

**Western U.P. Board of Health
Health Department Office
408 Copper Street Ontonagon, MI 49953
Virtual "Google Meet"
Monday, May 22, 2023**

Minutes

Opening

Chair Rajala opened the meeting at 6:04 p.m. (EST). Present were R. Britz, B. Dakota, G. Eilola, J. Keranen, R. Nousiainen, and D. Rajala. Absent was G. Anderson, J. Byrns, J. Cane, R. DeMarois, and D Siirila. Also, in attendance were Kate Beer, Health Officer/Administrator; Dr Robert Van Howe, Medical Director; and Pete Baril, Deputy Health Officer & Director of Community Planning; There were 4 people virtually in attendance as audience.

Chair Rajala requested action on the agenda. This action followed:

Motion: Nousiainen/second Dakota to approve the agenda as presented. Motion carried on roll call vote, all voting yes.

Chair Rajala asked for public comment, and one person spoke.

Karen Timonen commented on the FDA notice regarding COVID-19 vaccines.

Minutes of the March 27, 2023 meeting were reviewed and approved with this action:

Motion: Keranen/second Eilola to approve the minutes of the March 27, 2023 Board of Health meeting as prepared. Motion carried on roll call vote, all voting yes.

The board reviewed expenditures for the months of April & May 2023, leading to this action:

Motion: Britz/second Keranen to approve the general expenditures for the period 3/17/2023 to 05/11/2023, voucher # 13, voucher # 14, voucher # 15 and voucher # 16 in the amount of \$190, 239.37. Carried on roll call vote, all voting yes.

Reports

Kate Beer, Health Officer:

Michigan Tech reached out and we extended our nursing internship program to them as they open up a nursing program and begin accepting former Finlandia students.

We have entered into an agreement with UPCAP to work together to develop and market immunization clinics for the elderly.

The state has initiated a \$5 million well-testing fund. Tanya Rule is making arrangements for citizens in our community to receive free well water testing through this grant. We will most likely work through White Water to accomplish this. Those wishing to have their water tested will be directed to an EGLE website and a test kit will be sent to them.

MALEHA and MALPH are working through language in the currently proposed well and septic bills recently proposed in the state legislature. In general, the concept of the bills is supported, however, there is not a reasonable time frame or suitable funding for local health departments to take on this role. There is also concern over the ability of citizens to repair or replace systems that are found to be failing.

A grant has been renewed through MALPH for employee wellness. Managers are working through ways to spend the \$4,000 award to boost employee morale.

We have been approved for additional funding from NorthCare in the amount of \$310,650. The money will help extend our jail-based programming, expand peer recovery services, and assist people with sober living options.

The current year's budget remains in flux. Additional funding of just over \$900,000 has been added so far this year. The health department's ability to spend all of this funding will depend somewhat on increasing staff positions or hiring additional staff.

Dr Robert Van Howe, Medical Director:

Shortages of basic medications continues to be an issue. Just recently, Bicillin LA became in short supply. This injectable form of penicillin is used as a single shot to treat syphilis. This is on the heels of shortages reported for two of the antibiotics that are used as first line agents to treat tuberculosis. Other essential medications that have been in our arsenal for decades often fade in and out of availability. Pharmacists, especially those providing medications to intensive care units, spend a great deal of time hunting for and hoarding simple medications that keep our sickest patients alive. This has been going on for over a decade. On the other end, some of the simplest generic medications now cost a fortune. One example, VoSol HC otic drops is vinegar with some hydrocortisone in it. It used to treat swimmer's ear. It used to be about \$5 to \$10 a bottle. Now it costs over \$100 a bottle. Another example is the rabies immunoglobulin used for animal bites. The State of Michigan used to make its own. In a shift to economize, the state sold the rights to make the product to a private company, which subsequently stopped making it. Now it costs about \$3000 or more. We used to get it for free.

There are several ways to address the problem. One is to monitor supplies and supply chains more carefully. Another is having reserves available. My solution is to have all generics manufactured in the United States. This is a problem that is not going away, but the issue has caught the attention of Senator Peters who talked about it in his taped address to the UPHCS Trustee Forum. Hopefully, his attention will be translated into legislative action.

Old Business

Kate Beer provided an update on the Gogebic Office space.

New Business

The board reviewed the Financial Audit – year ending 9/30/2022, leading to this action:

Motion: Dakota/Eilola second to approve the Financial Audit – year ending 9/30/2022 as presented.
Carried on roll call, all voting yes.

The board reviewed the Accident/Incident Report – 1st Quarter 2023, leading to this action:

Motion: Keranen/second Eilola to approve the Accident/Incident Report – 1st Quarter 2023 as presented. Carried on roll call, all voting yes.

The board discussed purchasing vehicles for Health Department general use, leading to this action:

Motion: Keranen/second Eilola to approve spending up to \$125,000 on vehicles for Health Department general use as discussed. Carried on roll call, all voting yes.

Other

With no other business, Chair Rajala set the next meeting for 6:00 pm (EST), June 26, 2023, in person at the health department office in Hancock and also available via Google Meet.

Chair Rajala then asked for public comment and heard from no one.

Adjourn

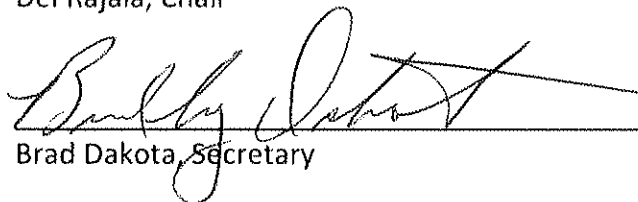
The final motion occurred at 7:21 p.m.

Motion: Britz/second Nousiainen to adjourn at 7:21 p.m. Carried on roll call vote, all voting yes.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Del Rajala", written over a horizontal line.

Del Rajala, Chair

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brad Dakota", written over a horizontal line.

Brad Dakota, Secretary

Prepared by Kate Beer
KB/jh