

**Western U.P. Board of Health  
Health Department Office  
540 Depot Street Hancock, MI 49930  
Monday, March 30, 2026**

**Minutes**

Opening

Chair Dakota opened the meeting at 6:01 p.m. (EST). Present were R. Britz, J. Cane, B. Dakota, W. Menge, R. Nousiainen, D. Rajala, and M. Yon. Absent was G. Anderson, J. Cayer, R. DeMarois, and J. Keranen. Also, in attendance were Pete Baril, Health Officer/Administrator; Dr Robert Van Howe, Medical Director; Roy Manninen, Director of Finance; and Julie Heikkinen, Administrative/HR Assistant. There were 2 people present online as audience.

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

Motion: Yon/second Rajala to approve the agenda with the addition of 9c. Letter of Support, City of Hancock and 10d. Union Bay Beach Discussion. Motion carried on voice vote, all ayes.

Chair Dakota asked for public comment, one person spoke.

- Karen Timonen, Chassell – commented on a standing order regarding COVID-19 & MMR injections from Governor Whitmer. She questioned if the public was aware of this information.

Minutes of the February 23, 2026 meeting were reviewed. This action followed:

Motion: Cane/second Nousiainen to approve the minutes of the February 23, 2026 Board of Health meeting. Motion carried on voice vote, all ayes.

The board reviewed expenditures for the period: 02/13/2026 to 03/12/2026, leading to this action:

Motion: Yon/second Menge to approve the general expenditures for the period 02/13/2026 to 03/12/2026, voucher # 11 and voucher # 12 in the amount of \$88,395.50. Carried on roll call vote, all voting yes.

Reports:

Pete Baril, Health Officer:

Personnel/Programs:

Activity since last meeting – None

Current Openings - None

Unions:

Working with the AFSCME union on potentially placing the Environmental Health Analyst position back into the union as the duties of the position have a significant amount of overlap with sanitarians. This was a new title and we were unsure of how it would play out so we initially petitioned to have it removed from the union. This change would impact one employee.

Facilities:

Received revised specs from OHM for Gogebic County General Building Improvements - \$150K price tag, down from initial estimate of \$250K.

General:

Sent GIS data request as noted during last month's meeting, heard from Baraga County – awaiting new data set in May, and Ontonagon County - quoted \$1,475 for access. Have not heard from Houghton, Keweenaw or Gogebic.

Making good progress on the website upgrades, consultants have provided us with mockups and we are happy with the look of the new site, now the real work of migrating all the data, pages, functions, etc., has begun. Still limping along with the old site, everything is still working provided we don't make too many changes or try to import documents larger than one page.

Signed final termination of our SNAP-Ed agreement, marks the closure of a long-standing program.

Have denied one food service establishment renewal of their license. Henrys Inn of Rockland has fallen on hard times for the ownership and the condition of the facility. Long history with Henrys and has a legacy in Rockland, however, the current conditions warrant the denial of license. Extended the opportunity to anyone wishing to bring the establishment back into compliance to go through the plan review process and renew the license after demonstrating ability to operate the establishment within the guidelines set forth by the Michigan Food Law.

The laboratory is pleased to announce the successful validation of our first laboratory developed test (LDT). LDTs are diagnostic tests that are not commercially manufactured, but instead, are developed, validated and performed in-house by individual laboratories. They range from routine tests such as blood counts to more complex molecular and genetic tests for cancer, heart disease, and rare and infectious diseases. LDTs are critical in providing timely patient access to accurate and high-quality testing for many conditions for which no commercial tests exist or where an existing test does not meet current clinical needs. Currently, there are no commercially available laboratory tests to identify measles infection in its early stages. Western UP Regional Public Health Lab has successfully adapted the Centers for Disease Control protocol to detect measles via molecular methods. Through a months-long study, staff have demonstrated successful performance of the CDC measles PCR assay in our laboratory conditions. We are currently the only lab in the Upper Peninsula capable of performing measles testing via PCR. Michigan Bureau of Laboratories and South Carolina Public Health Laboratory provided positive patient samples to assist in completion of this study.

Dr Robert Van Howe, Medical Director:

Kratom, which comes from the leaves of the *mitragyna speciosa* tree has been drawing attention lately. It is known for mild stimulant effects from mitragynine and trace amounts of 7-Hydroxymitragynine (7-OH). While the tree leaves had been traditionally used, more potent and synthetic version of kratom are now widely available. The concentration and potency of these unregulated products vary widely, creating a false sense of safety for consumers and increasing public health risks.

Kratom contains approximately 40 alkaloids that bind to opioid receptors in the brain. At low doses it provides a stimulant effect. At higher doses it has opioid effects. When the concentrated and synthetic forms are used with other substances, overdose risk increases. Synthetic kratom also carries the risk of addiction and severe withdrawal symptoms such as anxiety, irritability, restlessness, insomnia, fatigue, gastrointestinal distress, muscle aches, chills, and runny nose. Its use can result in higher doses of bupronorphine being needed for those being treated for opioid addiction.

The annual number of reported exposures cases in Michigan increased in 2025, which included 69 children. While not approved by the Food and Drug Administration for medical use, people report using kratom products to self-manage pain, anxiety, fatigue, and opioid withdrawal symptoms. Regular use of 7-OH-enhanced kratom products can lead to dependence and withdrawal, overdoses resulting in seizures, other serious health events, and death.

Kratom and 7-OH products are widely available in gas stations, smoke shops, convenience stores and online marketplaces, often marketed as natural, herbal, and caffeine-free energy boosters. Kratom can be in beverages, powders, capsules, wellness drinks, gummies, candies, liquid shots, or extracts. Serious adverse events can occur, including: seizures, agitation, hallucinations, mood changes, increased heart rate, hypertension or other cardiac symptoms. 7-OH-enhanced kratom products can interfere with certain antidepressants and antipsychotics, medications for anxiety or sleep, some heart medications, pain medications.

Currently, legislation has been introduced to ban these products.

#### Old Business

There was no old business to discuss.

#### New Business

The board reviewed the Travel Immunization Fees as presented, leading to this action:

Motion: Rajala/second Cane to approve the Travel Immunization Fees as presented. Carried on voice vote, all ayes.

The board reviewed the Ontonagon Lease Addendum # 1, leading to this action:

Motion: Yon/second Rajala to approve Addendum # 1 to Lease 11745-2016 between WUPHD and the State of Michigan for the office space at 408 Copper Street in Ontonagon; and to authorize Pete Baril as the signatory on behalf of the agency. Carried on voice vote, all ayes.

The board reviewed the Letters of Support for the City of Hancock, leading to this action:

Motion: Cane/second Rajala to approve and sign the Letters of Support as presented. Carried on roll call vote, all voting yes.

### Other

The board discussed the procedures & timeline for the Health Officer and Medical Director Reviews.

The board discussed the process for reviewing and approving a high volume of policies.

The board discussed a public complaint about Union Bay Beach.

With no other business, Chair Dakota set the next meeting for 6:00 pm (EST), April 27, 2026, in person at the health department office in L'Anse and also available via Google Meet.

Chair Dakota then asked for public comment, one person spoke.

- Karen Timonen, Chassell - She thanked the board for making the agenda available on the agency's website.

### Adjourn

The final motion occurred at 7:12 p.m.

Motion: Menge/second Nousiainen to adjourn at 7:12 p.m. Carried on voice vote, all ayes.

Respectfully submitted,



Brad Dakota, Chair



William Menge, Secretary

Prepared by Pete Baril  
PB/jh