

**Western U.P. Board of Health
Health Department Office
210 N. Moore Street Bessemer, MI 49911
Monday, July 28, 2025**

Minutes

Opening

Chair Anderson opened the meeting at 6:00 p.m. (EST). Present were G. Anderson, R. Britz, J. Cane, J. Cayer, B. Dakota, R. Nousiainen, and M. Yon. Absent was R. DeMarois, J. Keranen, W. Menge, and D. Rajala. Also, in attendance were Cathryn Beer, Health Officer/Administrator; Dr Robert Van Howe, Medical Director; Cari DiGiorgio, Public Health Director; and Julie Heikkinen, Administrative/HR Assistant. There was no one present in attendance as audience.

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

Motion: Nousiainen/second Britz to approve the agenda with the addition of 12a. Closed Session to discuss succession planning for key staff. Motion carried on voice vote, all ayes.

Chair Anderson asked for public comment, no one spoke.

Minutes of the June 23, 2025 meeting were reviewed. This action followed:

Motion: Cane/second Britz to approve the minutes of the June 23, 2025 Board of Health meeting. Motion carried on voice vote, all ayes.

The board reviewed expenditures for the period: 06/19/2025 to 07/17/2025, leading to this action:

Motion: Nousiainen/second Cane to approve the general expenditures for the period 06/19/2025 to 07/17/2025, voucher # 20 and voucher # 21 in the amount of \$119,914.88. Carried on voice vote, all ayes.

Reports:

Kate Beer, Health Officer:

Personnel/Programs

Carol Waisanen retired July 2, 2025, with 32 years of service—best wishes to her on her next adventure. Hiring for a full-time replacement is ongoing.

Last week, we offered the EH Director position to G. Shane Lewis. Mr. Lewis accepted our offer on Friday. Shane is from Montana and was interviewed both online and in person. We anticipate that Shane will join the team before October 31st.

The regional lab underwent an accreditation visit for approval to process water samples in the new water lab. After some delay in getting the report, we are happy to announce that with a few minor corrections, we will be able to run water samples in the next few weeks.

The process of transferring the federal grant from Houghton County to the WUPHD is ongoing. Notice was received today that there are additional reporting requirements now tied to the grant.

Financials:

Financials for the month ended June 30th, 2025, show a year-to-date net loss of \$38,207. Some revenues are lagging; however, expenses are in line with the budget.

We had hoped to have a revised budget today; however, budget changes are still occurring. Additional funding has been received from the state to cover the previously approved autoclave for the lab. The lab has also received new funding of \$75,000 from the Michigan Health Endowment Fund to help bridge the gap in lost federal grants. Some of the immunization grants that were paused have been restored.

News received last week indicates that the SNAP education program will be discontinued. We are anticipating a stop date by August 31st. This will impact two full-time employees.

Other:

We are exploring working with OHM to design plans for remodeling in the Bessemer office. Landscaping is being done around the Hancock building.

~ Robert Van Howe, Medical Director:

As part of the Upper Peninsula Community Health Needs Assessment, residents across the region have been asked to prioritize a number of health-related issues. In 2017 and 2021, sixteen issues were evaluated and in 2024, fourteen of the same issues were evaluated. Over these three surveys the percentage of respondents who responded “very important – should be a priority” to the issue “shortage of dentists or lack of affordable dental care,” has increased substantially, from 30.3% in 2017 to 51.7% in 2024. This included an increase from 23.6% in 2021 to 57.1% in 2024 in Baraga County, an increase from 32.7% in 2017 to 68.0% in 2024 in Gogebic County, an increase from 26.6% in 2017 to 57.6% in Houghton/Keweenaw Counties, and increase from 32.3% in 2017 to 53.2% in 2024 in Ontonagon County.

The percentage who reported the lack of a dentist as a barrier to receiving dental care for the Upper Peninsula increased from 7.4% in 2017 to 17.5% in 2021 to 23.7% in 2024. In 2017 the range for counties served by the Western Upper Peninsula Health Department was from 3.1% to 8.7%. In 2024 the range was 19.5% to 32.1%, a three-fold to nine-fold increase.

The percentages vary substantially by county as local dental care access has been impacted by dentists retiring, leaving their practice, and an inability to recruit replacements. There is also an acute shortage of dental hygienists in our region. Currently, access to dental care is one of the region’s highest public health priorities.

Old Business

There was no old business to discuss.

New Business

The board reviewed the Accident/Incident Report – 2nd Quarter 2025 which led to this action:

Motion: Yon/second Cayer to approve the Accident/Incident Report – 2nd Quarter 2025 as presented. Carried on voice vote, all ayes.

Beer provided the board with an update on the FY2025 Budget Amendment #1.

Other

Chair Anderson set the next meeting for 6:00 pm (EST), August 25, 2025, in person at the health department office in L'Anse and also available via Google Meet.

Chair Anderson then asked for public comment, no one spoke.

Members acted to move to closed session for the next agenda item, as follows:

Motion: Cayer/second Nousiainen to resolve to move into closed session at 7:01 p.m.; for the sole purpose of discussing succession planning for key staff. Motion carried on voice vote, all ayes.

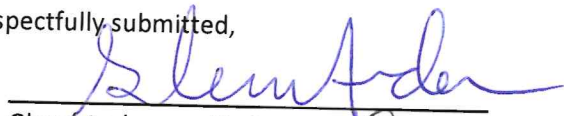
The board moved back to open session at 7:18 p.m. on proper motion, second, and vote (Cane/Dakota). All members were present when open session resumed.

Adjourn

The final motion occurred at 7:18 p.m.

Motion: Cane/second Dakota to adjourn at 7:18 p.m. Carried on voice vote, all ayes.

Respectfully submitted,



Glenn Anderson, Chair



Brad Dakota, Secretary

Prepared by Kate Beer
KB/jh