



Northeast District Department of Health

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NDDH Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

Date: April 14, 2022 – 3:00 PM

Location: Quinebaug Valley Senior Center, 69 South Main Street, Conference Room / Zoom

A. Public Hearing – FY2023 Budget

The Hearing began at 3:06 p.m. No questions or comments from the Board and no members of the public were present. The Hearing closed at 3:08 p.m.

B. Commencement/Roll Call

Meeting was called to order at 3:09 p.m. by Board Chair David A. Griffiths.

Present: Robert Kelleher, Brooklyn; Luther Thurlow, Canterbury; Elaine Lippke, Danielson; Paul Torcellini, Eastford; Heidi Clifford, Killingly; David A. Griffiths, Killingly; Don Gladding, Plainfield; Lana Salisbury, Sterling; Carla Jordan (Sterling alternate); Orla McKiernan-Raftery, Thompson; Nate Swift, Union; Gail Dickinson, Woodstock; Sue Starkey, (Director of Health); Melissa Nichols (Finance Manager)

Late Arrival: Ann Hinchman, Pomfret

Absent: Rob Kerr, Plainfield (excused); Robert Grindle, Hampton; Joseph Nash, Putnam

C. Citizen’s Participation – None

D. Approval of Minutes – January 25, 2022

L. Salisbury motioned to accept the January 13, 2022 minutes. D. Gladding seconded the motion. R. Kelleher, L. Thurlow, E. Lippke, P. Torcellini, D.A. Griffiths, H. Clifford, D. Gladding, L. Salisbury, O. McKiernan-Raftery, and G. Dickinson in favor. N. Swift abstained. Motion carried (10-0-1)

E. Communications

H. Clifford read her March 16th letter to D. A. Griffiths in which she announced her decision to leave her position on the NDDH Board of Directors at the end of her term. Family commitments have

made it difficult for her to give the Board the time required to be truly effective. She thanked the Board for the opportunity to serve the community and wished the organization continued success. Board members thanked her and wished her well.

F. Staffing Updates

1. New Staff

S. Starkey advised the Board of two additions to the NDDH team: Madalyn Lowell, an intern from ECSU and Isaac Combs, the Public Health Programs Specialist.

2. Resignations / End of Service / Reduction in Hours

S. Starkey advised that H. Charette and S. Petell have had a reduction in their hours and are now per diem to assist at vaccination clinics and do contact tracing. D. May resigned after 14 years. He was a full-time employee subcontracted to also work at EHHD. D. Newman and J. Black reached their end of service however, remain scheduled to work a minimum of eight hours per quarter on an as-needed basis. This will keep them on the books and we can bring them back when we need their skills.

D.A. Griffiths asked if any positions were cut due to lack of Grant funding. S. Starkey assured him they were not. The individuals were hired to do COVID-specific work which has decreased greatly. Remaining Grant funds are being fine-tuned based on current staffing needs.

G. Reports

1. Executive Committee – D.A. Griffiths advised that the Committee hasn't met recently however, he has followed up since the January 25th meeting and everything seems to be going well.
2. Board of Health Member Updates – none noted other than comments that the Team Leader Orientation on April 7th was nicely done.
3. Personnel Committee – L. Salisbury reported that an Employee Satisfaction Survey was sent from Human Resources to all employees on March 18th. All employees were given the opportunity to complete the survey, including full time, part time, temporary and grant funded. Initially, employees were concerned with having to complete the survey the same day it was received. The timeline was adjusted and employees were given four days to complete the questionnaire. Eighteen out of 23 surveys were returned. Anonymity was assured. Overall results showed 28% neutral responses, 43% approval responses, and 29% negative responses. Questions with a strong negative response will be addressed by the Personnel Committee and HR. Trainings are underway regarding leadership and positivity training. There were five director-specific / management style questions with 23% neutral responses, 42% approval responses and 35% negative responses. Suggestions on how to improve the survey will be considered by the Personnel Committee and HR. L. Salisbury distributed a copy of the employee survey to the Board. Board members requested a copy of the survey results. HR will email copies to Board. D.A. Griffiths said that he appreciated the time and effort put in to get the survey done after it was requested. He noted that he has been able to view recorded staff meetings and thinks this practice should be continued. L. Salisbury advised that she will be attending the next staff meeting to thank employees for taking the survey.

L. Salisbury advised Board that NDDH is looking into an Employee Assistance Program to see what it entails, costs for the same, etc. EAP is a means of getting assistance outside of one's regular insurance without having to file insurance claims. O. McKiernan- Raftery reported that there was once a contract with United Services.

4. Finance Committee.

E. Lippke advised the Board that the Finance Committee has put a lot of time and effort into the documents being presented. There are three items requiring a vote today:

a. *Per Capita Rate (\$0.50 per individual)**

E. Lippke reminded the Board that they agreed to the \$0.50 per individual increase in January. A letter went out to the towns advising of the increase for their budgeting purposes. D.A. Griffiths motioned to accept the per capita rate. D. Gladding seconded. R. Kelleher, L. Thurlow, E. Lippke, P. Torcellini, D.A. Griffiths, H. Clifford, D. Gladding, L. Salisbury, O. McKiernan-Raftery, N. Swift and G. Dickinson in favor. Motion carried (11-0-0).

b. *FY Fee Schedule**

E. Lippke asked Board to look at the fee schedule and note a few increases. Increases are suggested after determining the cost to do the jobs and making certain everything involved with the permitting was taken into consideration. N. Swift motioned to accept the fee schedule. H. Clifford seconded. R. Kelleher, L. Thurlow, E. Lippke, P. Torcellini, D.A. Griffiths, H. Clifford, D. Gladding, L. Salisbury, O. McKiernan-Raftery, N. Swift and G. Dickinson in favor. Motion carried (11-0-0).

Ann Hinchman arrived at 3:55 p.m.

c. *FY Proposed Budget**

E. Lippke introduced the proposed budget that included the per capita, fee schedule, etc. Budget includes grants, expenses and not using reserve funds. Union salaries are already scheduled, other employees are expected to get a 2% increase. As a whole (general budget and grants), there is a 25% increase in payroll costs. S. Starkey notes that when we don't have grant funds for grant funded employees, we don't keep the employees. That is how we keep the budget balanced.

It was suggested that going forward there be three columns for comparison on the proposed budget to include past actual and current year-to-date. It was noted that a column could be added to the proposed budget but the YTD values are always included in Board packets.

S. Starkey explained that the over expenditures in YTD finance reports are explained in the reports. Over expenditures are often related to grant funding that is received after the budget is adopted. It is challenging to give information regarding what we will spend using grant money as we are offered grants after the budget has been prepared.

E. Lippke motioned to accept the proposed budget for FY23. R. Kelleher, L. Thurlow,

E. Lippke, D.A. Griffiths, H. Clifford, D. Gladding, A. Hinchman, L. Salisbury, N. Swift, and G. Dickinson in favor. P. Torcellini abstained. O. McKiernan-Rafoery did not respond. Motion carried (10-0-2).

d. YTD Financial Report – February 2022

M. Nichols pointed out that the report depicts what costs are paid through the general fund and those paid using grant funding. R. Kelleher asked how we were 105% of the original budget for social security. M. Nichols explained that the increase in cost for social security was due to the increase in employees. We are not using increased general funding as the employees are grant funded, as are the increased social security costs.

5. Director of Health Report

S. Starkey introduced her report depicting all staff activities. On page 16, there is information from our new website that shows some of the work we have done this year. She referenced the Strategic Plan update that was distributed to Board members at the meeting (and emailed to everyone) and said she is currently working with the leadership team on a strategic plan update and anticipates having more complete timelines for the June Board meeting.

S. Starkey explained that we have five staff members in EHS to provide all the work required. Of the five, only two are fully qualified and we are asking them to do all the food inspections, all the soil and septic work, lead investigations, oil spills and train new people. It is impossible for them to do all that. We have so many customers asking us to process their septic and well permits that are needed for homes, businesses, for the economy and because it's the law. These are a priority as are public health nuisance complaints such as heat and hot water that we must investigate, as well as a recent oil spill in Putnam. These are high priority items. Lead poisoning prevention, while not huge, is important and the state is coming to visit us again to discuss the files that we have and cases that have been open for years because it takes a long time to do the work. This explains why food service inspections fall to the bottom of the list. We are working hard to get more people certified but even when we give people a chance to learn everything they need to know and to shadow some of our staff, they still need to be certified by the State and the State hasn't certified anybody in years. The State said it will be at least 3 months before they certify the people that can certify people. It will take time before we are on track.

S. Starkey understands that we should be doing the food service inspections but we don't have the personnel or the necessary certifications. The fees underestimate the true cost. Everything we put in for fees is based on estimates. The money that's missing is per capita. The town per capita is too low. Our budget is balanced to pay the amount of people that are working here every single day to do things besides food. The only way we can afford to pay them for complaints, lead, and education is by increasing the per capita sufficiently and the Board has not done that. The Board determined that the most that we can ask for from the towns each year is something in the range of fifty cents per individual.

D.A. Griffiths asked whether we had enough people on staff to do the work a year and a half ago. S. Starkey responded that we have never had enough people. The EHS report is in every single Board packet and there has never been a time when we've reached 100%. S. Starkey said that right now, we should have five people on staff that can do food inspections. Last year, two EHS workers left when there were three months left in the year. We went an additional three months

before we could hire people. It's been challenging the last four years to find certified EHS employees. It is much harder for us and other state health departments because the State isn't doing their due diligence and getting people certified. They weren't available for at least a year during COVID and they weren't running any testing to go through the classes. These are things that continue to slow us down. The FDA code slowed us down because the State of Connecticut made some changes and then they were going to make more changes to further slow the process and FITO had to do more inspections. That's the food side. Currently, we have two people that are 100% certified; one is an RS, one is not, and we have three new EHS employees.

There was much discussion regarding sending a letter to the Department of Public Health Commissioner to advise that we need more inspectors and they need to make themselves available so that we can get our people certified. If we got FITO certified here, in our department, that would help. S. Starkey added that virtually all health directors in the state have been telling the State this for a year. It was further discussed that we should reach out to our state representatives and legislators and ask if they are aware of health department challenges.

D.A. Griffiths asked for a motion to write a letter. D. Gladding motioned that we write the letter and follow it up by requesting other health directors' signatures. H. Clifford seconded. R. Kelleher, L. Thurlow, E. Lippke, P. Torcellini, D.A. Griffiths, H. Clifford, D. Gladding, A. Hinchman, L. Salisbury, N. Swift, and G. Dickinson in favor. O. McKiernan-Rafertry did not respond. Motion carried (11-0-1).

S. Starkey will write the letter per D.A. Griffiths request and share it with Board members. Once signed by Board Chair D.A. Griffiths, the letter will go to the Department of Public Health Commissioner with copies to our representatives and senators.

S. Starkey will advise the CADH that we are writing a letter, that they are welcome to sign it, and that we need to push for this. She reminded the Board that part of the solution includes putting in enough per capita to pay the people to do all the jobs in the environmental health report that aren't getting done because no one else is going to pay us. If towns really want to see things get done, the per capita will have to be increased.

H. Adjournment

Motion was made to adjourn at 5:09 p.m. by L. Thurlow. N. Swift seconded. R. Kelleher, L. Thurlow, E. Lippke, P. Torcellini, D.A. Griffiths, H. Clifford, D. Gladding, A. Hinchman, L. Salisbury, O. McKiernan-Rafertry, N. Swift and G. Dickinson in favor. Motion carried (12-0-0).

Respectfully submitted,
Linda Buisson
NDDH Administrative Assistant