



Northeast District Department of Health

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NDDH Board of Health Executive Committee Meeting Minutes

Date: Tuesday – August 16, 2022

Location: Quinebaug Valley Senior Center, 69 South Main Street, Unit 4, Brooklyn, CT

Attendees: David A. Griffiths, Robert Kelleher, Elaine Lippke, Lana Salisbury, Susan Starkey, Paulina Martinez

Guests: Isaac Combs, Amanda Sanelli, Linda Buisson

1. Call to Order – meeting was called to order at 3:00 p.m.
2. Attendance taken
3. Citizen Participation – None
4. Review of Minutes*
January 6, 2022 DRAFT minutes. E. Lippke motioned to accept the January 6th minutes as presented. L. Salisbury seconded the motion. All in favor. Motion carried (4-0-0).
5. Board Consent re Director of Health Outside Employment / Hours*
D.A. Griffiths reminded the Committee that last year, S. Starkey consulted with him before she took on a teaching appointment at ECSU. He suggested that doing so should be a formality as she would be taking time away from her normal duties and hours at NDDH. Conversation ensued wherein S. Starkey reminded the Committee that due to the requirements of her position; she is required by the State to be available 24/7. When asked if she was available while teaching, she affirmed that she was.

S. Starkey noted that the Employee Manual used to simply say that nobody could take a job that conflicted with their duties here. Last September, when the Manual was updated, it was changed to say that the Director of Health could give approval for outside work. S. Starkey feels that if it is outside work hours, employees should not have to ask if they want a second job. She recommended that this requirement be taken out of the Manual as she does not want employees to have to ask her if they can take another job. She believes that is everyone's personal business.

There was much discussion regarding outside employment and whether employees needed to get permission from the NDDH Director if they needed/wanted a second job. It was

determined that if the second job was not during NDDH work hours, it was not necessary. If necessary, employees could be allowed to flex their time, working longer one or two days to leave early another day if approved by their supervisor.

R. Kelleher motioned that the Personnel Committee be instructed to revise the wording to make it clear that we cannot control what employees do outside of their regular work hours. L. Salisbury seconded. No additional discussion or questions. R. Kelleher, L. Salisbury, E. Lippke, and D. A. Griffiths all in favor. Motion carried (4-0-0)

R. Kelleher motioned that the Executive Committee does not object to S. Starkey's outside employment, based on the schedule she has given us, and we recommend the Board acquiesce. E. Lippke seconded. No further discussion. No questions. R. Kelleher, L. Salisbury, E. Lippke, and D.A. Griffiths all in favor. Motion carried (4-0-0)

6. Director of Health "Out of Office Hours" Notification to Board Chair*

D.A. Griffin expressed concern about her 24/7 schedule due to her having "out of office hours". S. Starkey explained that she is unavailable if she is out of state, or rather, out of the country, where she does not have an international phone. On the rare occasion S. Starkey is unavailable, she informs the Board and the State Department of Public Health. The protocol is that the Acting Director fill the role of Director.

The Committee further asked the Director if she would have an issue reporting any flex time that she did. As she is a 24/7 employee and has an arbitrary schedule, she said she could not imagine having to call to tell someone when she was adjusting her schedule. Things happen at the last minute. Committee members asked those staff members in attendance if they had ever had a difficult time reaching the Director when she was out of the office. There was mutual agreement that she was always available when on vacation, out sick, or at a seminar. Communication and guidance are always available. The Committee agreed that there has never been any abuse of time away from the office and she would not need to report any flex time. The Director will advise the Board in September that it is her intention to teach a class at ECSU on Monday afternoons. She will ask if anyone is opposed to her doing so.

7. HR Complaint*

D.A. Griffiths requested an opportunity to respond to a complaint between S. Starkey and himself. Due to D.A. Griffiths being a part of the complaint, he took a step back from his Chair position during the discussion, and R. Kelleher, Vice-Chair, assumed the role of Chair.

P. Martinez (HR) distributed copies of the complaint to the Committee along with a copy of our COVID protocol. R. Kelleher asked who wrote the summary and findings. P. Martinez stated that she did. In brief, S. Starkey was out of the office sick. Another co-worker was also out sick after getting a COVID test. D.A. Griffiths tried to reach S. Starkey to get together and work on a letter to the DPH Commissioner regarding our being short of sanitarians and thus, falling behind on food inspections. It was at this time he discovered she was out sick. He then reached out to S. Starkey and said that he knew she was sick and asked what was wrong, concerned that she had COVID. As he had recently been sitting next to her at a Board meeting, he was concerned that he may have been exposed and in turn,

could expose his family. D.A. Griffiths said that S. Starkey advised him that he could not ask her questions about her symptoms or what was medically wrong. She stated that the “complaint” was not truly a complaint, it was documentation of the event.

The Executive Committee agreed that due to the last couple of years of constant concerns about COVID, the Director should have known that D.A. Griffiths was specifically looking to know whether she had COVID. The Committee thought that the Director should have known that was what he genuinely wanted to know, and she should have simply advised him whether she had tested positive or negative for COVID. The Director explained that if she had COVID, she would have followed protocol and reported it to HR. If necessary, contact tracing would have been done and individuals contacted as needed.

D.A. Griffiths said that S. Starkey did tell him that she did not have COVID however, he did not know that for 7-9 days after she was out sick and he was concerned the entire time that he might expose his family members.

D.A. Griffiths did state that the Director had done nothing wrong. He said he understands that we should assume everyone is carrying the virus and as such, should continue to keep a mask on and try to keep our distance. He did think that we should be able to advise is someone in the office has been diagnosed positive for COVID so that individuals can get a pill that is now being offered by Pfizer that is supposed to speed up recovery time.

D.A. Griffiths noted that he was ready to leave the subject alone until he discovered that S. Starkey had written a complaint. The Director said that she did not write a complaint. P. Martinez advised that she wrote the document, not as a complaint, but as a summary of what happened and the findings thereof. It is her job as an HR specialist to have documentation of events.

S. Starkey noted again that it was not a complaint. There are laws about people’s private health information and Board members may not call up staff and ask them about their health conditions. This could put NDDH at risk.

L. Salisbury suggested that as the Director, the NDDH leader, S. Starkey should have and could have put a stop to this by simply stating, “I don’t have COVID.” She could have simply given D.A. Griffiths the reassurance he was looking for.

L. Salisbury motioned that the Executive Committee is reaffirming the statement in Sue’s evaluation that she consider ways that she can improve in the area of not allowing things to snowball out of control. More conversation ensued that lead to L. Salisbury withdrawing her motion.

B. Kelleher motioned that the Executive Committee has considered the complaint and decided that no action will be taken at this time. The Committee is disappointed that the Director of Health was unable to avert the situation. L. Salisbury seconded. R. Kelleher, L. Salisbury and E. Lippke voted in favor. D.A. Griffiths abstained. Motion carried (3-0-1)

B. Kelleher asked if the letter to the DPH Commissioner had gone out. D.A. Griffiths advised that it had not been written. B. Kelleher noted that the directions by the Board were specific.

8. Review Board Survey

E. Lippke comment that she most appreciated the open comments in the survey as it was interesting to see the thoughts of other Board members.

D.A. Griffiths indicated that one of the most important things is to have Board members more involved. He thought alternate representatives should be encouraged to attend the meetings, so they are aware of what is occurring. That way, if the regular representative was not able to attend, the alternate would already have knowledge regarding ongoing events. It was noted that alternates may not vote on Motions if the regular representative is in attendance.

R. Kelleher and E. Lippke noted that it is difficult to get individuals to serve on the Board. E. Lippke pointed out current vacancies and that some representatives rarely attend.

D.A. Griffiths asked L. Buisson if a letter had gone out to the Hampton first selectman. He explained that the Hampton representative had not attended a Board meeting in over a year, so the town had no representation. The letter was sent as a final effort. Both L. Buisson and D.A. Griffiths had tried reaching out to the representative and the first selectman via phone and email but had had no response. There has been no response to the letter. L. Buisson reported that the letter went out on Monday, August 8th. D.A. Griffiths said that if a town does not have a representative, the first selectman should attend the meetings, otherwise the town has no one looking out for their best interests. Town officials often balk at NDDH's per capita requests, but we are uncertain if they understand where that money goes.

E. Lippke suggested that a last step with Hampton might involve a face-to-face meeting. D.A. Griffiths said that there are selectmen not sending delegates to the Board meetings. He suggested we first go to those selectmen and explain to them how important it is to have a representative in attendance. He notes doing so would require an appointment and a request for 15-20 minutes of their time. He asked the Director if she might be willing to go with him to see the Hampton first selectmen. She responded in the affirmative. Additionally, E. Lippke said she would not mind doing visits to the selectmen.

In review of the survey, E. Lippke pointed out that 38% of Board members thought a retreat was good, as well as communicating with officials. Selectmen are the ones that can truly tell us what is on the minds of their constituents.

The Committee requested that L. Buisson send the Board Survey results out to Board members with the Board packet and request that they review and be prepared to comment at the September meeting.

9. Access to Staff Meeting tapes

D.A. Griffiths suggested that Board members view the staff meeting videos. P. Martinez explained that the meetings are taped and are kept on file for 2 weeks (as meetings are bi-weekly). She advised that following the meeting, minutes were typed up as well. D.A. Griffiths said that watching the video is a great way to get involved in the dynamics of what is going on. There were some questions about how viewing the meeting would work. P. Martinez explained that it is a Zoom meeting that is taped. She could simply email it to Board members and they could log in and watch it from anywhere. B. Kelleher suggested that P. Martinez send it to all Board members. They can turn it on and view if they are interested. If they are not, they do not have to watch.

10. Strategy for Executive Committee Slate: Personnel and Finance Chairs*

S. Starkey added this item to the agenda and suggested that the Committee might want to consider how they will get the chairs for the Finance and Personnel Committees because the entire Executive Committee is elected in September per the ByLaws.

There was discussion regarding the Personnel Chair as L. Salisbury is due to be voted in as Vice-Chair of the Executive Committee and cannot hold two seats (Vice Chair and Personnel Chair) on the Executive Committee. D.A. Griffiths informed L. Salisbury that upon his expiration as Board Chair, he is interested in returning to the Personnel Committee. He noted he is not interested in being the Chair. L. Salisbury advised that that A. Hinchman had expressed a willingness to chair the Personnel Committee and D. Gladding indicated support for Ann's offer.

E. Lippke suggested that the Personnel Committee select a chair when they next meet. S. Starkey advised that the Chair needed to be voted in at the September meeting per the ByLaws. The Personnel Committee is not due to meet again until October. She proposed that they accept nominations for the Personnel and Finance Chairs at the September Board meeting. Those interested would add their name to the slate and the vote would be taken. Those chosen as Personnel and Finance Chair, by virtue of the ByLaws, become members of the Executive Committee.

E. Lippke is currently on the Slate for Executive Committee because all positions are for terms of three years except for the Finance Chair, who has a term of five years. D.A. Griffiths suggested that be changed so that people would revolve a bit more often.

L. Salisbury asked what the ByLaws read. S. Starkey states that the Personnel Committee Chair is on the Executive Committee and the Executive Committee is elected in September. She said it was possible to ask someone on the Personnel Committee if they were interested in being Chair and if so, they could nominate themselves from the floor at the Board meeting. When his/her hand is raised, he/she is added to the slate, and everyone votes.

E. Lippke reminded the Director that at the last meeting there was discussion about the Confidentiality Agreement and that S. Starkey was going to bring it back in a more simplified format. S. Starkey did not bring it as it was not on the agenda but advised she could bring it to the next Executive Committee meeting.

E. Lippke reminded L. Buisson that the Board requested a list of frequently used acronyms. L. Buisson advised that it was nearly completed and she anticipated it would be in the Board packet.

11. Adjournment*

R. Kelleher motioned to adjourn. E. Lippke seconded. All in favor. Motion carried. (4-0-0)
Meeting adjourned at 4:46 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Linda Buisson
Administrative Assistant
NDDH