return to their school buildings, and community events to resume. I supported our decisions to provide as many tools in the COVID prevention toolbox to Bedford, including: vaccine and testing clinics, masking and social distancing protocols, and ventilation requirements.
- **Mental Health:** I am proud to have supported expanding our town social work services to support our most vulnerable residents. When I began on the Board of Health, we had one part-time social worker. With my support, we increased that position to full-time, we hired a youth social worker to support at-risk youth, and engaged and expanded pediatric mental health services by partnering with Eliot Community Human Services.
- **Tick and mosquito-borne diseases:** Unfortunately, the COVID pandemic has not stopped Lyme or EEE, or any other tick- or mosquito-borne disease. I am pleased to say, however, that I supported the Board of Health's public education forums, the continued contract with East Middlesex Mosquito control, and installation of playing field barriers that prevent balls from going into tick-infested woodlands. I will continue to support these efforts, and push for a coordinated statewide response, if I have the honor of being re-elected to the Board of Health.

I, like so many of us, am done with COVID, but unfortunately, COVID is not done with us! I commit to continue to be a source for data driven discussions at every Board of Health Meeting.

REPLIES TO THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS QUESTIONS

Q1—Why are you interested in serving the Bedford community as a member of the Board of Health, what are your qualifications?

I have had the honor and pleasure of serving as a member of the Board of Health for 23 years. I come to the Board with a PhD in biochemistry, decades of experience as a scientist, and day-to-day implementation of biosafety rules and regulations. With my training, experience, and passion for science and public health, the Board of Health is a natural fit.

In my day job, I am the Biosafety officer and Chair of my company's Institutional Biosafety Committee. This role is incredibly useful for many facets of the Board of Health's work, such as developing safety measures in this unprecedented pandemic and serving as the community representative on some of the Biotech Institutional Biosafety committees in Bedford. I have helped the Board grow from a pure advisory role to the strong organization it is now.

My training as a scientist doing research in cancer immunotherapy ensures that I can keep the board and public informed on the latest public health-related science, including COVID-19. If re-elected I will ensure that the Board of Health will develop the frameworks for assessing our responses to COVID, which can be deployed once the pandemic subsides.

Q2—What area of the Board of Health's responsibilities will be most important to you when the pandemic is no longer such a dominant issue for the Board?

Over the last 21 months, we have learned that the pandemic has increased pre-existing health issues such as mental illness, food insecurity, and obesity. Mental health, in particular, touches us all and the pandemic has certainly exacerbated mental illness.

I am proud that our town has invested in four social workers. The Board of Health has been central to the expansion of our town social work services, a process I am glad to have been a part of. I'm particularly proud to have supported the hiring of a pediatric social worker to meet the needs of our youngest population. I look forward to working with the schools and following up on such important tools as the Health Risk Survey that can capture mental health trends.

Unfortunately, COVID has not stopped Lyme, EEE, or any other tick- or mosquito-borne diseases. I am pleased that pre-COVID the BOH held several public education forums; supported the continued contract with East Middlesex Mosquito control; and installed playing field barriers that prevent balls from going into tick-infested woodlands. The BOH will pick up these issues again, as we head into warmer months and our youth and families will be ready to enjoy outdoor activities again.

Q3—Will you support the general guidelines promulgated by the national CDC and other health agencies and the Massachusetts Board of Health in regard to wearing of face masks and vaccination against Covid 19 viruses? Are there measures that you think go too far or not far enough?

I support the Board of Health decisions to provide a tool box of vaccine and testing clinics, masking and social distancing protocols, and ventilation requirements all based on CDC guidelines. Creating an experienced immunity is the only way out of this pandemic. Hospitalization and vaccination rates can steer the way to responsible masking guidelines.

The pandemic has evolved from the moment it began, and I have been working hard to keep the BOH decisions rooted in science-based solutions. The Board of Health's responses to COVID enabled businesses to remain open, children to return to their school buildings, and community events to resume. The judgment of whether these measures were effective is best studied over significant populations. If re-elected, I will ensure that we pay attention to such studies and implement these learnings into our response tool box.

I am committed to the BOH vision of helping neighbors lead healthy lives, and to our values of maintaining a balance between short-term benefit(s) to human life vs. long-term risk. Decision-making priority is given to town/community needs vs. individual needs with special attention to the underserved in our community.

SUMMARY STATEMENT

As I write this final statement I am reflecting back on what a great experience this has been to connect with Bedford citizens! Your perspectives have helped me to frame the policy responses needed for the top three public health issues on my mind today: preventing the spread of COVID-19, promoting mental health and preventing mosquito & tick-borne diseases.

I have heard your concerns that Board of Health decisions need to be based on science with the most vulnerable in mind. Throughout my 23 years on the Board of Health, I have used my scientific knowledge and experience to inform our policy choices. My knowledge continues to evolve, as I actively work in Cancer Immunotherapy research and volunteer for institutional biosafety committees that ensure the safe containment of biological matter in Bedford laboratories.

You have told me that trust is paramount. I believe that building trust in our community requires transparency, relationships, and of course civil discourse. My involvement in the community provides me with opportunities to hear feedback from residents and to collaborate with other local leaders. My record as 10-time Chair or Co-Chair of the Board of Health speaks for itself. I fostered collaboration and civil discourse among members and helping the Board evolve from the advisory role it once was -- to the policy-making board it is today.

If re-elected, I will continue to advocate for data--driven policies that are informed by the real-life concerns of residents and continue to be transparent, collaborative, and maintain civil discourse.

For more information about me, my top public health priorities, and more, please see my website at: <https://beaforboh.org>

I ask for your vote on March 12 to continue to serve you and our community.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

- [Corinne and Bob Doud & Dorothy Anderson-Perales](#)
- [Astrid Kruse](#)
- [Anita Raj](#)
- [Erin Sandler-Rathe](#)