

***Dubuque County Board of Health Meeting
Minutes of December 15, 2021***

Mr. Bechen called the December 15, 2021, Dubuque County Board of Health Meeting to order at 6:00p.m.

Roll Call:

Members Present:	Tom Bechen, Diane Pape-Freiberger, Adam Hoffman, Sandra Larson, Amy Crow Sunleaf
Members Absent:	Hendrik Schultz
Others Present:	Patrice Lambert, Dubuque County Health Department; Samantha Kloft, Dubuque County Health Department; Bailey Avenarius, Dubuque County Health Department; Benjamin Fischer, TH; Ann McDonough, Chair of Dubuque County Supervisors; Stacey Killian, VNA; Micheala Freiburger, Dubuque County Food Policy Council; Paul Schultz, Dubuque County Food Policy Council; Mary Rose Corrigan, City of Dubuque; Dawn Sherman, Dubuque County Human Resources; Ken Buesing, Buesing & Associates; Justin Andrews

Additional Notes:

1. Roll Call

2. Public Comments

Michela Freiburger – Speaks to the BOH on the importance of supporting the budget requests from the Dubuque County Food Policy Council. She stresses the importance of the work being done by the Council and adds the need for staff to continue this work.

Ann McDonough – Thanks Patrice for her work with the Dubuque County Health Department and congratulations her on her retirement. She also thanks Diane Pape-Freiberger for her work on the BOH. Ann also urges the BOH to take their time in conversation regarding restructuring the health department and what that might look like with staffing.

Paul Schultz – Speaks on behalf of the Food Policy Council as well to stress the need for funding staff to continue providing healthy food to the community.

3. Approval of Agenda

Sandra Larson suggests amending the Agenda under item #6c to include “Personnel and Staff/Strategic Direction.”

Sandra Larson made the motion to approve the Agenda as amended for December 15, 2021. Adam Hoffman seconded the motion. 5 Aye, motion carried.

4. Approval of Minutes

Sandra Larson made the motion to approve the Minutes for November 17, 2021. Amy Crow Sunleaf seconded the motion. 5 Aye, motion carried.

5. COVID-19 Update

Samantha Kloft shares her screen to display a presentation led by Patrice Lambert. Patrice gives the BOH a brief update on COVID-19 vaccinations in Dubuque County. She shares that Dubuque County remains at a community transmission level of high. Patrice also shares the following updates:

- On December 1, 2021, the first case on Omicron variant was discovered in the US
- On December 9, 2021, the first case of Omicron variant was discovered in Iowa.
- On December 10, 2021, the CDC recommended all individuals 16+ receive a booster dose of the COVID-19 vaccine
- On December 17, 2021, the CDC ACOIP committee formally recommended getting the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine over the J&J vaccine.

Diane Pape-Freiberger clarifies that IDPH has not yet release data for those age 5-11. She also comments on the use of at home rapid tests. Diane is worried that regathering for the holidays will increase cases that will not be reported to IDPH if they are at home rapid tests. Patrice Lambert responds that the IMT is currently working on a plan for reporting these tests to LPH. Diane stresses that this issue skews the data schools and law makers rely on.

Diane also asks if the VNA is still able to give vaccinations to homebound individuals. Stacey Killian from the VNA responds that they can do that. Patrice Lambert also adds that individuals in this situation can call the SleevesUp phoneline to arrange in-home COVID-19 vaccinations.

Sandra Larson asks for an update on local nursing homes and hospitals as it relates to COVID-19. Patrice Lambert responds that the IMT does not have current information on nursing homes. Hospitals are now reporting their numbers to the TH, but the IMT continues to meet with them on a weekly basis. The IMT has not been notified by any local hospitals that they are postponing elective surgeries at this time.

Sandra also comments that she read Dubuque County has seen 11 deaths in a three-day span. Patrice responds that there was a brief lag in data reporting and that pause was most likely related to that.

6. Katie Jones Resignation

Tom Bechen recognizes that Katie Jones has resigned from the BOH and thanks her for her time and service. Tom also recognizes the work of Diane Pape-Freiberger over the past three years. He adds that two new BOH members, Marsha Horwitz and Jess Smith, will be joining at the next meeting.

7. Patrice Lambert Retirement

Tom Bechen recognizes and thanks Patrice Lambert for her work with the Dubuque County Health Department over the last 11 years. Patrice thanks the BOH, Department Staff, the IMT and media for all their work during the COVID-19 pandemic.

a. Designation of Signature Authority – Action

Tom Bechen recommends that Assistant Director, Samantha Kloft be appointed by the BOH to sign department documents and claims in Patrice's absence.

Diane Pape-Freiberger made the motion to appoint Samantha Kloft as the interim designee for signatures on behalf of the Health Department. Amy Crow Sunleaf seconded. Aye, 6 motion carried.

b. Interim Director

Tom Bechen recommends that Assistant Director, Samantha Kloft be appointed by the BOH as Interim Director of the Dubuque County Health Department. He believes that replacing Patrice will not be a quick process and therefore an interim is needed.

Patrice explains to the BOH that this position would remain a part of the IMT and focus mainly on COVID-19 updates. This position would also work with the BOH and public to share requested health information. Additionally, they would serve as a 24/7 contact for IDPH. Diane Pape-Freiberger adds that this position would also work with the BOH Finance Committee on budgeting.

Diane asks what the salary would be for an Interim Director. Tom Bechen and Dawn Sherman explain that this position would be paid out of class. There is a pay range for the Director position and the Interim Director would be paid at the low end of that range. Sandra Larson asks if the Interim Director would need to meet the minimum qualifications of Director, detailed in the job description. Tom Bechen responds yes.

Amy Crow Sunleaf adds that Samantha has the background, education, and willingness to serve as Interim Director. She feels Samantha is a good fit for this position. Diane Pape-Freiburger agrees.

Diane Pape-Freiburger made the motion to appoint Samantha Kloft as Interim Director to the Dubuque County Health Department, who will work with HR on receiving an out of class pay raise. Sandra Larson seconded. Aye, 6 motion carried.

c. Personnel and Staff

Tom Bechen explains that he started the process of collecting the job description for Director to get ready for posting. He has since been contacted by other BOH members asking to take this time to discuss restructuring the current health office. Tom asks the BOH what they prefer to do to better suit the needs of Dubuque County moving forward.

Sandra recommends forming a committee to look over the options prior to the next meeting. She also recommends hosting an exit interview with Patrice. Amy Crow Sunleaf offers to sit in on that interview with Sandra and Patrice. Information from this interview will be brought to the BOH at the next meeting.

Diane Pape-Freiburger adds that slowing down this process will give the BOH time to navigate ARPA proposals, staffing, and the state alignment between public health and DHS. Adam adds that looking at the structure of other departments may help with decision making as well. Additionally, Tom Bechen, Sandra Larson, Amy Crow Sunleaf, and Adam Hoffman will each look into a different counties strategic plan and collect information for the next BOH meeting to inform this decision-making process.

Tom Bechen asks to switch item #8 and #9 on the Agenda to accommodate Ken Busing who has attended the meeting in person to discuss the septic tank variance.

8. Septic Tank Variance

Information on the septic tank variance was provided to the BOH in advance through the Agenda Packet. Ken Buesing from Buesing & Associates provides background information to the BOH and goes over the variance request for 4524 Massey Station Road. This request is for a variance from setback requirements such that the new concrete, septic tank, sand filter, pumping tank, and small absorption bed be installed on this property.

Justin Andrews, the property owner shares that he is aware of the environmental issues at hand and believes that Ken has developed a plan to meet the requirements for the property.

Diane Pape-Freiberger stresses her concerns regarding runoff and water contamination in this small of a space. Bailey Avenarius shares that the water at this property has not been tested yet. She adds that the Iowa DNR has yet to provide a formal recommendation on the approval of this variance request.

The BOH feels the need to postpone approval of this variance until there is a formal recommendation from the Iowa DNR for Bailey. Ken and Justine would like to begin septic installation as soon as possible.

There is no action on this variance request. This will be revisited at a later meeting.

9. Grants to Counties Update

A Grants to Counties update was provided to the BOH in advance through the Agenda Packet. Samantha Kloft shares her screen to display the update as Bailey Avenarius goes through the presentation. Some highlights from the report include:

- 150 Dubuque County wells have been tested so far this year
- Of the allotted \$40,400, \$24,452.06 has already been spent. The remaining \$15,947.94 will be spend by July 2022

Diane Pape-Freiberger stresses the importance of the Environmental Specialist and the need to spend all grant funds. She thanks Bailey for her work on this so far. Adam Hoffman adds his thanks to Bailey and Collin Dolphin for the work they have done as Environmental Specialists.

Adam plans to reach out to Bailey to discuss plans moving forward with water testing as it relates to programs he is currently working with.

Sandra Larson suggests sending out mailings to Dubuque County residents to inform them of these grant services.

10. Health Department Clerk Replacement Update

Patrice Lambert shares with the BOH that following interviews, an office clerk has been selected and will begin within in the next 2 weeks.

11. Budget

Samantha Kloft displays her screen to show the proposed FY23 budget document that was put together but the finance committee. Tom Bechen goes through each line item to explain justification for cost requests. This budget document was provided to the BOH in advance through the Agenda Packet. The total request for the operating budget comes to \$1,357,383.00.

Tom Bechen motions to approve the FY23 BOH operating budget for \$1,357,383.00. Adam Hoffman seconded the motion. 5 Aye, motion carried. This will now go to the BOS for final approval.

Sandra Larson requests that in the future there be more members on the Finance Committee for transparency. Tom Bechen agrees.

The Board then looks at the ARPA requests that are coming through the BOH to the BOS. These will need to be approved by the BOH to be included in the additional budget request to the BOS. The following proposal are discussed with the actions recorded:

- Health Department 5-Year Restructuring Plan
Diane Pape-Freiburger made the motion to include the Health Department 5-Year Restructuring Plan proposal costs in the BOH budget request to the BOS. Amy Crow Sunleaf seconded the motion. 5 Aye, motion carried.
- Food Policy Council – Food Systems Proposal
Amy Crow Sunleaf made the motion to include the Food Policy Council – Food Systems proposal costs in the BOH budget request to the BOS. Diane Pape-Freiburger seconded the motion. 3 Aye, 2 Ney, motion carried.
- Food Policy Council Improvement Request
Tom Bechen made the motion to not include the Food Policy Council Improvement proposal costs in the BOH budget request to the BOS. Amy Crow Sunleaf seconded the motion. 4 Aye, 1 Ney, motion carried.
- MercyOne Opioid Program
Diane Pape-Freiburger made the motion to not include the MercyOne Opioid Program proposal costs in the BOH budget request to the BOS. Sandra Larson seconded the motion. 5 Aye, motion carried.
- Dubuque County BH/JASS Program
Adam Hoffmann made the motion to include the Dubuque County BH/JASS Program proposal costs in the BOH budget request to the BOS. Tom Bechen seconded the motion. 2 Aye, 2 Ney, 1 Abstain, motion fails. However, this proposal will still be included in the budget because it was approved by the BOH in a previous meeting.

The approved proposal costs will now go to the BOS for final approval.

12. Meeting Schedule for 2022

The BOH is required to meet six times a year. Tom Bechen asks what the Board prefers to do for 2022. The Board agrees that the next meeting should remain on the third Wednesday of January and a further schedule will be discussed at the next meeting when the new BOH members are there to participate.

Sandra Larson has requested that at the next meeting there is an agenda item to discuss how the BOH responds to public comments/questions.

13. BOS/BOH Liaison Comments

Supervisor Ann McDonough shares with the BOH her son who is a surgeon informed her same day elective surgeries are still taking place. However, they are experiencing staffing issues. She also states that Becky Nowachek at IDPH has contacts that may be able to assist with restructuring the department.

Ann also shares her appreciation for the Grants to Counties report. She adds that funds may be coming to address the ongoing opioid crisis. Lastly, Ann lets the BOH know that all requests that were submitted as ARPA proposals will still be presented to the BOS in the coming months.

Ann thanks Diane and Patrice for the work they have done for the BOH, Health Department, and Dubuque County.

14. Next Meeting Date – January 19, 2022

15. Public Comment

Harley Pothoff – Shares his thanks and appreciation for both Patrice and Diane.

16. Adjournment

Amy Crow Sunleaf made the motion to adjourn at 8:35pm. Diane Pape-Freiburger seconded the motion. 5 Aye, motion carried.