Western U.P. Board of Health
Health Department Office
303 Baraga Avenue L'Anse, MI 49946
Monday, August 24, 2026

Minutes

Opening

Chair Dakota opened the meeting at 6:00 p.m. (EST). Present were G. Anderson, R. Britz, J. Cane, B. Dakota, W. Menge, R. Nousiainen, D. Rajala, and M. Yon. Absent were 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 was no one present in person or online as audience.

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

> Motion: Cane/second Nousiainen to approve the agenda as presented. Motion carried on voice vote, all ayes.

Chair Dakota asked for public comment, no one spoke.

Minutes of the July 27, 2026 meeting were reviewed. This action followed:

> Motion: Yon/second Rajala to approve the minutes of the July 27, 2026 Board of Health meeting. Motion carried on voice vote, all ayes.

The board reviewed expenditures for the period: 07/17/2026 to 08/13/2026, leading to this action:

> Motion: Nousiainen/second Yon to approve the general expenditures for the period 07/17/2026 to 08/13/2026, voucher #22 and voucher #23 in the amount of $213,083.36. Carried on roll call vote, all voting yes.

Reports:

Pete Baril, Health Officer:

Staffing
We welcomed a new public health clerk in Gogebic County to replace a staff member who left employment, this role has changed from full time to part time.

Other
We are working with a hazardous waste hauler to dispose of Mercury that we have collected, we may have to discontinue collection of certain mercury containing items, primarily ones that are not thermometers and

thermostats due to the hazardous nature of the items, our ability to store them properly, and the cost of disposal.

Colorado update – the truck involved in a recent accident was considered totaled by insurance company, plan to make a purchase with insurance funds from Keweenaw chevy. We obtained quotes from Keweenaw Chevy and two dealerships downstate using our MI-Deal contract. Considering delivery fees Keweenaw Chevy offered an acceptable quote.

Gogebic office construction update, moving toward final plan review and bidding. Displacement for up to three months will be a significant disruption and initial planning for that has begun.

Eagle Harbor Township – townhall meeting. Baril and Lewis attended, about 60 in attendance, good discussion on current state and future wastewater needs of the township.

Keweenaw County Building permits, 2 issued this summer without sewage permits, have reached out to permit clerk and will continue discussion with building inspector to ensure sequence of permitting has not changed via policy or procedure changes.
Discussed Village of L'Anse storm water outfall, communication with EGLE, Village, and efforts to collect samples to identify sources of E. coli in storm water.

Discussed Baraga County Health Dept office, underutilization and problems with staffing the office appropriately for the level of demand. Will be working on some different models and patterns over the next month and will report back to the board next month.

Updated the Board on the Legendary Tales Barrel and Brewpub plan review process.

Dr Robert Van Howe, Medical Director:

In mid-July, the counties of the Upper Peninsula were under a cloud of smoke from fires in Ontario and Minnesota. The frequency and intensity of forest fires have increased as a consequence of climate change leading to hotter, drier conditions. Some of the fires in the remotest parts of Minnesota are expected to continue to burn until the snow falls.

The density of smoke was highest in the Upper Peninsula, resulting in alerts to remain indoors and wear N-95, KN-95, and P100 masks. Those at greatest health risk include people with lung disease, heart disease, 60 years of age or older, pregnant, and children.

Fine particulate matter (PM2.5), because of their small size, can get deep into the lungs where they disrupt the lining of air sacs. This results in oxidative stress, inflammation, cellular injury and interference with the ability of the lungs to clear foreign materials. The PM2.5 are absorbed into the bloodstream and distributed throughout the body impacting the function, and leading to disease, in the central nervous system, the thyroid gland, the heart, the kidneys, the liver, the intestines, the pancreas, the placenta (if pregnant), abdominal the reproductive organs. PM2.5 are also mutagenic, increasing the risk of cancer.

During the air quality alert, I was contacted by several in the local media wanting to know how seriously to take the situation. My response was "very seriously." Time to pull out any masks left over from COVID.

Old Business

The board discussed the FY2027 County Allocation Schedule.

New Business

The board reviewed FY2026 Budget Amendment #2, which led to this action:

> Motion: Cane/second Menge to approve FY2026 Budget Amendment #2 as presented. Carried on roll call vote, all voting yes.

The board reviewed the Fiscal Year 2027 Budget, which led to this action:

> Motion: Yon/second Rajala to approve the Fiscal Year 2027 Budget as presented. Carried on roll call vote, all voting yes.

Baril presented a request from Baraga County Memorial Hospital to park a mobile healthcare unit at the Ontonagon County health department office. Drafting a contract to manage liability will be needed to advance the arrangement.

The board reviewed the MCHD Agreement – Registered Dietician, which led to this action:

> Motion: Rajala/second Nousiainen to table the MCHD Agreement – Registered Dietician. Carried on voice vote, all ayes.

The board reviewed the Fund Balance Policy, which led to this action:

> Motion: Cane/second Anderson to approve the Fund Balance Policy as presented. Carried on voice vote, all ayes.

The board reviewed the Capital Asset Policy, which led to this action:

> Motion: Yon/second Nousiainen to approve the Capital Asset Policy as presented. Carried on voice vote, all ayes.

Other

With no other business, Chair Dakota set the next meeting for 6:00 pm (EST), September 28, 2026, in person at the health department office in Hancock and available via Google Meet.

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

Adjourn

The final motion occurred at 7:20 p.m.

Motion: Menge/second Anderson to adjourn at 7:20 p.m. Carried on voice vote, all ayes.

Respectfully submitted,

Brad Dakota, Chair

William Menge, Secretary

Prepared by Pete Baril
PB/jh