

Van Buren/Cass District Health Department Minutes
03/12/2025

Chairperson Leary called the meeting to order at 3:00pm at 302 S Front Street, Dowagiac, MI on Wednesday, March 12, 2025. Roll call taken. Board members present: Jeremiah Jones, Tina Leary, Robert Linderman, Don Hanson, Randall Peat, Priscilla Gatties, Roseann Marchetti in person.

Employees present: Danielle Persky, Lauren Jaramillo, Nancy Desai, George Friday in person and Jennifer Zordan, Kelly Adkins, Dr. Larry Wile, Megan Fecho, Emily Flowers virtually.

Others: Roger Boyer, James Bronke, Jerry Marchetti, Karen Tan, in person and JG, Matt K virtually.

February 2025 minutes were reviewed. Motioned by Jones and second by Leary to approve the meeting minutes as written. All voting yes, motion carried.

Ahead of the regular agenda, Chairperson Leary requested the public comment period be moved ahead of the first agenda item as agenda item 2.A and a closed session after public comment as agenda item 12 and adjournment moved to agenda item 13.

Public Comment, James Bronke

James Bronke communicated his concerns about the profit orientation of healthcare and medical interventions specifically for cancer treatment as a part of the public comment. The focus was the alternative solutions that are not FDA approved or could be repurposed for other illnesses. The final sentiment was that medical interventions are failing the public, and Bronke would like to find a way forward with health organizations. Materials handed out by Bronke are in the updated board packet.

Finance Director's Report

Desai reported with a presentation of the financial year 2023-2024 in review. Materials reviewed are in the updated board packet.

Highlighted are the purchases of five vehicles through grant funding, the opened investment account with MI Class, benefit enhancements, restructured chart of accounts, and strengthened internal controls.

Peat asked if there is a policy for how much is in reserves financially. Desai agreed that a formal policy could be created for reserve and could look at this potentially next year along with other recommended policies from the auditors. These can then be brought back to the board. Peat offered Desai access to Van Buren County's policies such as the Michigan Earned Sick Time Act.

Linderman asked if the state has approved of our current standing after the previous audit miscalculation associated with two grants. Desai and Persky explained there has been no more movement on this issue at this time and any further discussion of formal agreements with the state will be brought back to the Board of Health.

Linderman sought clarity on why the expenditures were higher than the revenues at this point. Desai explained that the numbers are based on future reimbursement of grants as well. Friday pointed out line item 20 as an example that is still in the process of being reimbursed for Environmental Health. Desai went on to say that at worst case scenario, the reserves are there. Persky added that there are no concerns for state budgeting and no adjustments are expected to be needed.

George noted his appreciation for the current financial team as this year, leadership was provided financial information they had not received before. These financial reports provide valuable information for directors.

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Linderman asked how investments are going. Desai reviewed the current standing of investments in MI Class and the comparison of interest to banking institutions.

January Expenditures Report

Desai noted nothing out of the ordinary for this expenditure report. Gatties commented on dental billing achieving 47 percent of the health department's goal on the statement of revenues line item 401. This is on par per Desai; although by adding an additional dentist and accepting new patients, the goal is to exceed this.

Administrator/Health Officer's Report

Persky introduced our new Human Resources Generalist, Alisha Bartlett. Alisha brings over 15 years of human resources experience with a background in training, learning, and human resources development.

Nursing and Medical Director Report

Dr. Wile updated on the current measles outbreak in the United States. Measles is one of the most infectious diseases and the best protection is vaccination with a 93 percent success rate at the first dose and a 97 percent success rate with the second dose. Communicable disease nurses doing contact tracing is an important part of this disease along with quarantine procedures. When we receive a request for vaccination waivers, educating the parent/guardian about the importance of these procedures is necessary.

The health department is making efforts to support the Amish and Mennonite communities within our counties through education and accommodation. Linderman asked about the current vaccination rates within our counties, specifically in schools beyond public schools like the Amish or Mennonite population. Dr. Wile discussed the school immunization programs making it around 90 percent, but unsure on the specific vaccination records the requested populations. Persky will pull this information and follow-up.

Dental Report

Updates are discussed in the written report. Persky noted in the written report the highlighted veteran's dental grant program. Van Buren County has used \$41,371.62 of the \$55,000 allowance and Cass County has used \$671.81 of the \$18,000 allowance. Van Buren County is getting close to the spending limit on the grant, so Van Buren veteran's services are going to pause promotion, and the health department will stop scheduling to prevent maxing out. We will honor all appointments and plans of care already scheduled or in progress.

When reviewing the nursing events, Linderman noted the VFC visits. Persky explained that it was not an outreach event but rather a site visit audit of participating providers who receive these federally funded vaccinations. It is required by the state for health departments to lead these audits. Gatties noted that the Pokagon Health Services facility is audited by health department staff.

Leary asked how much of the VFC program for the health department is federally funded. Desai responded that around 55,000 dollars for our own clinic, which will be noted in our own audit. The ordering of these vaccines is by the providers.

Leary followed up by asking if there is a concern these federal funds will eventually go away. Persky noted that it is on the health department's radar. Persky will reach out and confirm with the nursing director, Julie Beeching.

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Environmental Health Report

Friday reported the lull as road restrictions are underway, but the department is still busy. Confirmed that the self-audit for private wells through the health department passed with flying colors with all concerns on our self-evaluation being changed to fully met by the overseeing organization.

Friday noted the revival of Michigan Environmental Health Association (MEHA) with the support of environmental health administrators from across the state and the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE). It was informed to MEHA that the conversation of additional sanitary codes is returning. The concern is that many local health department codes are outdated. Hanson asked if the process would change for those like himself who do have their well and septic systems tested. Friday said that yes, especially for those who do not test at the recommended interval.

A concern brought up by Friday is a well driller who is based in Van Buren County but working in another county has been found drilling without permission. Leary asked if he drilled wells in our counties. Friday responded that the wells of issue are in a different county. He has taken care of all requirements for the wells in our county.

Health Promotions Report

Updates are discussed in the written report.

Public Comment


A public commenter asked about the mortality and incident rate of measles outbreaks for the Amish population or those in public schools. Dr. Wile answered that there is a difference between the Amish and Mennonite populations as the measles outbreak being seen in Texas is connected within the Mennonite community. In the past, it was seen more from travel outside the country. Epidemiologists are looking at where this outbreak originated from because of this difference in potential origination. Another difference from this outbreak to previous ones is that although there were 16 outbreaks last year compared to three at this moment, the impact was much smaller in previous years and the cases this year are connected, making it meet the definition of an outbreak (two or more cases linked to one another). Linderman noted that the death from this outbreak is the first measles death for the United States in ten years.

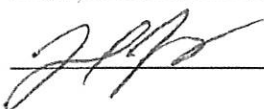
Other Business

Peat moved to go into closed session pursuant to MCL 15.268 (1)(h) to discuss a written legal opinion within the attorney-client privilege regarding the dismissal of an employee of the Health Department, second by Marchetti. All voting yes, motion carried.

Motion by Marchetti, second by Jones to return to regular session. All voting yes, motion carried.

Motion to adjourn at 4:39pm by Jones, second by Peat. The next regular District Board of Health meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, April 9, 2025, at 3:00pm in the Van Buren ISD Conference Center at 490 S Paw Paw St, Lawrence, MI 49064.





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Robert Smith
Tina Spang
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