

Van Buren/Cass District Health Department Minutes
09/10/2025

Chairperson Leary called the meeting to order at 3:01pm at 302 So Front Street, Dowagiac MI in the Community Center on September 10, 2025. Roll call taken.

Board members present: Jeremiah Jones, Tina Leary, Robert Linderman, Priscilla Gatties and Roseann Marchetti

Board members absent: Randall Peat

Employees present: Alisha Bartlett, Nancy Desai, Lauren Jaramillo, Danielle Persky in-person and Kelly Adkins, Dr. Larry Wile, Jennifer Zordan virtually

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

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

Finance Director's Report

Desai reviewed the July disbursements with the board, then moved to the budget documents for fiscal year (FY) 2026. \$1.5 million dollars was invested with MI Class generating approximately \$50,000 in interest income. The 2026 fiscal year budget is noted to have a \$253,000 deficit. Fund balance will be used to balance the budget. The budgets are organized by division. Linderman asked about county appropriations. County appropriations are used to handle the deficit in Clinical Health, which Persky highlighted as the intended purpose. Desai answered that the appropriations from Van Buren and Cass Counties for the FY have been approved. Persky thanked Cass County for the increase of five percent. The creation and meeting of the Ad Hoc Dental Committee is working on several cost-saving strategies with more details to come. Desai will continue to review the budget and bring back any necessary amendments as state budgets are finalized. Linderman asked how quickly an updated fee structure can be put into place. Persky answered that it can be put into effect immediately. Linderman asked if that's just for dental or other programs. Persky answered it could be for all programs, such as the Tuberculosis (TB) fees. Persky will bring fee schedule recommendations to the board once organized.

Leary asked about the state budget. Persky responded that the health department runs the risk of losing several programs if the House passed budget is carried through. Notices of awards for FY26 grants are moving forward as communicated from the State thus far. Desai highlighted the potential decrease of Public Health Emergency Preparedness (PHEP) for community outreach, but nothing has been solidified. The Hearing and Vision program is required by law, so the question would be who would ensure that program gets carried out.

Desai and Persky moved to the salary schedule in the packet. This schedule was recommended after the FYE 2024 accounting audit. A salary schedule is required by audited guidelines. During the audit process, they will review the role title and confirm that the employee's salary falls within the salary schedule.

Desai reviewed the cost-of-living adjustment staff report. Insurance was projected to increase by fifteen percent, but it instead went up only two percent. This increase is a shared cost between staff and the health department. Desai continued by recommending a two percent cost of living adjustment for staff. Supporting documentation from the Department of Treasury and Social Security Administration was provided. Desai

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also noted that it's important to be equitable and support employee morale. Linderman agreed that being competitive matters.

Discussed and reviewed. Motioned by Gatties, second by Marchetti to accept the cost-of-living adjustment staff report. All voting yes, motion carried.

Discussed and reviewed. Motioned by Jones, second by Gatties to accept the salary schedule. All voting yes, motion carried.

Discussed and reviewed. Motioned by Jones, second by Marchetti to accept the FY26 budget report. All voting yes, motion carried.

Expenditures Report

Updates are discussed in the board packet and no motion is carried.

Administrator/Health Officer's Report

Don Hanson's formal resignation is reviewed by Persky. Motioned by Marchetti, second by Jones to accept the resignation. All voting yes, motion carried.

Persky is working to find a Van Buren County member at large to fill this vacancy. Persky then reviewed current board terms. It was confirmed that Gatties' term is until December 31, 2025, and Jones noted the term extension form on the county website. Cass County Commissioner board assignments are reviewed yearly by the commissioner chairperson. Van Buren County terms align with their commissioner term. Linderman's member at large term is through January 1, 2027.

Persky moved to discuss the proposed staff handbook with Bartlett leading. Bartlett noted that the handbook was reviewed to remove redundancies and yearly benefit information. Yearly benefit information can be found in Employee Navigator and a summary booklet. Several other changes were highlighted such as paid time off (PTO), mileage reimbursement, and company vehicle usage. Leary asked about caps on PTO accrual. Bartlett responded that it depends on the years of service for accrual. Persky detailed the PTO cashout program, which allows staff to cash out remaining PTO twice a year if they retain eighty hours. The board commented on the county policies around PTO cashout. Short-term disability (STD) policies were also updated for staff to use PTO during the seven calendar days before STD starts. It is optional for staff to use PTO to supplement once STD starts. Jones asked if the board would be able to approve today instead of waiting until next month.

Discussed and reviewed. Motioned by Jones, second by Marchetti to accept the employee handbook. All voting yes, motion carried.

Nursing and Medical Director Report

Dr. Wile highlighted the information in the board report. Marchetti asked Dr. Wile about the current rates of COVID-19 cases. Dr. Wile responded that although an uptick is not being seen, many are hearing about an increase. Most are not tested at this point.

Dental Report

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Persky referred to the staff report by Emily Flowers to request a purchase of an autoclave with extra funding through the SEAL! program. The quotes were reviewed. Linderman asked where it would be located. Persky stated the basement or dental clinic depended on where the water hookup is.

Discussed and reviewed. Motioned by Jones, second by Marchetti to accept the autoclave purchase staff report. All voting yes, motion carried.

Environmental Health Report

Updates are discussed in the written report.

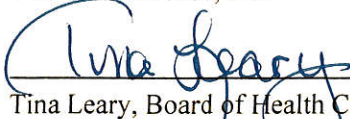
Health Promotions Report

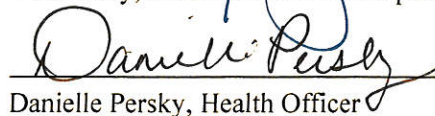
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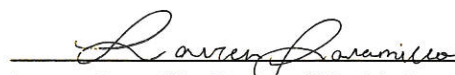
Persky thanked the Board of Health for their support in building an organization that is transparent. The continued support will bring more positive changes. Persky highlighted current discussions around public health childhood vaccination waivers and provided communication language for the board. With national and local conversations around vaccination waivers, Persky reminded all that waiver sessions are a public health tool where parents are positioned to make an active choice as opposed to a choice of convenience/passive choice. Jones asked for Persky's thoughts on employer waivers requiring individuals to select religious or medical exemptions for vaccinations. Persky noted that the health department's policy is along the same lines as the religious or medical exemptions, but there is no questioning of the reason once it is received. The health department may require employees to wear a mask if they do not have the vaccination. Going back to children's vaccinations, the schools need to meet a certain level of vaccination compliance, and the waiver is a part of that required percentage.

For public comment, Boyer asked why it is so critical to be vaccinated if the risk of getting the disease is on the unvaccinated, not the one that was vaccinated. Persky responded that although someone not being vaccinated may not affect someone who is vaccinated, it's for those who are medically vulnerable and unable to receive the vaccine. It's important to consider protecting the vulnerable. Tan noted her concern that children who are unable to be vaccinated and are wearing a mask may be singled out.

Motion to adjourn at 3:57pm by Jones, second by Marchetti. The next regular District Board of Health meeting is scheduled for October 8, at 3:00pm in the Van Buren ISD Conference Center at 490 S Paw Paw St. Lawrence, MI.


Tina Leary, Board of Health Chairperson


Danielle Persky, Health Officer


Lauren Jaramillo, Board of Health Secretary