



77 Main Street North, Suite 205
Southbury, CT 06488
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
Wednesday 4/5/2023, 5:30 PM

Voting Members in Attendance

Fred D'Amico (Oxford) Board Chair
Larry Ellis (Oxford) Vice Chair
Michael Crespan (New Milford)
John Michaels (Southbury)
Jack Kelly (Southbury)
Deb Fuller (Woodbury)
Chris Cosgrove (New Milford)

Non Voting Members in Attendance

Amy Bethge Director of Health

Staff in Attendance

Joe Kmetz (Chief Sanitarian)

Voting Members Not Present

Dean Sarjeant (Washington)
Dr. Jeremy Levin MD (New Milford)

MINUTES

Meeting called to order- Board Chair Fred D'Amico 5:30 pm

Chairman's Report

No report

Approval of Minutes

Motion to approve 3/1/2023 BOD meeting minutes

Deb Fuller made a motion to approve the minutes

Second: Chris Cosgrove

All in favor

Motion Carries

Executive Session started 5:32pm

Discussion and debriefing concerning strategy and status of the following case:

a). Lustig vs. Health District

Executive session ended at 6:00pm

Mr. Michaels made a motion to authorize Newport to release the funds to employees after the affirmation by council for the appropriate action.

Second: Chris Cosgrove

All in favor

Motion Carries

Staff Presentations

Environmental Health Team Report

Joe Kmetz stated the district is 100 times busier from the last meeting. There are also a ton of complaints coming in anywhere from housing to septic failings. Mr. Cosgrove asked if this is seasonal and lines up with last year. Mr. Kmetz stated it does and it is whenever the warm weather comes in. Ms. Fuller asked if the district has been able to recruit another sanitarian. Mr. Kmetz said the district has one person coming in for an interview next Friday. A lot of people have applied for the position but did not have any certifications the district is requiring. Ms. Bethge stated the next step in the process is to open up another position that is in the proposed budget that is a pipeline position. They will start off as an Environmental Health Administrator starting with the office work for environmental and then go out in the field with the sanitarians to learn more.

Mr. Ellis asked if there has been anything from the state loosening the requirements and Mr. Kmetz stated not as of now.

Community Health Team

Ms. Bethge sent slides to the board members with the list of senior flu clinics and the district will be adding more flu clinics as well. The clinics start in the middle of October and run through the beginning of November and have all been sent to the appropriate people to get on the town's calendars. Mr. D'Amico asked about the process of requesting vaccines. Ms. Bethge stated that what has come up recently is Town officials have requested vaccines as part of their function in town such as PPD for tuberculosis or vaccines that have lapsed for them. They are contacting our district and requesting the vaccines and we often do not have it in stock as they expire quickly. The district purchases the vaccine and then the person ends up not scheduling. Ms. Bethge proposes a process for Towns to request the vaccines so the district does not waste a vaccine. Mr. Cosgrove stated that they should go to their doctor. Mr. Michaels asked if the district is proposing to establish a standard for vaccines for town employees based on pre registration. Mr. Michaels asked if the district receives payment for the vaccination. Mr. Bethge stated we do receive payment. Mr. Cosgrove said that vaccines are not a money maker and that he does not believe the district should be doing anything to make money because that is not what we are here for and does not understand why a town official can not go to their doctor or CVS. Ms. Fuller asked how many times this has happened. Ms. Bethge stated she does not know prior to her coming to work for the district but in the past month there have been three or four requests. Mr. D'Amico said that this is different from a flu clinic as this is a specialized vaccine. Ms. Bethge said that it was specialized vaccines and just for town employees. Mr. Michaels said we do not do government requests. Mr. Kelly asked if there are any holes in vaccination coverage such as grocery stores, doctors offices don't provide.

Ms. Bethge stated it would depend on the doctors office as she believes it is different by locations. The board agreed to not provide vaccines for individual requests for special vaccines for town employees. Ms. Fuller asked if the pre register form that is mailed out to community members will still be part of the process for flu vaccine clinics.. Ms. Bethge said yes it will still be part of the process. Mr. Crespan said maybe we can partner with some of the VNA's to help them fill that gap of the special vaccines.

Budget Discussion

Discussion:

Mr. D'Amico said that three members of the Board already reviewed the budget. The board thanked Mr. Michaels, Mr. Crespan, and Ms. Bethge for their review and revision. Ms. Fuller asked since the budget includes the new position for environmental health does the budget also include raises for the staff. Ms. Bethge stated it does.

Mr. D'Amico asked if there were any other questions on the budget. Mr. Kelly stated from a budget standpoint this does not show any changes from what we looked at two weeks ago. It does not show changes from prior year or any metrics indexing activity so it is very difficult to even participate in a conversation about something that is basically a group of numbers on a sheet of paper. So in the future we should seek to provide year on year comparisons and when there are revisions to write up the revision comparisons for those of us who were not involved in the detailed conversation can see the changes that were made. He presumes since Mr. Michaels was involved that the 4 or 5 issues he had are all now treated in the budget in an appropriate manner. Mr. Michaels said it is certainly to his satisfaction. Mr. Michaels stated that Ms. Bethge has established a standard that as the district gets grants we will adjust the budget. There will be a spreadsheet to show the grants received against the budget. He stated for next year's budget there should be in the budget what was actual and what was last year's budget for comparison. Mr. Kelly asked what has happened to the per Capita in the budget. Ms. Bethge said the per capita was not changed. Mr. Kelly questioned where the vaccine expenses were in the budget. Ms. Bethge showed him they were there for \$87,000.00. Mr. Kelly stated that it sounds like vaccines are not a big money maker but a big money loser. Ms. Fuller stated the district provides community service. Mr. Michaels stated that travel vaccines are the big money maker according to the history of the district. Mr. Kelly said he is just looking at the data that is there and we should make it a priority by looking at it as we move towards a budget a year from now and what activities we do not want to include. Mr. Michaels said we need to look at if there is a need in the community. Mr. D'Amico said in the next budget we can compare the actual revenue for comparison to see if we still want to do it. Mr. D'Amico said he knows Heritage Village in Southbury was always used to getting those vaccinations. Mr. Cosgrove said the town always partnered with private sectors. Mr. Kelly said three years ago we had different expectations that we have today as we did not have grocery stores and pharmacies delivering vaccines. Mr. Cosgrove said that is a discussion over the next year and the board agreed.

Mr. D'Amico made a motion to approve the Budget for the FY 23-24 budget

Second: Deb Fuller

All in Favor

Motion Carries

Mr. D'Amico stated we need to set a Public hearing for the budget. Ms. Bethge suggested April 19th for 5:00pm at the Southbury Office. The board agreed.

Directors Report

Ms. Bethge shared an early draft version of the district's community health needs assessment that has been pulled from different pieces of publication and has been published across our region. Nuvance Health, Griffin Hospital, Waterbury Hospital and Trinity Health all put out a 3 year cycle community health assessment report in addition the entity Data Haven put out a specific report for the Towns and from last year's annual report with the number of towns served which is 5. It encapsulates 212.3 miles and the population is just under 75,000 as a district. All three community health assessments had in common were they pulled out 5 core issues that the district is looking at when we are discussing community health needs for this area. Maternal health is a big issue as it has gone way down ever since covid. Substance abuse is another issue that is becoming more prominent across the country but CT as well and Chronic Disease prevention. Ms. Bethge stated as we discuss further vaccinations for the district we should include these assessments to discuss. New Milford and Oxford have a 7% population without health insurance. Southbury, Washington and Woodbury have a 6% population without health insurance. Ms. Bethge would advocate providing vaccines for the uninsured. She said she would really like to expand upon Health risk factors in the next meeting. Folks who were surveyed rated their health as excellent or very good, 60% of folks in New Milford, 61% in Oxford, 59% in Southbury and 66% in Woodbury. Populations who had an issue with food insecurities, 8% in New Milford, 9% in Oxford, 3% in Southbury and 5% in Woodbury. Smoking was another issue that leads to other chronic health conditions. 13% in New Milford, 16% in Oxford, 6% in Southbury and 8% in Woodbury. Obesity was really the leader, 32% of the population for New Milford, 21% in Oxford, 27% in Southbury and 23% in Woodbury. Ms. Bethge stated next time she would like to go into some of the social deterrents of health. She stated after reviewing some of the more robust reports the board can start to discuss how the district would spend the funds going forward. Mr. Michaels asked Ms. Bethge if she was making the argument that a new community health assessment for just our district is not necessary as we got this recent information from other resources. Ms. Bethge said she would say it is not right now as there is enough information from other resources.

Old Business

Mr.D'Amico said we have to vote on Sharon being added to the district. The board of selectman for the Town of Sharon did vote last month to go with the district.

Discussion:

Mr. Michaels stated Ms. Bethge had a discussion with Southbury's first selectman recently that he had some concerns which Mr. Michaels said he addressed when he first heard Sharon wanted to join the district and he thought he received adequate assurances and asked Ms. Bethge to talk about those issues he had and how she addressed those concerns. Ms. Bethge said that the first selectman reported to Ms. Bethge that he is not interested in entertaining Sharon coming into the Health District. Ms. Bethge stated she does not believe his points of view are not for her to convey and that she would ask the representing board members for Southbury to speak to those points. Mr. Michaels said he would have to agree to disagree that it is okay for Ms. Bethge to tell us what the first selectman of southbury said but he thinks what his concerns are dealing with the windshield time meaning how much time would the district spend on the road instead of actually doing what the district should be doing. Mr. Michaels also stated the first selectman was concerned about the staffing levels at the district and while we are trying to fill those staffing positions taking on other community services that are far away. The other concern was the timeliness of the environmental services coupled with staffing problems that all districts are having at this time doing those inspections. Mr. Michaels stated the first selectman is all concerned with history but Mr. Michaels said we are done with that, that is in the past. Mr. Michaels would like Ms. Bethge to talk about the board's commitment if we take on Sharon that we are going to restore timeliness to the restaurant and septic inspections in our current communities. Mr. Michaels would vote yes if Ms. Bethge would address those issues. Mr. Kelly stated he read between the lines with the first selectman of Southbury and he feels his main concern is that Sharon will diminish productivity of the services in this organization and not enhance it. Mr. Kelly asked even

though we have added \$29,000.00 of revenues from Sharon what is the incremental cost of adding Sharon. Ms. Bethge stated no cost has been added barring that increase in salary to the sanitarian in training position and some additional contributions such as consultants and overtime to staff. It would add up to less than \$28,000.00. Mr. Kelly stated then the addition of Sharon in financial terms is a positive and he asks if we are diminishing our services that Mr. Michaels had stated earlier. Ms. Bethge stated the only way to look at that would be the data. She viewed the data just for the last year and she would say that our rates for approval pertaining to environmental health are arguably some of the best in the state. The number of days from receiving the applications from review to approval are very very low and she can not anticipate that would go up.

Mr. Kelly asked Ms. Bethge if she can assure the board that it will not be negatively affected. Ms. Bethge said she can not assure but she would say she is committed to making sure the services are not impacted but she can not guarantee it. Mr. Kelly stated then that is good enough for him. He was not looking for a guarantee but is assured Ms. Bethge is committed to no negative impact. Mr. D'Amico said Joe Kmetz the sanitarian is doing Sharon part time on a contract basis and he has been handling it with no problem. So he does not feel adding Sharon will take a lot of time and to Ms. Bethge's mention of how the district's turnover is about approving things. He said after dealing with some of the other districts where you can not even get a call back for three weeks, nevermind about approving applications. He said most of the districts are like that and the Housatonic Valley Health District is the only district that you get a turnaround really quick. Ms. Fuller stated the district is understaffed for this area especially for this time of year. She stated we need to staff up as it would serve the district better. Mr. Michaels said the problem is that there is only one person with the qualifications for the food inspector in all the 40 applicants the district received. Ms. Fuller said we will have the other person in training where they can go out and do other things which will help a lot. The board asked Joe Kmetz to speak on this and he stated he is not worried about picking up Sharon and there will be no problem as they are a very small town and he does it now as a contract employee and it will be no problem. He said it is only going to help the district in the long run. He has been with the district for 30 years and his opinion is that it will only help the district in the long run. Mr. Michaels said Southbury is not concerned if we can take care of Sharon but will we still be able to improve the services now. Mr. Kmetz said yes without a doubt. Mr. D'Amico asked Mr. Crespan how long to get from Sharon to New Milford. Mr. Kmetz said it takes him 38 minutes from Sharon Town Hall to New Milford Town Hall. It takes him longer from New Milford Town hall to Oxford Town hall. Mr. Crespan said from his home it takes him about a ½ hour. Mr. Michaels said with Joe Kmetz's statement about the services he has no issues. Mr. Kmetz said we will always get complaints. He said we do not approve things instantly but we will always get people complaining they want it instantly no matter what even if Sharon joined or not. You will always have a 1% issue. Mr. Michaels said he understood. Mr. Michaels also stated he had discussions with Ms. Bethge about having a database to keep track of the services. Mr. Michaels wants in the minutes that Mr. Kmetz and Ms. Bethge believe that this will not in any way diminish the service in our current 5 towns. Mr. Crespan stated that the addition of Sharon puts us above 75,000 population and that is a trigger where you can get additional grant funding and other opportunities.

Deb Fuller made a motion to add the Town of Sharon to Health district

Second: Chris Cosgrove

Abstain: Michael Crespan

All in favor

Motion Carried unanimously

New Business

Mr. Michaels wants to talk about what the board is going to do about the old district and the new district spending money for attorneys to pursue legal matters that are arising out of Mr. Lustig's legal. Mr. Cosgrove asked if that should be in an executive session. Mr. Michaels said it is not one of the ten things you can talk about in an executive session and his recommendation would be that this board asks the three towns, Oxford, Southbury and Woodbury chief executives to get together to talk about if they want to pursue this or not and the board has to decide what it wants to do as a board. Mr. Ellis agrees and said we need to get the attorney back here to get some more information before any decisions are made. The board agreed.

Meeting Adjournment - 6:43pm

Motion to adjourn: Fred D'Amico

Second: Deb Fuller

All in Favor

Motion Carries

Minutes recorded by:



Jennifer Luis