



## Northeast District Department of Health

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69 South Main Street, Unit 4, Brooklyn, CT 06234  
860-774-7350 / Fax 860-774-1308 [www.nddh.org](http://www.nddh.org)

### Finance Committee Meeting Minutes 2/17/22

Start Time: 3:05 p.m.

Attendance: Elaine Lippke (Finance Chair), Robert Kelleher, Luther Thurlow, Nate Swift, Orla McKiernan-Raftery and Melissa Nichols.

Absent: Susan Starkey (DoH) and Dr. Gail Dickenson

No Public participation.

#### Meeting Minutes-January 27, 2022

Motion made by L. Thurlow to approve the minutes of the January 27, 2022 meeting. Seconded by R. Kelleher. All in favor. Motion carried (4-0-0).

Orla arrived at 3:14pm via ZOOM.

#### YTD Financial Report (January 2022)

M. Nichols reviewed the January report. NDDH is seven months (59%) into FY22 budget. YTD Finance Report – income is at 107% of the budget and we have collected 70% of Permits/Registration fees income. NDDH is considered a Reimbursable Employer and saves \$17,000-\$25,000 per year by paying unemployment claims as they are filed versus a percentage rate determined annually by the State of Connecticut Department of Labor. The current claim filed has the potential liability of \$18K. NDDH has paid \$8,400 of the claim. NDDH has \$5K in the Unemployment Reserve Account and an additional \$27K in the Compensation/Fringe Reserve Account. We have money, if needed, to make balance transfers at the end of the fiscal year.

E. Lippke inquired about those employees hired under the grant, asking if we would be responsible for unemployment benefits once they leave. M. Nichols advised that any employee, regardless of how they are funded, would be eligible for unemployment unless they were hired as a contractor under 1099.

B. Kelleher mentioned that we had the potential for a lot of liability. E. Lippke asked if it was possible to have the unemployment compensation funding be part of the grant. M. Nichols will investigate this but thinks the money must be expended *before* the grant ends, not after. M. Nichols will share the committee's concerns with S. Starkey.

Consulting fees (encompassing attorney expenses, auditor fees, payroll company charges, service fees and outsourcing) is \$20K in January. E. Lippke requested that consulting fees/service expense category be itemized for the committee to see each individual cost starting February 2022 YTD report. Finance Committee continues to review what has been spent on overtime expenses.

R. Kelleher spoke with a restaurant business owner who noted that NDDH is good at collecting fees but had not done inspections in a year. He expressed concern that NDDH is costing out permits that include mileage fees, etc. but is not going out and doing inspections. M. Nichols discussed this subject with the first selectman of the Town of Thompson when presenting their annual report this week. M. Nichols noted these questions are really for the Director as she could provide a more comprehensive response. M. Nichols explained that NDDH had challenges due to the restriction from the pandemic, keeping NDDH staff safe/healthy, both inhouse and remotely. The Director, Education & Communications Coordinator and Environmental Health (EH) staff focused on daily messaging from the Governor's office, DPH and CDC to support the district's needs. Nursing homes restricted entry to facilities for inspections during COVID. Mask guidance and mask complaints took a large amount of the EH staff's time during the first year of the pandemic while NDDH subsurface permitting increased 23% from the previous year. The State of Connecticut has not certified food inspectors during the last two years. R. Kelleher asked if it was possible to hire any 1099 employees. Currently, NDDH has two food certified inspectors on staff. NDDH hired food certified inspectors (as 1099 contractors) to help with the Brooklyn/Woodstock Fair inspections. The EH staff was consulted and agreed to go ahead with the contractor hourly rate in exchange for help completing Fair inspections. All health departments are competing with each other to retain and hire qualified staff. Committee will revisit these questions with the Director at the March 10<sup>th</sup> meeting.

#### Grants/American Rescue Funds

S. Starkey sent an American Rescue funds letter to all the first selectmen with approximately \$641K cost estimates for the next three years. The ARPA is estimated to continue until February 2024. N. Swift had questions regarding the \$333K figure for secretary/receptionists and the sustainability after the funds are depleted. E. Lippke asked if there was a time limit to spend money received from ARPA. M. Nichols did not know for certain. Most likely, time limits will be in each town's contract with NDDH. M. Nichols suggested the committee bring questions to S. Starkey at the next meeting.

Orla left the meeting at 4:02pm.

#### FY 2022-23 Budget – Draft

The FY23 Employee Salary/Benefits page provided in packet is budgeting for 26 employees. Dental hygienists are only paid if NDDH provides the Dental Program to schools (this is a pay for fee service). NDDH budgets \$5,400 for Dental Program income. The program on average brings in a surplus of \$2K annually. Hours estimated to provide the services is 90 hours per year.

Senior Sanitarian, M. Marcoux, reviewed the permit cost analysis worksheet and determined the time estimates needed to completion inspections. S. Starkey and M. Nichols discussed the analysis. A proposed Fee Schedule was provided in the packet. The proposal shows that eight subsurface/other fees and eight food service fees should be increased according to cost analysis. Permit percentages range from 2.6 to 20 for FY23 fees.

#### Unfinished Business

- a. Conference Room Windows/Rug. No updates from last time. We cannot put in new windows until spring. R. Kelleher noted that the work cannot be done until we are not using the room and suggested we inform A. Tanner. M. Nichols advised that A. Tanner was aware and had recently been in to look at our generators. The selectman is looking to have all town buildings get generators or updates to generators currently in place. The generators we have now do not allow us to run at full capacity.

- b. Vehicle Purchase Update. The vehicle is on order. A down payment of \$1K was made. NDDH continues to be cost consciences and is still below the Board authorized \$35K expenditure. Additional features/equipment needed: a shield placed behind front seats to provide for driver safety (\$700), a rear window defroster (\$150), and straps/locks for fastening equipment (\$150). Vehicle will need Weather Tech/rubber matting and NDDH is in the process of getting estimates.

Current NDDH vehicles include a Dodge Ram Truck, a Kia Soul, a Kia Niro and two Kia Sportages. The 2008 Ford Ranger has been taken off the road and only has liability insurance on it. It is no longer drivable.

#### Other Business

We recently had the website updated to allow us more capabilities such as Facebook. If people “like” us they can find out what’s going on at the health department; messaging for restaurants with any FDA changes can be posted, etc.

R. Kelleher asked why we wanted new payroll software. E. Lippke inquired what, specifically, the new payroll company would do. Commonsense Payroll is our current payroll company and is local. The software provides time sheets for both hourly and salaried employees to access by time clock or by internet browser. The company processes our payroll every two weeks, delivers employees pay checks/stub and provides a payroll register report for financial QuickBooks records. Commonsense provides payroll quarterly reporting to State/Federal Government, annual W2s/1099 for employees, and reports 941/W3 information for NDDH. E. Lippke asked why we would need new software if Commonsense is doing all the work. M. Nichols provided the cost analysis according to the quote only. M. Nichols was told the new payroll software includes HR capabilities. M. Nichols suggested the committee speak with the Director for the specific reasons to switch to another payroll company and what benefits it will provide.

Next meeting: Thursday, March 10, 2022, Finance Committee meeting will start at 3:00 pm.

#### Adjournment

Motion made by L. Thurlow to adjourn. Second by N. Swift. All in favor. Motion carried (4-0-0). Adjournment: 4:51 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
*Linda Violette Buisson*  
Administrative Assistant