



# Northeast District Department of Health

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**NDDH Board of Directors Special Meeting**

**Date: November 16, 2023 – 3:00 pm**

**Location: NDDH, 69 South Main Street, Conference Room**

Meeting was called to order at 3:05 p.m. by Board Chair, Lana Salisbury.

## Attendance

*Present:* Robert Kelleher, Brooklyn; Christopher Lippke, Canterbury; Paul Torcellini, Eastford; Sean Regan, Killingly; Patti George, Killingly alternate; Don Gladding, Plainfield (3:16 arrival); Ann Hinchman, Pomfret; Anne Lamondy, Putnam; Lana Salisbury, Sterling; David Eaton, Union; Gail Dickinson, Woodstock

*Absent Excused:* Elaine Lippke, Danielson; Rob Kerr, Plainfield; Orla McKiernan-Raftery, Thompson; John Murdock, Union

*Absent:* Allan Cahill, Hampton; David A. Griffiths, Killingly

*Guests:* Maureen Nicholson, Pomfret 1<sup>st</sup> Selectman; Nick Smith, WINY

*NDDH Staff:* Steve Faucher, PHEP; Melissa Nichols, Finance Manager; Stephanie Hynes, Community Health; Isaac Combs, and Jenn Warner, EHS staff; Linda Buisson, Administrative Assistant

No citizen participation.

## Approval of Minutes – November 9, 2023

G. Dickinson motioned to accept the minutes. S. Regan seconded. R. Kelleher, C. Lippke, P. Torcellini, S. Regan, P. George, D. Gladding, A. Hinchman, A. Lamondy, L. Salisbury, D. Eaton, G. Dickinson in favor. None opposed. No abstentions. Motion carried (11-0-0)

## Communications

- DPH Letter

L. Salisbury stated that the DPH letter was sent under the impression that S. Starkey had been removed as the Director of Health and the necessary steps to take. S. Starkey has *not* been removed from her position. Attorney Harrington was consulted and he advised that the steps only needed to be followed if the Director were removed in the middle of her term. The DPH verified that a simple non-renewal of the Director's contract would not be subject to the steps outlined.

- Other

L. Salisbury shared a letter of resignation from M. Nichols, Finance Manager, whose last day will be November 25, 2023. S. Starkey is working to see if she can make a counteroffer to keep M. Nichols here.

E. Lippke, as representative of the Danielson Borough, sent a letter to the Board stating that they would remain with the town of Killingly and was therefore giving notification that they would be withdrawing from NDDH.

P. George advised that the town of Killingly will be sending a letter that they will be leaving NDDH. The letter is anticipated to arrive any day.

L. Salisbury reported that since the November 9<sup>th</sup> meeting, she has received 114 emails regarding NDDH.

#### Follow Up on Vote of No Confidence

S. Starkey was asked if she wanted discussion held in executive session. She was open to public discussion.

L. Salisbury reported that she and R. Kelleher met with S. Starkey earlier this week to offer her the opportunity to submit her resignation or retirement with a specified final date of work.

R. Kelleher motioned that whereas the Northeast Connecticut Council of Governments, by letter of September 25, 2023, has advised this Board of Directors that on September 22, 2023 it adopted a vote of “no confidence” in Susan Starkey as Director of the Northeast District Department of Health and whereas this Board subsequently, on November 9, 2023, adopted a vote of “no confidence” in Susan Starkey’s ability to manage the affairs of the Northeast District Department of Health now therefore, the Chair of this Board of Directors or her designee is directed, on behalf of the Board, to advise Susan Starkey that her employment contract will not be renewed in January 2024. Seconded by C. Lippke. R. Kelleher, C. Lippke, P. Torcellini, S. Regan, P. George, D. Gladding, A. Hinchman, A. Lamondy, L. Salisbury, D. Eaton, G. Dickinson in favor. None opposed. No abstentions. Motion carried (11-0-0)

Concerns about per capita were discussed. S. Starkey and M. Nichols have been working on the budget and estimate an increase of one dollar per the FY2024 projections. The entire cost would be to pay for staff.

The Board agreed that they would need to have a search committee for a new Director. S. Starkey advised that per the Bylaws, the Personnel Committee is supposed to recommend to the Board a candidate to fill the director vacancy. The Executive Committee stated that they wanted to be involved in putting the Search Committee SLATE together.

Conversation continued around the possibility of towns leaving NDDH. A. Hinchman pointed out that forming a new agency will be very difficult and costly. Towns need to take that into consideration. Further discussion ensued regarding root causes of raising the per capita and the seeming disconnect between Board representatives and town leaders. NDDH needs clear messages from the towns about what their expectations are and how we can meet them.

### RFP Update, Discussion & Possible Action

There was lengthy discussion regarding the RFP distributed on November 9<sup>th</sup>. The Board agreed that the plan is comprehensive.

C. Lippke motioned to send the RFP to an attorney to review and for the Board to act on it and get it advertised. A. Lamondy seconded the motion. R. Kelleher, C. Lippke, P. Torcellini, S. Regan, P. George, D. Gladding, A. Hinchman, A. Lamondy, L. Salisbury, D. Eaton, G. Dickinson in favor. None opposed. No abstentions. Motion carried (11-0-0)

There were concerns about how much the RFP may cost NDDH, how it will affect the budget, and how it will affect the agency if towns leave the district. It was asked whether a plan might be done in house rather than by an outside agency. Board members believe an outside agency with fresh eyes to review the infrastructure is necessary. An independent company will be sought.

Regarding the per capita rate, C. Lippke stated that towns want to see the required work getting done and they will not mind paying for it. S. Starkey thanked everyone for the RFP and noted that NDDH has a prescribed list of what needs to be done. The Finance Committee did a presentation to the Board last year showing justification for why we needed more money. Once we have more certified people on staff, we will be able to increase investigations and inspections as long as EHS staff are being paid a fair wage.

P. Torcellini does not believe we understand the actual cost to deliver services. Everything needs to be considered: vehicle, fuel, employee, time spent, and documentation. NDDH is falling short in the number of staff to complete the services.

R. Kelleher motioned to proceed with the RFP subject to the attorney's review and approval. C. Lippke seconded the motion. R. Kelleher, C. Lippke, P. Torcellini, S. Regan, P. George, D. Gladding, A. Hinchman, A. Lamondy, D. Eaton, G. Dickinson in favor. L. Salisbury opposed. No abstentions. Motion carried (10-1-0)

It was pointed out that NDDH and its communities do not get money from the state for services that other parts of the state are receiving, partly due to our demographics. Towns are struggling.

L. Salisbury will send the RFP to Attorney Harrington this week once she has the finalized version.

C. Lippke motioned to form an ad hoc committee to oversee advertisement and management of the RFP. R. Kelleher seconded the motion. R. Kelleher, C. Lippke, P. Torcellini, S. Regan, P. George, D. Gladding, A. Hinchman, A. Lamondy, L. Salisbury, D. Eaton, G. Dickinson in favor. None opposed. No abstentions. Motion carried (11-0-0)

Volunteers to form an ad hoc committee include C. Lippke, P. Torcellini, and S. Regan. M. Nicholson offered to assist. If D.A. Griffiths is interested in being part of the committee, S. Regan will withdraw as D.A. Griffiths has been on the Board for a long time and may have more insight. L. Salisbury will forward any suggestions from Attorney Harrington regarding the RFP to the committee. They will try to get the RFP advertised before December 10 with a due date of January 8, 2024. L. Buisson, as Board

liaison, will be the contact person to collect responses for the RFP and assist with the advertising of the same. Once a company is chosen, the Board Chair and Vice-Chair will sign the contract.

G. Dickinson asked that alternate Board representatives be invited to the meetings. L. Buisson advised, and alternates in attendance agreed, that they are invited to all the meetings and receive the Board packets for the same.

M. Nicholson thanked the Board for all their work and stated that she thinks today's meeting will reassure towns that we are heading in the right direction. She, P. George, and D. Eaton stated that they would like to see the district remain intact and employees remain in place.

A. Hinchman heavily recommended that Board members meet with town leaders and keep them apprised. A collaborative working relationship with the towns is imperative. She asked people to complete the Director evaluations and get them back to NDDH. It will be a valuable tool going forward.

D. Gladding exited the meeting at 4:25 p.m.

#### Adjournment

Motion to adjourn at 4:38 p.m. by P. Torcellini. P. George seconded. R. Kelleher, C. Lippke, P. Torcellini, S. Regan, P. George, A. Hinchman, A. Lamondy, L. Salisbury, D. Eaton, G. Dickinson in favor. None opposed. No abstentions. Motion carried (10-0-0)

Respectfully submitted,  
*Linda Buisson*  
NDDH Administrative Assistant