

Van Buren/Cass District Health Department Minutes
02/11/2026

Chairperson Leary called the meeting to order at 3:00pm in the Van Buren/Cass District Health Department conference room at 260 South Street, Lawrence, MI on Wednesday, February 11, 2026. Roll call taken.

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

Employees present: Alisha Bartlett, Robin Cornejo, Cody Davis, Nancy Desai, George Friday, Ryan Hiemsath, Carrie Hiemstra, Lauren Jaramillo, Brian Lint, Corrine Taylor, Dr. Larry Wile in-person and Kelly Adkins, Julie Beeching, Danielle Persky, Myah Smith, Jennifer Zordan virtually

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

Persky welcomed and invited Wendling to introduce herself to the Board of Health as the recently approved member-at-large for Van Buren County.

Persky led a moment of silence in honor of Randall Peat, Van Buren County Commissioner and Board of Health member, who passed away on February 9, 2026.

Leary requested Board of Health Chairperson nominations. Gatties nominated Jones. Motioned by Leary and second by Marchetti. A roll call vote was taken. All voting yes, motion carried. The meeting was turned over to Chairperson Jones.

Jones requested Board of Health Vice-Chairperson nominations. Jones nominated Leary. Motioned by Gatties and second by Marchetti. A roll call vote was taken. All voting yes, motion carried.

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

Finance Director's Report

Desai reviewed the November and December summary of disbursements. Linderman asked if line item 14 is a yearly due. Desai answered yes, for representative purposes. Linderman asked if line item 808 was for both locations. Desai confirmed. Linderman requested information on the WorkEasy yearly purchase. Desai responded that in the future there potentially will be a change in time clock software to something that is more compatible with the accounting software. The benefit would also include staff access to past W-2s and payroll paystubs. Persky added that the benefits also expand to grant coding as staff are currently tracking this information on paper. More information will be formally brought to the Board of Health in the future. Desai remarked that an informal quote was provided at around \$6,000 for the initial implementation and a recurring yearly cost of \$2,000. Leary noted it is compatible with the existing time clocking software costs, which Desai agreed with. Linderman asked about the cell phone costs and if cell phones are used by staff within the office. Desai responded it can depend on if staff are out in the field using their phone versus staff at their desk with desk phones. Snow removal charges were discussed. Desai noted the health department is partnering with Van Buren Tech on snow removal.

Discussed and reviewed. Motioned by Linderman, second by Marchetti to accept the November and December summary of disbursements. All voting yes, motion carried.

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Expenditures Report

Desai reviewed the statement of revenues and expenditures. Desai noted the health department and dental department are on par with previous years. Linderman asked about decreases, which Desai noted is due to lagging in funding that came in after the quarter ended. Gatties asked if any impacts have been noted since changing the fee schedule and the dental business hours. Desai predicted that by June or July, there will be a better idea of the impacts financially.

Linderman asked if the offices were closed due to inclement weather in January. Persky stated the health department follows Van Buren and Cass County weather closures. The dental clinic provides challenges during closures, so Persky worked with dental department leadership to make sure patients were able to attend their dental appointments before making any decision. Jones gave his perspective as the chair of commissioners who works with the county road commission, sheriff's department, and administration to make the call during winter events. Linderman requested communication when the health department closes. Zordan provided closing alert sign-up information to interested board members. Persky noted the difficulty of making these decisions when staff live and work in different counties with such varying weather conditions. In the end, there were a few late starts and early releases, but no full day closing. Remote work was available for those whose role allows for that option.

Desai reviewed the last fiscal year-to-date documents. Overall, the health department has seen an increase in the fund balance, which will be used to balance out the dental operation deficit. Linderman asked why the dental operation has a deficit. Desai responded that our biggest cost factors are benefits, supplies, and staff salaries. To operate, the department needs a minimum amount of staffing. Revenue is also nearly all Medicaid based. The fee schedule update and business hour changes will hopefully show an outcome by the middle of the calendar year. Persky added that the loss of the state plan Medicaid amendment has pushed dental into the deficit ever since. The loss of the Mattawan location also had an impact on funds. Persky took this time to provide an update on the dental safety net coalition and one-time state funding. This funding is projected to be close to \$250,000 to \$300,000 allocated to VBCDHD. A problem that has been identified is the lack of a nonprofit designation for dental, which could make us ineligible for future funding and can have legal implications with lobbying. Persky and Desai have reviewed the option of a non-profit, but it is not a favorable option. It would require a unique governing body, cost of incorporation, and would make the dental clinic ineligible for county appropriations. Linderman asked about Dr. Malsbary's role and seeing financial benefits since his designation as Dental Director. Persky emphasized the value of the role, and his experience has supported the streamlining of processes and maximized billing opportunities.

Leary asked if it would be possible to run the year-to-date report with the budget percentages. Wendling agreed with the sentiment. Desai explained that it is not yet fully uploaded as it can cause issues in the system. Desai can instead give the budget to actual trends.

Administrator/Health Officer's Report

Persky referenced the January and February board reports for updates and acknowledged the acceptance of a \$25,000 grant to sunset the SNAP-Ed program. The health department also received a \$4,000 employee well-being grant. This funding is designated to improve employee morale and wellness. Linderman asked if the fitness center is used by staff. Persky confirmed and added that early morning

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gym access was adjusted for more open hours. Persky also highlighted the staff presentation schedule for each board meeting this calendar year. Persky moved to have Jones sign Dr. Wile's updated contract.

Nursing and Medical Director Report

Beeching deferred to the nursing board report for updates. Dr. Wile and Beeching welcomed the new nurse that will be starting in late February. The role will support immunization and communicable disease efforts.

Dr. Wile reviewed the updated CDC immunization guidelines and the recommended vaccination schedule for adults and children. He reviewed the background information relating to the CDC and American Academy of Pediatrics, recommendation to work with your health care provider to make medical decisions, and the rebuilding of trust in vaccines. Dr. Wile also reviewed the U.S. News and Reports rankings for Michigan and discussed looking into specific data for the district. Jones and Leary agreed that it would be helpful to have this local perspective.

Jones commented on the amount of illness going around. Dr. Wile noted that there are many factors that could be attributed to the increase. For example, the data may be tracked differently compared to previous decades, the percentage of children going to daycare, or the changes in diet.

Dental Report

Persky noted that Dr. Strickler's schedule has changed with her offering to do four full days, and other dentists have moved to splitting time between Lawrence and Dowagiac. The dentists were thanked for their flexibility that will increase billing opportunities.

Environmental Health Report

Ahead of the division presentation, Friday highlighted that this time of year is interesting. He highlighted the open internal position for Type II, indoor pool inspections, and springtime planning. There has been a noted increase in restaurant reviews with a large amount of ownership turnover.

Friday goes on to introduce his staff who will be presenting on the Residential and Type III Wells Onsite Wastewater Treatment Systems. Staff includes Davis, Lint, Taylor, Heimsath, Hiemstra, and Cornejo. The team has a combined of 120 years of experience throughout the health department. Davis leads the presentation describing how and why the work is necessary for the public health of the community. The presentation provided thoughtful discussions and questions by the board and guests. Davis invited the board to join any sanitarian out in the field to see the work firsthand.

Health Promotions Report

Updates are discussed in the written report.

Public Comment

Boyd appreciated the new agenda with the listing of names. Tan thanked staff for updating the Van Buren/Cass District Health Department website with the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS) link.

There was no other business.

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The meeting adjourned at 4:22pm. The next regular District Board of Health meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, March 11, 2026, at 3:00pm at the Van Buren/Cass District Health Department, 302 S. Front Street, Dowagiac MI in the Community Center.


Jeremiah Jones, Board of Health Chairperson


Danielle Persky, Health Officer


Latren Jaramillo, Board of Health Secretary