

Van Buren/Cass District Health Department Minutes
04/09/2025

Chairperson Leary called the meeting to order at 3:00pm at the Van Buren ISD Conference Center at 490 S. Paw Paw St. Lawrence, MI as well as on Microsoft Teams on Wednesday, April 9th. Roll call was taken.

Board members present: Jeremiah Jones, Tina Leary, Robert Linderman, Don Hanson, Randall Peat, and Roseann Marchetti

Board member absent: Priscilla Gatties

Employees present: Danielle Persky, Alisha Bartlett, Nancy Desai in person and Megan Fecho, Julie Beeching, Jennifer Zordan, Kelly Adkins virtually

Others: Roger Boyer, Doug Haefner, Jerry Marchetti in person and Karen Tan virtually

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

Finance Director's Report

Desai introduced Doug Haefner of Vredevelde Haefner, LLC to present the audit report. Haefner reviewed many specifics of the report such as what VBCDHD deposits, income statement, lease agreements, and staff affected by the updated sick time law from the state. Desai noted that two staff will be affected by this. Noted was that this report is as of September 30, 2024, so holiday time is not factored into this report. Haefner confirmed that this was a good, clean audit.

Haefner reviewed recommendations to strengthen controls with the journal entries. It was noted that this is already implemented with Persky reviewing. Another recommendation is to review how staff time is allocated when they are funded through several funding sources. Leary asked if our payroll system has this capability. Desai noted that our current account software, MIP, would be ideal but it would cost extra. A solution has not been fully decided yet. Haefner noted a formal approval process for staff pay changes would be recommended as well. Haefner also shared his recommendation to leadership staff that there be a second reviewer on credit card transactions.

Linderman asked if previous financial deficiencies were still impacting the financial situation expressed in this report. Desai answered that there are still issues being resolved, such as medicaid settlements prior to her coming on board. These reports were not completed for several years. No deposit was requested this year, which will support offsetting the amount owed. Persky noted that the Michigan Bureau of Audit Communications reached out with further information coming soon, but having a functioning financial management system has set us on the right track with these issues.

Linderman asked if this outstanding amount owed is noted in the report data. Desai answered the estimate is noted of how much is owed, but it has been accrued already. Persky reminded that the work was being completed but not recorded and reported properly. Desai reviewed the situation of the previous lack of accounting structure causing a misreporting of underspending and overspending for two grants. The amount of overspending and underspending was balanced, but there was no way to verify. Desai put in place cost coding immediately to improve accuracy. Peat noted that he was pleased with this clean audit.

Motioned by Peat and second by Linderman to approve the audit report. All voting yes, motion carried.

January Expenditures Report

Desai reviewed the March disbursement report and noted that everything is routine expense-wise. Linderman asked about the utility bill's total this financial year. Desai explained that not enough was budgeted when putting the accounting structure in place. A larger budget amendment will be organized for next month. Leary confirmed that there was no large financial anomaly to cause this. Desai noted that a cost originally with the Van Buren ISD has since been placed with the health department unexpectedly.

Linderman asked about the Audiometer cost. Persky explained that although the odometer was a prize won by a staff member and is under warranty, the cost of shipping was required to send it in for a repair. Linderman asked how many vehicles are owned and how they are being used. Desai answered we have five; two are dedicated to the environmental health team, one is for dental outreach, one is for maintenance, and one is for general staff use. Desai added for example that environmental health staff are still traveling even if the vehicle isn't available, so mileage is paid in those instances. The goal is to purchase more vehicles in the future.

Discussed and reviewed. Motioned by Marchetti, second by Jones to accept the expenditures report. All voting yes, motion carried. Expenditures are then reviewed with revenues on track for the financial year.

Administrator/Health Officer's Report

Persky introduced Alisha Bartlett as the health department's human resources manager, who has been incredibly helpful since starting last month. More to come.

Persky then goes on to review the grant funding termination letter received from the state. This funding was originally for COVID but had transitioned to infection prevention and response to future pandemics. It for example funded health department staff to go into nursing homes to educate staff about healthcare acquired infection prevention. The grant agreement from the state noted this funding states it is funded per a federal COVID grant but the state granted these funds to LHDs for purposes outside of COVID. The funds were not used for COVID-related activities. \$650,000 was granted to the health department. VBCDHD received \$325,000 as of March 31, 2025. \$325,000 will not be fulfilled as a result of the grant termination.

Leadership is navigating solutions with different scenarios, but initial eliminations are required. Three full-time positions and one retirement will account for this. The IT manager's position posting has been pulled with the IT consultant coming onsite two days a week instead of just one. This is more cost effective than hiring at this point. The next few months will be spent assessing and deliberating as preparations are put in place for the financial year 2026. All variables will be assessed such as grant distribution and general funding for how we are allocating our county appropriations between required services and non-essential services. Although the general fund is healthy, it can't be relied on entirely. This is the time to assess general operations and how we can best serve our community. Several meetings are planned with state partners to discuss our operational expectations as a health department. Persky noted though that many of our programs are already as bare bones as they can be, but some programs are harder to afford. This is not an ideal situation. Even though this funding is a part of a court restraining order, the funding is not sustained through the end of this year. The best strategy is to move forward and strategize without it. Leary asked about the details of the court restraining order. Persky noted that this is the one from the state and 23 other states with a two-week restraining order. There is hope that the lawsuit will go in the state's favor.

Peat noted that reduction in force is difficult for everyone, especially if not done deep enough. This is for everyone's sake. Desai answered that although we do have financial stability, taking from one grant source

to pay for another doesn't cover anything indefinitely. The goal of the cost codes is to separate the funding accordingly as required for compliance.

Leary asked about if the IT situation is working. Persky noted she connected with the Van Buren County IT department to consider collaboration but that is not an option at this time due to the unique work we do at the health department. The goal is to get through the end of the fiscal year with the position being posted at a later date.

Peat asked for Persky's opinion on the cuts. Persky noted that she agreed with the intent to eliminate COVID funding at the federal level although there is a miscommunication on how this funding was being utilized. It is not COVID funding at this point, and the argument from the lawsuit states this. The method of the cuts has also been discouraging. Persky noted that although this isn't what anyone wanted, the health department is committed to moving forward.

Linderman commented on the positive forecasting at year's end as the current overage figures is \$500,000. He would like to see this money being invested in. Linderman then asked about the impact of the Palisades Power Plant reopening. Peat noted to his knowledge that everything is on schedule. Persky answered that emergency preparedness training is imminent, but the funding for training is unsure. Linderman commented that the property tax as a future projection should be considered. Zordan noted she can elaborate on the palisades training program, but it was not requested by the board.

Linderman reviewed the IT program and cost effectiveness of a consultant versus in-house role. Nancy noted that the in-house hiring would be around \$180,000 for the package while consultancy is about \$5,000 per quarter.

Jones asked about the staff being funded through the terminated grant and if this staff were already hired before this funding source. Persky answered that no one has been hired under this grant. Small variables have slowly eaten away at other funding sources, which is why we maximized this fund source. Desai noted that even if we hear we have an overage, spinning plates mentality is not sustainable. Linderman asked how changes will be made in the future, and Persky answered with a forthcoming budget amendment.

Nursing and Medical Director Report

Dr. Wile started by discussing measles. At the time, there were three positive measles patients in Michigan. Although none are in our district, we do have an at-risk population of those who are unvaccinated with the Amish. A recent funeral brought hundreds from the Amish communities across the Midwest together, which is concerning if exposures occurred.

Other updates included tuberculosis (TB) testing training held by health department nurses, training with CEUs for nursing staff, and community distribution of updated Narcan education information and packaging. Dr. Wile handed out Narcan kits to board members. Marchetti noted that Narcan has started being placed in several community locations. Linderman asked about the funding for this. Persky noted the updated educational packaging is from the Overdose Prevention Engagement Network (OPEN).

Dr. Wile completed this update with kudos to leadership and Persky for considering what is best for the health department and constituents all week.

Persky highlighted at this time the report of dozens of dead birds on the North Beach in South Haven. Although this was reported to the health department, the DNR took the lead on this investigation. A tool

for reporting animal concerns to the DNR can be found at <https://www2.dnr.state.mi.us/ORS/>. Tests are still being run on the birds.

Linderman commended Dr. Wile for the letter addressing a visit to the Amish bishop. It's important to build the connection between the Amish and the health department. Persky agreed that Dr. Wile is making good headway on this.

Linderman asked about the impact of migrants on spreading measles. Dr. Wile noted that from his experience, the migrant population is the most vaccinated population. There is no correlation. Persky noted that the concern of underreporting from Canada is more of a concern.

Leary asked about the accreditation letter in the board packet. Persky noted this was the letter approving our 2023 accreditation.

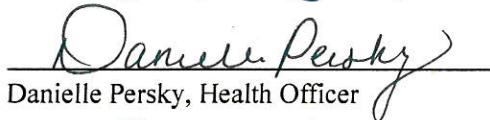
Dental Report, Environmental Health Report, and Health Promotions Report

Updates for these departments are discussed in the written report.

Linderman noted that he will most likely not be at the next board meeting. There was no other business and no public comment.

Motion to adjourn at 4:25pm by Jones, second by Peat. The next regular District Board of Health meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, May 14th, at 3:00pm in the Dowagiac Community Center, lower level at 302 S Front Street, Dowagiac, MI.


Tina Leary, Board of Health Chairperson


Danielle Persky, Health Officer


Lauren Jaramillo, Board of Health Secretary