

Van Buren/Cass District Health Department Minutes
03/11/2026

Chair Jones called the meeting to order at 3:00pm. The meeting was held at the Van Buren/Cass District Health Department, 302 S. Front Street, Dowagiac MI in the Community Center on Wednesday, March 11, 2026. Roll call taken.

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

Employees present: Ellen Carr, Cody Davis, Nancy Desai, George Friday, Lauren Jaramillo, Dr. Andrew Malsbary, Caitlin McNair, Danielle Persky, Jessica Smith, Dr. Larry Wile in-person and Kelly Adkins, Diana Baker, Alisha Bartlett, Julie Beeching, Jennifer Zordan virtually

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

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

Persky began the meeting by reviewing the Board of Health bylaws, Article III, Section IV – Agenda. This section requires the board to follow a rigid agenda format with no alteration. Persky requested an amendment to strike this section as it restricts discussion abilities. Accompanying this request was a revamped agenda that highlighted requests from the board for staff report motions and financial report acceptance guidance. Eventually, Persky would like to review the bylaws as they have not been fully reviewed in several years. DiStefano asked about article V, Section II in relation to how to amend the bylaws with support from the local governing entity. Persky confirmed the next steps of moving forward on the amendment with the local governing entities, Van Buren and Cass County Commissioners.

A roll call vote was taken to motion for the removal of Article III, Section IV of the Board of Health bylaws. All voting yes, motion carried.

Finance Director's Report

Desai began by discussing item number four which was a payment to the State for \$88,214.00 after audit findings revealed that all grant funds for the Immunization Action Plan (IAP) grant for FY 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 were not spent in its entirety as reported. Now that it has been paid, the issue is resolved. Leary asked where the refund was pulled from. Desai responded that it was from the general fund as that is likely where the unused funds were deposited into. Linderman asked if anything was put in writing by the State that it has been resolved, which Desai confirmed. Linderman asked how the rent concerns have been going. The rent costs for the Lawrence building have increased to \$19,000 from \$15,000 since construction, with no explanation from the Northern Health Foundation. Desai has connected with the health department's attorneys to make progress with cooperation with the Northern Health Foundation.

Desai then reviewed the summary of disbursements for January 2026. Linderman asked about the variation in snow removal costs. Desai responded that in her conversations with the ISD, it was cost-effective to pay for snow removal and salting per occurrence. Desai explained that in the past when there was a contractual agreement, the snowfall was low, and the HD was bound to the agreed upon cost. Linderman shared concern about the varying cost. Desai confirmed that the individual invoices go into more detail on the costs; the plow is a flat cost, but it's the cost of how much salt needs to be distributed per occurrence that makes it vary. Jones provided information on a slurry, which is a cheaper solution with sand. Gatties noted the liability concerns of not plowing and salting.

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

Desai passed the meeting to Adkins and Bowman, who is the health department's IT consultant, to review the IT staff report to replace phone systems. Adkins noted the current system will no longer be supported in the near future, so her and Bowman have reviewed four options for replacement. The recommendation is to move forward with the 3CX cloud-based phone system with SIP service through CallCentric. This system will be a significant improvement with enhanced call routing, higher call volumes, answering ability through multiple devices, and easier phone management. The implementation is factored into the Public Health Infrastructure Grant (PHIG) for the fiscal year and will not exceed \$10,000 as a part of this request.

Gatties discussed being cautious about the operational cost guarantees with it being cloud based. She recommended looking over the contract and confirming their operational guaranteed percentage. Bowman confirmed that the guarantee is at 98% and the hosting centers are across the globe. At this point, the fiber connection between the two buildings is ideal, but it may be impacted if this changes. Jones noted the county's experience with this company and the ease of redundant switches, which Bowman confirmed would occur in the health department's case as well.

Persky noted she will review the contract and review the operational guaranteed percentage in relation to hours per year. Persky moved to discuss the PHIG tracking and explanation document in the board packet. The purpose of the grant is to improve public health infrastructure, which started in 2023 and will end in 2027.

Discussed and reviewed. Motioned by Linderman, second by Gatties to approve the 3CX Phone System Implementation report, which authorizes the health department to enter into an agreement with CallCentric SIP service and approves one-time set-up costs not to exceed \$10,000. All voting yes, motion carried.

Administrator/Health Officer's Report

Persky led the board in an introduction as the board welcomed DiStefano to the board. Persky then updated the board on the firearm safety grant. All special work projects, which included this grant, have been halted until a legislative review is completed. There is a directive that two weeks have been given for this review, but little information has been released on what to do with already signed media contracts or purchased gun safes and trigger locks. Although this program will not affect the bottom line, it takes time to organize, develop, and lead grant-based programs. This emphasizes the difficulty of navigating unexpected changes to federal and state budgets in the present. Persky confirmed that Health Promotions is ready to continue on this project, but she has connected with partners that would also be able to use the gun safes and trigger locks. Linderman asked how many gun safes were purchased and Zordan confirmed 200 lockboxes and trigger locks. There is a return window, but the team is waiting to hear on the legislative review before moving forward.

Persky continued by giving updates on the statewide septic code being brought before legislation and the discussion around data centers. The statewide septic code, Senate bill 771, has been reviewed in previous years, but has not moved forward. MALPH testified on behalf of local health departments to give the

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consensus that health departments are open to dialogue, but further details need to be reviewed. The code would lead to millions of dollars in increased costs statewide but only a six percent increase in funding.

Persky has also been working with the City of Dowagiac and the state Environmental Health team to research noise ordinance in relation to data centers. This is at the precipice of the legal discussion around St. Clair County and renewable energy. The state's passing of PA 233 has left many local government leaders with unresolved questions, and Persky is wanting to support them through any challenges. At this time, the state is leading a literature review, but Persky offered to connect any local leader with the state for further discussion. Jones and Marchetti reviewed what tools and education Cass County is providing to their townships and cities. The county is hosting a zoning consultant through the University of Michigan for an upcoming education session about data centers.

Persky reviewed updates on the critical access dental safety net. The one-time budget item from last year will soon be available to the health department. Final estimates are at \$114,000 with expected release of funding next month. This year also brings accreditation from the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) Local Health Services and Michigan Public Health Institute (MPHI) teams. Accreditors will be onsite in October for a week with Environmental Health having accreditors onsite earlier in the year.

Persky moved to discuss the building renovations staff report. This aligns with the discussion earlier on the PHIG grant as that is where this financing would come from. The project would consist of beneficial changes in both Lawrence and Dowagiac based on a space analysis done in September 2024. This initial request is to start the schematic drawings with Tower Pinkster and AVB, not for the approval to start construction. The deadline for work is September 2027, and both groups were amenable to this. Projects include making room for Environmental Health to move upstairs in Dowagiac, nursing refrigeration storage improvements, safety concerns for the front desk of dental services in Lawrence, and general projects to support the growth of the organization. This includes expanding the onsite conference room. Jones asked if offsite meeting spaces have included fees. Persky noted that the Van Buren Conference Room does not, but other spaces along with food do create nominal fees. Linderman requested to wait on approval of this staff report. After further discussion of the deadline, space analysis, and cost, it was decided to move forward. Motioned by Linderman and second by Gatties to approve the building renovations staff report, which authorizes the health department to enter into an agreement with Tower Pinkster, not to exceed \$20,000 and with AVB, not to exceed \$5,400 for a total project cost not to exceed \$25,400. All voting yes, motion carried.

Nursing and Medical Director Report

Dr. Wile described the importance of spring break cleaning to prevent illnesses such as influenza, which can remain on surfaces for 48 hours. He also noted the first case of measles in the state of Michigan. Contact tracing has begun. Dr. Wile also added that several tuberculosis (TB) cases have been identified. The difficulty comes when the budget has been cut to \$200 a year while it takes many hours each week for communicable disease nurses to complete follow-up with long-term treatment requirements.

Dental Report

Dr. Malsbary began by reviewing the Curve dental practice management software staff report. The current software being used is outdated and nearly to the end of life with no ability to upgrade. This

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cloud-based platform will improve the staff and patient experience with streamlined processes and access. This includes not having to complete documentation on paper then reviewing to add to the computer with the patient afterwards. Linderman asked if Dr. Malsbary is familiar with the program. Dr. Malsbary noted that he has not had personal experience, but they have attended demos of the product. Gatties asked what the transfer of medical records looks like, especially in the case of needing to pull all records after the transfer. Dr. Malsbary responded the transfer is simple with the ability to download records afterwards if needed. Gatties asked if current x-ray equipment is compatible, which Malsbary confirmed. This software is native to the Dexis equipment used. Gatties recommended making sure that the migration of data does not also transfer the ownership of the data. Dr. Malsbary agreed and further reviewed options if the operating system does not work for the health department, the data can be migrated with support from the Curve team. The conversion process looked efficient based on the demos.

Gatties asked what the implementation timeline looks like. Adkins responded it will likely be in June across six to eight weeks. Gatties asked if it is manual data conversion. Dr. Malsbary responded it will be Curve who handles the transfer with minimal need for manual input. Added is that based on the conversations, Curve has excellent customer service to benefit the transfer. Linderman thanked Gatties for her questions about this software request. Motioned by Gatties and second by DiStefano to approve the installation of Curve dental practice management software staff report, which authorizes the Health Department to proceed with the installation at a one-time implementation cost not to exceed \$8,200 and a monthly subscription cost of \$1,799. All voting yes, motion carried.

Environmental Health Report

Updates are discussed in the written report.

The program perspective series continued with a presentation about the environmental health food service program from McNair, Carr, and Smith as well as a presentation about the vector, beach monitoring, public pools, and campgrounds programs from Carr and Davis.

The food service program discussed the importance of the program to prevent foodborne illness, education, and enforcement of the Michigan Modified Food Code. Everyday challenges are the public perception of inspections and balancing enforcement with education. DiStefano asked about the protocol for temporary food licensing if critical violations are seen. McNair and Smith confirmed that yes, the goal with any inspection is to prevent community-wide illness. Friday shared that there has not been a foodborne illness outbreak since 2019 due to the due diligence of health department staff. Leary asked how many restaurants are reviewed regularly. Friday and Davis confirmed there are 492 licensed restaurants that are reviewed in-person frequently.

Persky thanked McNair for allowing administration to shadow one of their inspections. It was a testament to the program and McNair for her knowledge of the code and ability to educate the restaurant on necessary corrections.

The vector, beach monitoring, public pools, and campground programs first reviewed the vector and beach monitoring programs. The vector program covers the surveillance of tick and mosquito populations with the goal of monitoring for transmission activity. Carr described her work when collecting ticks and mosquitoes. DiStefano asked if the corduroy that is used to collect ticks is easy to work with. Carr confirmed it is, but she will often walk 10,000 feet to have a full container of ticks.

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Leary asked what the next steps are for the ticks and mosquitoes captured. Carr explained that both vectors are sent to MDHHS, then sent to different laboratories for testing. It takes much longer to receive results on ticks, but in theory if something comes back positive, a press release would be sent out. With these results, the program can provide signage or recommendations to schools or communities. Carr also provides outreach to schools and noted how educated the kids are on the dangers of mosquitoes and ticks.

Davis provided information on the public pool and campground programs. There are 57 licensed campgrounds and 79 public pools among both counties. The board thanked Friday, Davis, McNair, Carr, and Smith for their presentations.

Health Promotions Report

Updates are discussed in the written report.

Other Business


Linderman provided a handout to the board. This handout was an article sharing Berrien County Health Department's current budget with projections and allocations. Persky discussed the disparity in funding such as with the Michigan Rural Health Transformation Program. She has applied to be on the advisory council of this program. Marchetti agreed with the difficulty of funding and access and asked if Persky would like a letter of support to benefit her application. At this time, a letter of support is not needed, but Persky will continue to advocate for the health department. Wendling noted the hospital system is being impacted by this program as well. Linderman also confirmed his concern with budgeting disparities.

There was no public comment.

Motion to adjourn at 4:49pm. The next regular District Board of Health meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, April 8, 2026, at 3:00pm, Van Buren Cass District Health Department at 260 South Street, Lawrence, MI in the Conference Room.


Jeremiah Jones, Board of Health Chairperson


Danielle Persky, Health Officer


Lauren Jaramillo, Board of Health Secretary