

**Van Buren/Cass District Health Department Minutes**  
**05/14/2025**

Health Officer Danielle Persky called the meeting to order at 3:01pm at the Dowagiac Community Center, lower level at 302 S Front Street, Dowagiac, MI on Wednesday, May 14th. Roll call taken.

Board members present: Priscilla Gatties, Don Hanson, Roseann Marchetti in-person and Bob Linderman by dial-in phone

Board members absent: Tina Leary, Jeremiah Jones, Randall Peat

Employees present: Nancy Desai, Danielle Persky, Lauren Jaramillo in-person and Alisha Bartlett, Jennifer Zordan, Kelly Atkins virtually

Others: Jerry Marchetti, Jim Broke, Karen Tan in-person

April meeting minutes were reviewed. No motions to approve due to lack of quorum. Noted is the adjustment of single sided printing and minutes approval signatures.

**Finance Director's Report**

Desai provided the budget amendment staff report. The staff report reflected the changes in the budget due to funding cuts. General redundancies were also corrected. On the expense side, reductions are noted for personnel. Budgeted was a full IT team and three positions that were laid off from unexpected grant funding losses. Routine adjustments for different line items such as facility costs are highlighted, too. Desai explained that the health department reserves will be used to offset the deficit. Persky explained that for the next budget year, we will be balancing without using general reserves, but the state's FY2026 budget will need to be reviewed once available. In the meantime, health department leadership will start looking at ways to reduce costs and increase revenue. There are still operational functional changes that need to be made beyond the three eliminated positions.

Marchetti asked if the reduction in revenue could be replaced or resumed as time went on. Persky answered that although there is current litigation over this issue, even if it ends in favor of resuming funding, that funding will not be seen again in future financial years. The question then is what the state will backfill. Currently the state is below the minimum requirement for health department funding as required by law. Given all the changes, it is not known what to expect.

Gatties asked how the layoffs have affected services and operations. Persky answered that staff cuts were support staff. A few hearing and vision clinics have been cancelled, or less services were provided at the remaining clinics. This affects kindergarten round-up events, for example. A champion administrative staff member has stepped up to pick up the tasks from those roles, but burnout is a serious concern. Leadership is looking at how to restructure to better support the role.

No motions to approve the budget amendment due to lack of quorum. Persky asked that the board continue to review ahead of next month's meeting to then go through the formal approval process with a quorum. This packet will be mailed or emailed to absent board members.

**January Expenditures Report**

Desai noted that the disbursements are not out of the ordinary for this month. Payroll was a bit higher than normal due to the benefits paid out and typical expenses from role eliminations.

Persky noted that Alisha Bartlett's role as Human Resources Manager has benefited the health department and staff greatly through this unexpected process. The health department is grateful for the guidance and

expertise that she brings to this role. Linderman asked if her support is still available to eliminated staff members. Desai answered yes, she has been available to answer any of their questions.

No motions to approve the expenditures report due to lack of quorum.

#### **Administrator/Health Officer's Report**

Persky will seek approval for the staff report about splitting the boiler as part of next month's meeting. The primary issue is that the health department shares a boiler with VB Tech of the Van Buren Intermediate School District (VBISD), and both organizations have different heating and cooling needs. This project will create a valve system where the health department can regulate the temperature. The health department would also gain access to back-end controls. Hanson noted that the singular boiler should have the capacity for this. Persky answered that it was at one point considered to add a separate boiler, but HVAC professionals agreed that there is plenty of capacity on the one. The Public Health Infrastructure Grant (PHIG) is the funding source for this project. Desai noted that right now VBISD bills the health department based on square footage rather than usage. This project will allow the health department to have its own meter with a more accurate idea of use. Hanson agreed that different controls are important.

Persky mentioned that Dowagiac may also have future facility shifts. Noted was the potential release of the community room space to take over the currently vacant first level clinic space for health department nursing. This space is fully furnished and would be a better space for clinical staff. Discussions are taking place with the city of Dowagiac. More formal conversations will be brought to the board in the future. Board members were invited to view the space after the meeting.

Marchetti asked if the board would need to find a new location for meetings. Persky noted that we would still be able to utilize the space. The health department would just not be responsible for cleaning the space. Hanson asked if the square footage is comparable. Persky answered that although different, this first level clinic space has more value.

#### **Nursing and Medical Director Report**

Persky noted that Dr. Wile couldn't attend, but he would like to note that next month he will provide information on tick prevention. Persky highlighted that Frances Rose, an immunization nurse, retired in May. The health department held a celebration to celebrate this exciting next chapter.

Linderman asked who would fill Rose's role. Persky answered that an on-staff nurse has been training for two years with Rose. Once we can review the budget for the next financial year, the health department will look at adding a nurse.

#### **Dental Report**

Updates are discussed in the written report.

#### **Environmental Health Report**

Updates are discussed in the written report.

#### **Health Promotions Report**



Zordan noted that the health department is one of the leading agencies supporting emergency preparedness for the reopening of the Palisades Nuclear Plant. With the plant's reopening agreement, all offsite facilities must do training and be graded by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The health department supports the public decontamination centers in Gobles and Paw Paw. Staff participate with several other agencies. The board was invited to attend the second round of training. Persky stated that Zordan and the health department staff were complimented for being so well prepared. This is due to Zordan's considerable experience with radiological emergency preparedness and thorough guidance through staff pre-training. Further updates are discussed in the written report.

There was no other business.

#### **Public Comment**

Broke noted that he attended a previous Board of Health meeting and would like to continue to discuss the faults of the national healthcare system. The concern is based on the system being profit oriented rather than solution oriented. This is especially present for cancer treatment and prevention. Broke then said he would like to see the health department play a more active role in cancer prevention through community-centered communication.

Tan asked if the COVID vaccination was removed from childhood vaccination schedule, how long would that take to implement. Persky answered that COVID vaccination is not on the routine childhood immunization schedule. It is instead a recommendation along with the Influenza vaccination. If there is ever a standing order change, that is updated as soon as possible. Our medical and nursing leadership take their role in updating standing orders incredibly seriously. Our staff will broadly recommend vaccinations with a discussion. The discussions may include the best time of the year for recommended vaccinations, side effects, expectations, and answering patient questions. Answering questions is a vital role of public health; the health department refers patients to their primary care provider for personal health recommendations. Daycares and school systems may require vaccination. The health department is there to support decision making with immunization waivers and a space to discuss concerns in an informational setting.

Motion to adjourn at 3:42pm by Persky. The next regular District Board of Health meeting is scheduled for June 11, 2025, at 3:00pm in the Van Buren Cass District Health Department at 260 South Street, Lawrence, MI.

  
Tina Leary, Board of Health Chairperson

  
Danielle Persky, Health Officer

  
Lauren Jaramillo, Board of Health Secretary