



CITY OF GARDNER
BOARD OF HEALTH
95 PLEASANT ST, ROOM 29
GARDNER, MASSACHUSETTS 01440-2630



Members Present: Emma Chaitin - Interim Chairperson
Dr. Michele Parker - Member
Geoff Tobia, Esq. - Member
Angela DiPrima - Agent for the Board of Health

Attendees' Present: Susan Avallone, RN

Special Board of Health meeting held Thursday, January 8, 2026

4:30 PM Meeting called to order and opening announcement

This was a special meeting held solely to address an Open Meeting Law (OML) complaint dated December 19, 2025, regarding executive session interviews conducted on November 12 and November 19, 2025.

Former BOH Chairperson Susan Avallone commented on the City Solicitor's response to the OML complaint.

- Stated interviews were held in executive session in good faith based on past practice.
- Noted corrective actions outlined by the Solicitor and her intent to assist with completing them.
- Expressed concern about confidentiality for applicants and uncertainty about how interviews should proceed going forward.
- Plans to consult the Solicitor upon his return.

Alternative pre-screening and interviewing processes were discussed, the Board will continue working with HR and the Solicitor to define a compliant interview process for future hiring.

The Board reviewed the Solicitor's advisory letter. Key points discussed were:

- Pre-screening may occur privately; substantive interviews evaluating suitability must be public.
- Members questioned the advisory's use of the term "appointment," noting the Health Director is a hired position, not appointed. The Board agreed to seek clarification.
- Members discussed what information can be addressed during pre-screening, what must occur publicly, and how HR may participate without creating a quorum.
- Board will continue working with HR and the Solicitor to define a compliant interview process for future hiring.
- **Executive session minutes:** Minutes from November 12 and 19 will be finalized and approved at the next meeting, then released with only legally permitted redactions.

The Chair read the recommended motion to:

- Adopt the City Solicitor's advisory letter (dated December 30, 2025) as the Board's official written response to the OML complaint.
- Acknowledge receipt of the complaint and confirm review of OML guidance.
- Direct preparation and release of the November 12 and 19 executive session minutes.
- Send the vote, complaint, and advisory to the Attorney General's Division of Open Government and to the complainant.

Motion seconded and passed unanimously.

Regular January meeting scheduled for January 26.

6:03 PM Motion made and seconded to adjourn the meeting.

Emma Chaitin , Interim Chairperson

Atty. Geoffrey Tobia , Member

Michele C. Parker MD, Member

All conversations are documented on You Tube at the following location:
<https://www.youtube.com/@CityofGardnerMassachusettsrecordings>
Please see the 'Gardner Board of Health' playlist for the full video recording.