



77 Main Street North, Suite 205  
Southbury, CT 06488  
**BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING**  
Wednesday 3/1/2023, 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)  
Deb Fuller (Woodbury)  
Dr. Jeremy Levin MD (New Milford) *via google meet*  
Chris Cosgrove (New Milford) *via google meet*

Non Voting Members in Attendance

Amy Bethge (Secretary)

Staff in Attendance

Jennifer Luis (Recording)  
Joe Kmetz (Chief Sanitarian)  
Heidi Bettcher (Public Health Nurse Supervisor)

Voting Members Not Present

Dean Sarjeant (Washington)

MINUTES

Meeting called to order- Board Chair Fred D'Amico 5:33 pm

**Chairman's Report**

Fred D'Amico stated that the by-law committee has met and Mike Crespan will be making the changes in the by-laws to bring to the board for review. Southbury has another appointee for the HVHD Board. The Southbury Selectmen still has to appoint the board member at Southbury's next town meeting.

**Staff Presentations**

● **Environmental Health Team Report**

- Joe Kmetz the Chief Sanitarian stated the soil testing has been higher than normal this time of year.
- The environmental health team is short-staffed as one of the sanitarians went up to the state and it is now only himself and one other sanitarian. Spring is coming and will be crazy with more septic work and fairs.
- The permit numbers are status quo.

- Mr. D'Amico asked if the other sanitarian has taken his test for food yet. Mr. Kmetz stated he did but he still has to shadow a person from the state and it will be at least six months minimum. Mr. Kmetz said we still use a contractor part-time for food inspections.
- Mr. Michaels asked if there is anything in the rules somewhere about emergent situations. Mr. Kmetz said you can hire more part-time sanitarians to help in those situations. Mr. Crespan said there is an informal agreement with other health districts to help out. There is also a shortage of sanitarians.
- Mr. Micheals asked if a retired sanitarian has to keep up with his credentials and Mr. Kmetz stated yes. Mr. Michaels asked if we could get a retired sanitarian to work and Mr. Kmetz said there is no one out there that wants to as he has been looking.
- Chris Cosgrove asked if the district has to do septic inspections on a house if it sells and Mr. Kmetz stated they do not as there are no state statutes.
- Mr. Crespan asked if we could hire someone without certifications. Mr. Kmetz said the district would have to train that person and then that person leaves as it is happening across the state. Mr. Crespan said he understands they can not do septic work or food but they can handle the complaints and other items that you do not have to be certified. Mr. Kmetz said the position the district is hiring for is a Sanitarian II position and you need to be certified. Mr. Crespan explained that the non-certified would be in addition to four sanitarian positions. Mr. Kmetz said he is all for that but it is not in the budget.
- Mr. Michaels stated there is an EMT crisis in the state worse than the sanitarians and the state is starting to pay attention and asks if there is a coalition at the state level that is trying to help with the sanitarian shortage. Mr. D'Amico said that the Commissioner of Health has a coalition and is working on that to help lower credentials to help with the shortage. Mr. Michaels said this could take years. Amy Bethge said we could look into it and see what the state is doing and at a smaller level by looking into interns. Dr. Levin asked if there is a college to link up with that trains the students. Mr. Crespan said Southern University provides Public Health degrees. Mr. Kmetz stated they do not get on the job training for food and septic, that is done out in the field. Ms. Bethge agrees with Mr. Kmetz that the field training is done more out in the field and not in the university but will reach out to the schools for internships.
- **Community Health Team**
  - Heidi Bettcher the Public Health Nurse stated the district continues to operate the Covid-19 vaccine and blood pressure clinics along with the childhood and adult immunizations.
  - The covid-19 clinics for testing and vaccines has decreased dramatically but there is a huge uptick in the blood pressure clinics and people coming for immunizations from other towns. Ms. Bettcher stated she is hearing from the community that we have convenient appointment times and are trustworthy.
  - The flu schedule is being worked on now and Ms. Bettcher is working with the town's Senior Centers for the flu clinics.
  - Ms. Bettcher has a program called Healthy Chats with Heidi that provides monthly educational programs at each Senior Center. She stated all five towns are different in their needs and there is a different program for each town.
  - March 23rd the district is having a CPR class for all the clinical volunteers for free.
  - Insurance payments for our vaccines have been taking a long time due to the name change but the district is starting to see payments come through from the insurance reimbursements.

- Mr. Crespan asked Ms. Bettcher how are the Covid-19 and Flu cases at this time? Ms. Bettcher stated that since people are using home tests for Covid-19 it is hard to gauge.
- There is a flu home test coming out on the shelves for the community. The flu is flatlined low and looks good at this time.
- Mr. Crespan asked if Ms. Bettcher has other nursing staff and Ms. Bettcher said she does not as her part-time nurse has left for another opportunity. She also stated we have interviews set up for next Monday.
- Ms. Fuller asked if the district uses volunteers and Ms. Bettcher said that the district does and has great volunteers and we use some for the blood pressure clinics. Mr. Crespan asked when was the last time Ms. Bettcher used volunteers and she said recently during our flu clinic season.
- Ms. Fuller stated she did not see any flu clinics for the Town of Woodbury and Ms. Bettcher stated we did have them at the school and senior center. Mr. Crespan stated I am sure Ms. Bettcher has the list of dates to show Ms. Fuller that there were flu clinics in Woodbury and Ms. Bettcher said she would be happy to send the dates to Ms. Fuller.

### **Directors Report**

Mr. D'Amico introduced Amy Bethge as the new Director of Health for the Housatonic Valley Health District. Ms. Bethge thanked the Board for the opportunity, it has been wonderful. Ms Bethge would like to give an update on the previous outstanding items from the previous board meeting. One was the ELC 2 grant which has since been signed and submitted. Ms. Bethge is excited to look into the opportunities of what needs to be done for the district.

Mr. D'Amico stated that the district is looking into digitization of the property files and has received estimates. He said it is good to digitize as it would be easier for the community and staff. Ms. Fuller asked where the estimates were and Ms. Bethge noted the packet given to board. The company in the packet is what the state has used to digitize their files. Mr. D'Amico stated one option is for the district to purchase the scanning machine which could be up to \$50,000.00 and have staff members scan the files which might help save a lot of money. Mr. Michaels asked how to read the estimate and Ms. Bethge said the total of all five towns is \$156,402.00. The other amounts are the totals for each individual town which includes the company to do all the scanning on the district's behalf. Another option is to write a grant to hire an individual to scan the files. Ms. Fuller would like to know the price difference between the district scanning themselves and the company doing it all. Mr. Michaels said the district should look into leasing a scanner with an option to buy. Mr. Crespan stated we would need to keep the scanner in order to maintain the files. Mr. Cosgrove asked what type of scanner would cost \$50,000.00? Mr. D'Amico said he thinks that they might be around \$20,000.00 and it is a speciality scanner for large engineered plans. Mr. Cosgrove also stated that if we do the digitization, we would set up a process that we would never have to scan again and the records would go in digitally from the start. Mr. D'Amico said we can require people to send electronically now. Mr. Kmetz stated there would be a logistics problem with the towns as the district would have to move the file cabinets from the other two towns of New Milford and Washington. Dr. Levin stated the \$150,000.00 includes professional people who do this sort of thing all the time and cautions on the options being presented and what would be the best survivable product at the end. Dr. Levin said shifting files from one place to another can lead to losing information and agrees with Mr. Cosgrove about digitizing as records come in and feels that paper records are outdated and what will it cost us to keep a cloud maintained to keep the records. Mr. Michaels stated we would have to have them accessible to the public. Ms. Bethge said these are great points and would look into that. Larry Ellis asked if we do know if paper copies need to be retained and knows the state requires some paper records to be kept. There are retention records to be researched. Mr. D'Amico stated we still need to look into digitization further and ask other health districts about their digitization of files.

## **Old Business**

Mr. D'Amico said we will hold off on the budget as the district will present a more detailed budget next week.

By-laws - Mr. Crespan will make the changes to present to the board. Mr. D'Amico said there should be a special meeting held to discuss and we should also change the meeting schedule.

*Mr. Michaels made a motion to add to the agenda a revised meeting schedule.*

*Second: Ms. Fuller*

*All in favor*

*Motion carries*

Ms. Fuller would like to meet monthly. Mr. Michaels would like to move monthly as there is a lot to discuss.

*Mr. Michaels made a motion to move the board meetings monthly.*

*Second: Mike Crespan*

*All in favor*

*Motion Carries*

Mr. D'Amico asked if any of the towns had any comments regarding the budget and there were none. Mr. Michaels would like to set up a special meeting now for March regarding the budget, by-laws and digitization update.

Mr. D'Amico would like to form a subcommittee for finance. He would like to appoint himself, John Michaels and Mike Crespan. Ms. Bethge recommends the first item for the subcommittee is to replace the Mission Accounting firm.

Mr. D'Amico asked regarding the conflict of interest on the agenda and Mr. Michaels said there should be a conflict of interest policy for the district. Mr. D'Amico said there could be conflict of interest information in the by-laws and will discuss at a later time about a policy for the district. Mr. Michaels also stated there should be a sub-committee for personnel to make sure the district has personnel documents. Ms. Bethge stated the district has those documents in place. She feels the board does not need a sub-committee for personnel; it should be on ad-hoc which the board agreed.

## **New Business**

Discussion on vacation carry-over for district staff - Mr. D'Amico stated the staff currently has 35 hours to be carried over for vacation and for the board to allow the staff to carry over all their unused vacation to the next fiscal year but only allowed to use it in that next fiscal year. This will help prevent staff from taking the time off during the busy months of May and June before the staff loses it as it has been a problem in other towns.

*Mr. Michaels made a motion to carry over vacation time from one week to 4 weeks into the next fiscal year.*

*Second: Larry Ellis*

*All in favor*

*Motion carries*

Addition of Sharon to the Health District - Mr. D'Amico stated Sharon is losing their health director due to retirement and would like to join the district. Mr. Crespan clarified as he is the Director of Health for Sharon. They have not made a decision as of yet and will have to put it to a vote in the next couple of months. It is on the district's agenda for informational purposes only. Mr. D'Amico said it is a small



town of about 2800 people and the district would need only one day a week in Sharon. The money we receive from Sharon and the state might be able to hire another sanitarian to help cover. The staff is also familiar with Sharon as Joe has a contract with Sharon to do the environmental work. Mr. D'Amico recommends adding Sharon. Mr. Michaels has significant reservations as we are having trouble now with the timeframe on the inspections we do now. He would hate to see us diminish our services to the towns we have now and not be able to do Sharon they were they deserve to be done. Mr. Michaels asked Amy if she believes she can meet the time frame and do what needs to be done in the existing district then he is ok with adding Sharon and not to be bullied by the chairman to add Sharon because they need the services as charity begins at home. Ms. Bethge agrees and her responsibility as the director is to make sure we are not sacrificing quality of service with our five towns. During her research she found that there is a large financial component that will outweigh the quality of service as it will help hire an additional sanitarian to perform the inspections as it is only about 10 to 15 food establishments. From the community health perspective, the district's public health nurse is currently working with the homebound patients in Sharon and if any other community member needs services they can come to either New Milford or Southbury so as to not overextend our community health staff. If Ms. Bethge was concerned we would be sacrificing the quality of service she would not entertain adding Sharon but with the information she has been given and what she has researched she does not feel it would sacrifice the services. Mr. Michaels stated, given with what Ms. Bethge said, helping our fears then he supports adding Sharon. Mr. Ellis asked what would be the money from the State and Town of Sharon. Mr. Kmetz stated with the fees, the per Capita from the State and Town it would approximately be at the most \$40,000.00.

Mr. Crespan stated he could let Sharon know the board had a discussion on adding Sharon and it is agreeable. Mr. Michaels wanted it in the minutes for Sharon to see based upon Ms. Bethge's assurances, the board will accept Sharon to the district when they make their decision and would like the budget to be revised for the board to review in the next couple of weeks with the addition of Sharon fees.

**Meeting Adjournment - 6:51pm**

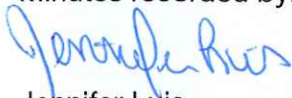
*Motion: Deb Fuller*

*Second: John Michaels*

*All in Favor*

*Motion Carries*

Minutes recorded by:



Jennifer Luis