Board of Health
Sandra Larson, JD, BSN
Preeti Joseph, MD
Jess Smith, PharmD, MPH
Mitchell Edwards, MD
Mike Fidgeon
Lynn "Tut" Fuller, MD
Kathryn J. Dolter, RN, PhD,
Lieutenant Colonel, U. S. Army (Retired)

DUBUQUE COUNTY BOARD OF HEALTH
Meeting Minutes – September 17, 2025 | 4:30 p.m.
Dubuque County West Campus Conference Room, 1225 Seippel Rd. Dubuque, IA & via Zoom

Call to Order: Chair Larson called the meeting to order at 4:31 p.m. (in person & Zoom).

Roll Call:
Board Members (In Person):
- Sandra Larson, Chair
- Kathryn Dolter (left at 5:54 p.m.)
- Mike Fidgeon

Board Members (Virtual):
- Mitchell Edwards (at 5:05 p.m.)
- Tut Fuller

Board Members (Absent):
- Preeti Josepth
- Jess Smith

Liaison (Virtual):
- Ann McDonough, Board of Supervisors Liaison

Internal Staff (In Person):
- Allie White
- Bailey Avenarius
- Tina Daubenberger
- John Sewell

Contracted Staff (In Person):
- Stacey Killian

Members of the Public (In Person):
- Diane Pape Freiburger
- Randy Hotchkin
- Peg Harbaugh
- Carla Kasal

Quorum Established: at 4:30 p.m.

Public Comment: Diane Pape Friburger expressed her appreciation to the Board members for their commitment and service**.** She reminded the Board that they hold the responsibility for protecting and improving public health, as outlined in Iowa Code 137.104. She noted that the Iowa Administrative Code requires local Boards of Health to base their decisions on scientific knowledge, and that under Iowa Code 137.5, county Boards of Health have jurisdiction over public health matters. She encouraged members to continue supporting the Health Department and its community partners in promoting and educating the public, as required by Iowa Code.

Chairperson Announcements & Updates: Larson noted that there are currently no bylaws addressing attendance, and that frequent absenteeism has made it increasingly difficult to conduct Board business. She mentioned the possibility of modifying or amending the bylaws and will present a proposal at the next meeting.

BOS/BOH Liaison Comments: Supervisor McDonough thanked the Board members for their service to Dubuque County. She noted that a recent email sent to the Board inadvertently created a quorum, and reminded members that when this occurs, they cannot respond to such emails. To promote transparency, Supervisor McDonough forwarded the email to the media, emphasizing that transparency builds public trust. She also stated that while she personally believes vaccines are safe, she will not engage in that discussion, as the Board of Health operates independently from the Board of Supervisors. Supervisor McDonough added that attendance has historically been a topic of discussion for boards in general, but has not advanced beyond discussion. Larson asked White to share information on upcoming training regarding the Open Meetings Act, which is now required for all Board members appointed after July 1, 2025.

Approval of September 17, 2025, Agenda: Motion by Larson to modify order of agenda by moving Action Item 8c to immediately follow the approval of the minutes, seconded by Dolter; approved unanimously.

Approval of August 20, 2025, Minutes: Motion by Fidgeon, seconded by Dolter; approved unanimously.

Action Item:

a. **Petition for Waiver 9779 Military Rd Dubuque, IA 52003.**
   Bailey Avenarius said that item #3 in the DNR waiver packet was incorrect and provided clarification before proceeding. She explained that property owner Randy Hotchkin, located at 9779 Military Road, had requested a one-time waiver to replace a failing septic system. The proposed system for the three-bedroom home included a 720-square-foot gravity sand filter, to be installed by contractor Drew Cook. Avenarius reported that she conducted a site visit on August 27 with Mr. Hotchkin, Mr. Cook, and realtor Peg Harbaugh to measure all required distances. Based on those measurements and the Iowa Administrative Code, one waiver was required—specifically, to allow the sand filter to be placed 45 feet from the homeowner's well rather than the required 100 feet. She also noted that the property currently has an offer, with a fair market value of $425,000. A

motion was made by Fidgeon, seconded by Dolter, to adopt the waiver for discussion. It was noted that if a liner were installed, no waiver would be required, with the liner estimated to cost $3,400. Larson stated that, given the fair market value, requiring a liner would not constitute an undue hardship. Fuller emphasized the importance of ensuring homeowners test their private wells annually and setting up a system to do so. Under Chapter 69, all four criteria must be satisfied for a waiver to be approved. In this case, the criteria were not met, and the Board unanimously voted to deny the waiver.

Presentations & Reports

a. VNA Report (Stacey Killian):

Medicaid Report: It was doubled in September to hit 400. These are families newly enrolled in Medicaid

Community Partnerships: The VNA reported on several recent and upcoming initiatives. Staff participated in a wellness fair at Wellpoint, where they provided direct services. They are also serving on the planning committee for the Kids Expo, an early childhood initiative that will include lead testing, child immunizations, WIC enrollment, dental screenings, and other direct services. In partnership with Dubuque County Early Childhood, the VNA received funding to purchase car seats, which represents a significant enhancement to the Maternal Health Program. On August 5, the VNA hosted a "Breakfast & Breastfeeding" event at both Allison Henderson Park and the Kehl Diabetes Center Conference Room. The event drew 20 participants and included breakfast, activities, and educational information. VNA staff were joined by community lactation consultants and representatives from all Medicaid MCOs to promote engagement and community outreach.

Family Planning: The VNA has been approved as a Family Planning Provider, with services expected to begin soon. If all goes as planned, patients will be able to access services starting in October.

Audits: School and childcare audits will be coming up in the spring, and they are preparing for this already.

b. DCPH Report (Director White):

Coalition and Partnerships: Wellness Coalition is now led by Emma Hilkin; established new SMART goals; retained $5,000 in LPHS funds to support goals. Dr. Dolter is interested in future discissions with the Iowa State University Extension. Ongoing collaboration discussions focused on promoting healthy eating and physical activity. MSA Coordination is helping to update local public health ordinances related to enforcement.

Environmental Health: Humane Society contracts are established or near-finalized with Dubuque, Asbury, and Epworth; negotiations are in progress with several other municipalities, including Peosta, Balltown, Holy Cross, Centralia, Sherrill, and Dyersville. Some cities have declined, are non-responsive, or pending follow-up (e.g., Cascade, Bernard, Bankston, Durango, Graf, Luxemburg, New Vienna, Sageville). John undergoing intensive onboarding via virtual and hands-on training; formal training scheduled in the coming months. John and Emma are working toward certification as lab staff to support water testing. Exploring expansion of water testing capabilities to include PFAS and potentially atrazine testing. Annual Lab Audit scheduled for September 22, 2025.

Emergency Preparedness: Emma attended Homeland Security Exercise & Evaluation Program (HSEEP) training on September 9–10 to support facilitation of annual tabletop exercises. Public Health Emergency Preparedness Coalition meeting scheduled for November 25, 2025, 8–9 AM at the Dubuque County Emergency Management Building.
Fuller asked what outcome White was most proud of, and she mentioned the expansion of the Private Well Grant.

Action Items:

- **a.** Mike Fidgeon to be Board of Health Vice Chairperson. Motion by Larson, seconded by Dolter; approved unanimously.
- **b.** Emma Hilkin to be Board of Health Secretary. Motion by Larson, seconded by Fidgeon; approved unanimously.

Discussion

a. Dolter apologized for inadvertently violating the Open Meetings Law and emphasized that vaccines are the second most important medical innovation in human history. She expressed support for the Board leading efforts to promote vaccination through policy. Fuller stated that while he supports vaccines, he does not support the Board endorsing or participating in events perceived as "vaccine rallies," as he does not want the Board to appear political. He clarified there had been a miscommunication regarding the upcoming Vaccinate the Heartland event, which he initially understood to be a rally but later learned it was not. Fuller added that while he does not believe a specific policy is necessary, he is not opposed to a structured policy framework that includes vaccination as one component. Edwards supported the development of a vaccination policy if it communicates a consistent, evidence-based message of being pro-science. He emphasized the importance of maintaining unwavering support for vaccines and providing opportunities for the public to engage with evidence-based platforms. Fidgeon expressed support for evidence-based practices and was open to further discussion on the need for a policy. White noted that having a policy would provide clarity and prevent uncertainty about the Board's stance. Killian stated her support for both vaccines and the creation of a vaccination policy. Larson agreed to draft a proposed policy or mission statement, to be presented at the next meeting for discussion. Fuller suggested that the draft could serve as a framework for Board policies in general, with vaccinations included as one element.

Presentation and Report

c. DCPH Quarterly Environmental Report (Bailey Avenarius):

FY26, Quarter 1

- Issued 30 septic permits
- 39 Time of Transfer reports submitted
- Issued 24 well permits
- Sampled 66 wells under the Private Well Grant thus far in Quarter one

FY26 PWG: Contract amount is $45,454, spent $15,393.84, and there is $30,060.16 remaining

Response to Public Questions: None

Unfinished Business: None

Board Communication and Reports: None

Next Meeting: October 15, 2025, at 4:30 p.m.

Public Comment: None

Adjournment: Motion by Fidgeon at 6:01 p.m.