

**RUTHERFORD BOARD OF HEALTH**

**ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE**

**2021 CALENDAR YEAR**

**COUNCIL LIAISON**

Thomas Mullahey

**BOARD MEMBERS**

Dr. Joseph DeFazio, President  
Dorothy Willms, Vice-President  
Matthew Ziemkiewicz, Board Secretary  
Theresa Gilburn, Board Member (Resigned 8-1-2021)  
Denise Goumas, RN, Board Member  
Mr. Ellery Tarife, RN, Board Member  
Deborah O'Neill, RN, Board Member  
Laura Connallon, RN, Alternate Board Member # 1  
Dennis Mazono - Alternate Member # 2

**2021 STAFF**

Brian M. O'Keefe, Administrative Officer/Registrar of Vital Statistics  
Jennifer Galarza, Health Official/Registrar of Vital Statistics  
Linda A. Hricik, Secretary, Deputy Registrar of Vital Statistics  
Mary Montoto, Secretary, Deputy Registrar of Vital Statistics  
Janet Calhoun, RN  
Therese Hoff, RN  
Dr. Jill A. Garripoli Pedalino, Public Health Physician  
Dr. Neil Beeber, Board Veterinarian

**RUTHERFORD HEALTH DEPARTMENT**  
**2021 ANNUAL REPORT**

The 2021 year started to reflect a sense of returning back to normal times prior to the COVID-19 pandemic arriving in the Borough last year. With the March thaw, the department starting working on setting up screening programs for the spring, in addition, planning for the surge of temporary events that normally develops throughout the year.

With the arrival of vaccinations for COVID-19, more establishments and businesses were able to fully open to the public in addition to the schools.

The borough, which should be called the “borough of special events” returned to seeing many of the temporary events that take place in the borough being re-established. The two public health nurses, who are the contact tracers for the borough, continued to be saturated with COVID-19 cases being reported electronically to the department through the State Health Department Communicable Disease Reporting and Surveillance System (CDRSS).

The number of laboratory cases of COVID-19 for residents from January 1, 2021 to December 31, 2021, rose to a total of 1,842 cases. The two public health nurses continued to have an active schedule dealing with contact tracing for residents testing positive for the COVID-19 virus, interacting with the public schools, St. Mary High School, Academy at St. Mary, the Day Care Centers and Felician University, fielding questions from the public and organized sporting organizations in town on COVID-19 related issues.

This reporting period marked the 30<sup>th</sup> year of rabies in land-based animals in Rutherford. This continued to result in an increase in manpower hours being devoted to rabies control measures. The department continued to receive excellent service and cooperation by the Governing Body contracting once again in 2021 for a private Animal Control Service. This decision not only realized the borough an increase in field related animal control services, but at a time when it was continually needed within the community in the rabies enzootic area.

For the 27<sup>th</sup> consecutive year, the Board of Health was able to apply for reimbursement for those residents 65 and over who were Medicare patients and were vaccinated against influenza through a shared services agreement with the Bergen County Department of Health Services.

The department continued its role in the School Nursing Program. For the 2020-2021 School Year, the Public Health Nurses continued the School Nursing Services at St. Mary High School and the Academy at St. Mary.

Since 1992, state entitlement per pupil is available for providing nursing services to the non-public school students by the health department through a shared services agreement with the Rutherford Board of Education. This resulted in reimbursement of \$34,170.00 to the borough for the 2020-2021 school year.

By continuing our role in the school-nursing program, it required at a minimum, the Public Health Nurses, when schools are in session, to devote an additional four (4) hours, three days a week on this program. 335 students received our services in the 2020-2021 school year.

For the 2021 calendar year, a number of specific items are in need of noting:

The Department investigated 287 of the 298 citizen complaints received during this reporting period. The county health department charges \$140.21 for each complaint handled. The Department Head saved the borough \$40,240.27 through his efforts.

Board members Theresa Gilburn and Matthew Ziemkiewicz were appointed to three-year terms on the Board of Health by the Mayor with the advice and consent of the Governing Body. Mr. Dennis Mazone, was also appointed alternate board member #2.

Councilman Tom Mullahey was appointed our council liaison.

The Department Head continued to serve as the bloodborne pathogen coordinator for the Borough.

West Nile Virus activity in the Borough was very quiet in 2021. This was the 15<sup>th</sup> consecutive year, since 2000 when the virus appeared in the State that we did not have a crow test positive for the West Nile Virus. The Department did reach out to 17 service stations in town regarding the issue of stagnant water associated with discarded vehicle tires.

The Department had to hire a private landscaper to cut overgrowth on several properties in town when the property owner failed to respond to written notice provided. Several liens on the properties for the cost of the clean-ups were placed by the Governing Body on the properties in question. Overgrowth on properties were abated by the health department on the following two private properties: Woodward Avenue, Donaldson Avenue.

The health department completed a review of records retention and after approval from the state, we were able to destroy several boxes of records.

The staff participated in numerous conference calls with the county health department throughout the reporting period concerning COVID-19 issues.

Influenza vaccination clinics for the 2021-2022 influenza season were held on October 27<sup>th</sup> and 165 residents vaccinated against the flu. A total of 240 flu vaccinations were administered by the public health nurses in 2021.

Access to Open Public Records Act requests, known as OPRA requests, increased to 193 requests, 637 pages of health department documents, and four CD's. One person made a request which totaled 115 pages of documents.

The department spent a considerable amount of time investigating animal bites to humans and to domestic animals. This was a very time-consuming process and intensive activity. While 26 animal related bites to humans and domestic animals were followed up on, some of the bite exposures were problematic and resulted in three residents receiving the post exposure treatment for rabies, which now involves four inoculations over a 14-day period of time. Since rabies is a fatal disease, proper follow up and documentation in a timely manner is imperative.

The board of health had updated its retail food establishment license fees in 2019 with a general increase of 10% in 2021.

The Department continued to be involved with the Bureau of Fire Safety with hoarding conditions inside dwelling units. Most of these complaints come to the department from the police department while responding to service calls at a particular address. The American population is aging and a number of these types of complaints involve elderly citizens who are residing in an owner/occupied residence.

The department dealt with two rodent complaints received in residential neighborhoods on River side Avenue and Woodward Avenue. Enclosed bait stations with rodenticide were set up at both locations and the rodent issue was abated.

The Department Head continued to serve on a host of Borough appointed committees during the calendar year, i.e., Safety Committee, Local Emergency Planning Committee, The Office of Emergency Management, Bloodborne Pathogen, and Special Events Committee.

New or change in ownership for several retail food establishments took place in 2021. Those establishments are located at the following: two at 106 Park Avenue, 98 Park Avenue, 104 Park Avenue, 61 Park Avenue, 313 Union Avenue, 4 Orient Way.

The board of health continued with a number of shared services in 2021, including, bloodborne pathogen program, influenza vaccination program, nonpublic school nursing program and an administrative/infrastructure contract with the county.

The department head corresponded with the borough administrator and met with a representative of the building department regarding changes that needed to be made to the updated property maintenance code being adopted by reference by the governing body.

The department head reviewed 15 pages of the public health annex to the Borough's Office of Emergency Management Plan and made updated changes.

The department head corresponded with a number of non-profit organizations in the borough regarding the need to obtain a temporary permit to provide food to the public at special events held by the organizations.

For the first time, the borough prepared a state of the borough report for 2020 and the health department provided the necessary statistical data for the report.

The department was able to provide a rabies clinic again in 2021 after cancelling the prior year's event due to COVID-19 concerns. In addition, the blood screening program, the Pap Test and Breast Exam program, Tuberculous Screening Programs were re-established.

Pre-operational inspections were conducted of two massage therapy establishments that opened up on Orient Way to insure compliance with borough ordinance.

Salary Ordinances were prepared and approved by the board of health. The department heads had been outstanding for seven years and the clerical workers ordinance covers 2021 through 2023.

The department head completed a mandated Webinar entitled "Protecting Children from Abuse – For Managers/Supervisors/Elected Officials" training required by the insurance fund. In addition, all of the staff completed an on-line training session entitled "Building a Safe Workplace: Anti-Harassment and Discrimination".

The department was able to return 100 doses of unused influenza vaccine from the 2020-2021 influenza season.

The department received permission from the state civil service commission to carry over 2020 vacation into the 2021 calendar year based on COVID-19 responsibilities.

The department worked on drawing up policies and procedures for about 38 different operations in the department.

The department corresponded with the families of those lost to COVID-19, advising of a FEMA program available to reimburse the families for funeral costs.

The Department Head of 43 years with the department and the Secretary for the Department with 33 years of borough service both submitted letters of retirement.

The board of health advertised and conducted interviews for a Clerk 1 and Registered Environmental Health Specialist (REHS) position based on the letters of retirement for the individuals holding those positions.

Both of the public health nurses successfully completed the State Health Department Certified Municipal Registrars training and became certified as municipal registrars allowing for a continuity of vital statistic services during the transition of a new department head and secretary for the department.

The department head continued to deliver certified copies of death records to the two local funeral homes in order not to lose the revenue source of \$6,400 for the year.

The department re-baited two sewer manholes on Feronia Way at a resident's request who had numerous rats enter her home through her toilet. Restricted use rodenticide was used with the assistance of the DPW.

The board of health ordered 250 doses of influenza vaccine for its fall vaccination programs.

Certificate of Appreciation was prepared for Therese Gilburn, Board Member, who moved out of town after serving on the board of health for 19 years.

The department was involved in a number of rabies control issues. There were three raccoons that tested positive for the deadly rabies virus. One raccoon attacked and bit a resident and two other positive raccoons got into a fight with two domestic dogs. A total of three residents sought rabies post exposure treatment after one resident was bit by a rabid raccoon, one handling a dog's fur after a raccoon/dog fight and a live bat observed in a bedroom overnight.

The Borough received \$ \$34,170 in state aid for the Department providing the nursing services at St. Mary High School, covering 335 students. This was accomplished without adding staff.

The following is a breakdown of activities for each component of the Health Department:

### **2021 VITAL STATISTICS**

- 967 - Certified Copies of Death, Marriage, Domestic Part., & Birth Records Issued
- 1,309 - Electronic Certified Copies of Death Certificates Issued
- 179 - Death Certificates Processed (143 electronic & 36 photocopied)
- 96 - Marriage Licenses Issued
  - 1 - Re-Marriage Occurred in Rutherford
- 50 - Death Certificates Recorded for Deaths Occurring in Rutherford
- 48 - Marriage Certificates Filed in Rutherford
- 120 - Residents Died Up to October 31, 2021
- 0 - Birth Occurred & Recorded in Rutherford

\$1,563.00 in revenue was received for certified copies of Marriage, Birth, Death Records, Civil Union, Domestic Partnership Affidavits, Burial Permits and Marriage Licenses plus electronic payments of \$6,400.00 - (Vital Statistics - \$1,563.00 + Electronic Payments - \$6,400.00 = \$ 7,963.00).

From a budget and finance standpoint, the Board of Health realized a total revenue source of \$67,680.00. The largest sums were in the school nursing reimbursement account totaling \$ 34,170.00, retail food establishment licenses totaling \$ 29,021.00, vital statistics revenue totaling \$ 1563.00, state shared license fees \$ 2,400.00, and electronic vital statistics revenue totaling \$ 6,400.00.

### **2021 BUDGET & FINANCE**

- Operating Budget - \$ 32, 160.00
- Salary & Wages Budget - \$386,021.34
- Capital Budget - \$ 0
- Animal Control Services - \$ 24,900.00
- County Health Department Shared Services - \$ 62,038.05

The Health Department brought in the following revenue:

\$ 34,170.00	School Nursing Reimbursement (2020-2021 School Year)
29,021.00	Retail Food Establishment Licenses
1,925.00	State Shared License Fees
1,201.00	Vital Statistics
270.00	Vending Machine Licenses
22.00	Store Milk Licenses

\$ 66,609.00 Total Revenue

Note - (\$5,195.00 -Electronic Payment Total for 2021 not added to above total revenue).  
\$ 66,609.00 + \$ 5,195.00 = \$71,804.00

### **ADULT SCREENING PROGRAMS**

Blood Screening:	May 1, 2021 -	19 Participants
	October 2, 2021 -	12 Participants
Flu Clinic:	October 27, 2021 -	186 Participants
Pap Program:	October 6, 2021 -	6 Participants
Rabies Clinic:	May 9, 2021 -	70 Dogs - 14 Cats

### **PUBLIC HEALTH NURSING**

Blood Pressures	14
Cardiovascular Assessments	8
Communicable Disease (Other) Follow-up	1,520
COVID-19 Contact Tracing Cases	1,630
Diabetic Education	2
Health Risk Assessments	8
Heights and Weights	9
Home visits for lead investigations	0
Immunization Audits	6
Immunization Enforcement Follow-up	3
Monitored elevated lead cases and investigated	0
Nutritional Assessments	7
TB Testing (0 reactors)	40

## **SCHOOLS**

Complete A45's (immunization charts) for all St. Mary Highschool students according to New Jersey State Department of Health & Senior guidelines.

Provide health screenings according to New Jersey State Department of Health & Senior Services guidelines for the following:

St. Mary High School – 348 Nursing Hours 2020-2021 – January 1, 2021-December 31, 2021

Continuing Education – Seminars & Webinars for Continuing Education Credits throughout the year – 15 Continuing Education Credits for Public Health Nursing & 15 Continuing Education Credits for Nursing Licenses.

Audits and surveys of public and private schools and 9 daycare centers and eight (7) schools in the borough concerning Immunization Compliance with Chapter 14 of The State Sanitary Code.

Complete School Nursing Program at St. Mary High School covering over 177 students. Programs cover such things as auditing and maintenance of health records and immunizations, tuberculin testing, health screenings which include vision, hearing, scoliosis, heights and weights, first aid to ill and injured students and faculty, student health counseling, etc. At least five (4) nursing hours three times a week are spent each day on programs when schools are in session. On-site services were provided.

## **COMMUNICABLE DISEASE FOLLOW-UP**

In 2021, the public health nurses followed up on 3,150 communicable disease cases for Rutherford residents.

## **HEALTH COUNSELING**

Includes telephone calls, walk-in, home visits, screenings, referrals, follow-ups, etc.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH**

The bulk of the food related inspections and those of the daycare centers, public recreational facilities, pet shop, tanning establishment, kennel inspections, etc., and plan review and citizen complaints received regarding those establishments were outsourced to the county health department.

## **CITIZEN COMPLAINT INVESTIGATION**

The department handled a large segment of the citizen complaints received during this reporting time period. Of the 298 citizen complaints received from the public, 287 complaints were followed up and investigated by the Rutherford Health Department. This resulted in a savings to the borough of \$40,240.27, since the county health department charges \$140.21 for each complaint handled. It should be noted that the volume of citizen complaints logged by the department might be lower than the actual number received, since it is unsure if all of the citizen complaints handled by the county health department were logged into the citizen complaint numbering and tracking database maintained by our department. The county handled 10 complaints

## **STAFFING ISSUES**

The board of health and department head have continued to express serious concerns about the continuity of services at the health department based on outsourcing of the Registered Environmental Health Specialist (REHS) position. Those concerns came to light this year with two of the current employees, (half of the current staff) who are key employees, both filing for retirement by the end of the 2021 calendar. One employee will have completed 43 years of service with the department and the other 34 years with the borough. There has been a 37% reduction in staffing levels in the department prior. Each and every employee in the health department has required licensing or certification requirements unique to their positions as compared to many of the other borough employees. Each health department employee handles various responsibilities outside their job title in order to allow the department to function properly and provide the essential public health services to the residents. The essential operations of the department have the potential of being seriously compromised by the current staffing arrangements and the combined loss of 77 years of institutional knowledge with the borough by the retiring of two employees.

## **FACILITY ISSUES**

The health department operation has been housed in the municipal annex since 1981. For the last 40 years, the current facility continues to meet our needs to provide public health programs to the residents of Rutherford. Our section of the municipal annex is in very good shape and has not been a burden to the borough in maintenance costs. For example, over the last 40 years, only the carpeting and the HVAC unit have had to be replaced in the facility, in addition to a backflow preventer being installed on the main sewer line to the building. The facility, while 40 years old, is the third newest facility owned by the borough. The facility has been used for meetings by other committees in the borough due to its handicapped capabilities and is used during multiple special events held in Lincoln Park so the public has access to restroom facilities. With the start of the construction of a new police department facility in 2021, there have been no discussions with the board of health as to what the status of the municipal annex will be and if the health department will continue to occupy the municipal annex, and if not, what is the plan for a suitable other location for public health activities.

## **CLOSING REMARKS**

This report is a credit to the members of the Rutherford Board of Health for their insight and support of the Staff in providing a public health program designed to meet the needs of the Community. Board members serve on the Board of Health to fulfill the statutory responsibility of a local board of health and receive no compensation for devoting their time and talent to the Borough of Rutherford.

The Governing Body of the Borough of Rutherford needs to be commended for continuing to provide an acceptable and reasonable level of funding to the Board of Health in order that public health needs and mandates can be successfully achieved.

As this report concludes the 22<sup>nd</sup> year of the 21<sup>st</sup> century for the Rutherford Health Department, many major dramatic health threats have been eliminated since the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century which have contributed to the increase in the average life span since the early 1900's by over 30 years, 25 years attributable to advances in public health.

Yet this year we were faced with a worldwide pandemic with the COVID-19 Virus, something the world has not seen since the Spanish Influenza Pandemic of 1918. By the end of December 2021, over 54,841,400 Americans were infected with the virus and 823,336 Americans have died from COVID-19.

Local public health continues to adjust to changes in the public health infrastructure since the local board of health was created by the Governing Body back in 1901, with all of the powers and duties delegated to the Board by acts of the State of New Jersey Legislature. The Board of Health continues to take the lead by partnering with other governmental agencies in shared services agreements. In 2021, the Board had a shared service contract with the Bergen County Department of Health Services for public health infrastructure and administration, direct nursing supervision, influenza vaccination reimbursement through Medicare Part B, and blood borne pathogen training and immunization for employees.

The Board also continued with a shared service contract with the Rutherford Board of Education, providing nursing services to two of the nonpublic schools in town, realizing the Borough a revenue source of \$34,170.00. In addition, the Board continued to encourage the Governing Body by contracting with a private animal control service, providing the borough with additional services.

The staff looks forward to working with the board in the 2022 Calendar Year in continuing to provide a sound and robust public health program to the residents of Rutherford. Working with a continued tight budget framework and a continued reduction in staffing, the 2022 year should continue to pose some unique challenges to the staff and Board of Health.

Respectfully Submitted  
For the Board of Health,

Brian M. O'Keefe  
Administrative Officer  
Registrar of Vital Statistics  
Bloodborne Pathogen Coordinator  
Rutherford Health Department

Updated By:  
Jennifer Galarza  
Health Official