



77 Main Street North, Suite 205
Southbury, CT 06488
Regular Meeting
Wednesday 01/07/2026, 5:30PM

Voting Members in Attendance

Larry Ellis (Oxford) (Chairperson)
Deb Fuller (Woodbury) (Vice Chairperson)
Michael Crespan (New Milford)
Chris Cosgrove (New Milford)
Dr. Jeremy Levin (New Milford)
Scott Halstead (Oxford)
Casey Flanagan (Sharon)
Jack Kelly (Southbury)
John Michaels (Southbury)
Sarah Fatibene (Southbury)

Non Voting in Attendance

Amy Bethge, MPH (Director of Health)

Voting Members Not Present

Dean Sarjeant (Washington)

MEETING MINUTES

Meeting called to order: Larry Ellis 5:30pm

Ms. Bethge introduced Sarah Fatibene, HVHD's new board member for the Town of Southbury. Ms. Fatibene's appointment fills a vacant seat for the Town that was created when Southbury's population surpassed 20,000 residents.

Ms. Fatibene, MBA, MPH, CPH is a senior healthcare leader and Director of Solution Development and Execution at CareAllies, where she oversees the development and execution of value-based care and provider engagement strategies that drive quality, performance, and population health improvement. With a background in public health and healthcare administration, she brings a data-driven, systems-oriented perspective informed by experience across the public, private, nonprofit, and government sectors. Sarah is recognized for her strategic rigor, cross-functional leadership, and ability to translate evidence-based research into scalable, sustainable public health solutions. Ms. Bethge shared that HVHD is very happy to have Ms. Fatibene on board.

Executive Session

Larry Ellis made a motion to move into Executive Session to discuss updates and advice from counsel regarding Lustig vs HVHD

Second: John Michaels

All in favor

Motion Carries

Entered Executive Session: 5:33pm

Left Executive Session: 5:37pm

Approval of Minutes

Motion to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes from 11/5/25 and the Special Meeting Minutes from 11/18/25.

Ms. Fuller made a motion to approve the minutes.

Second: John Michaels

All in favor

Motion Carries

Finance Committee Report

Mr. Michaels shared that the FY 26/27 budget had been reviewed and approved by the Finance Subcommittee to be sent to the full Board. He shared that Ms. Bethge circulated the FY 26/27 Budget and supporting documents to the full Board for review prior to tonight's meeting, and that discussion regarding the budget and associated documents was to follow later in the meeting.

He also shared that the December financial statements were received early and disseminated for the Board's review. He shared that the statements were accurate, clean, and simple.

Chairmans Report

No report

Directors Report

Vaccine Schedule Update

Ms. Bethge shared that recent public discussion has raised questions about the future of the nation's vaccine schedule, following statements by Robert F. Kennedy Jr. As these conversations continue at the national level, we want to be sure that residents have access to clear, accurate information.

According to CT DPH Commissioner of Health, Manisha Juthani, there will be no changes to Connecticut's recommended immunization schedule. Vaccines are a cornerstone of public health. They have played a critical role in reducing serious illness, preventing outbreaks, and protecting those most at risk, including infants, older adults, and individuals with chronic medical conditions. High vaccination rates also help ensure health equity by reducing preventable disease in all communities.

Ms. Bethge read a quote by Dr. Juthani, in which she shared that "Connecticut has serious concerns about the recent changes to the national childhood vaccine schedule. While doctors already work with parents to talk through the benefits and risks of vaccines, clear national guidance has helped families make informed decisions with confidence. Scaling back those recommendations risks creating confusion, placing more burden on parents and clinicians, and making preventive care harder to navigate. Other countries' vaccine schedules reflect their own health systems and disease patterns, and a one-size-fits-another-country approach does not reflect the realities facing children in the United States. Connecticut will continue to support evidence-based recommendations designed to protect children and the communities we serve."

Ms. Bethge stated that in alignment with CT DPH, HVHD strongly supports evidence-based immunization practices and works to ensure vaccines are safe, accessible, and effective.

She noted that HVHD recognizes that questions about vaccines are common, especially when information circulating online may be incomplete or misleading. Residents are encouraged to speak with trusted healthcare providers and rely on reputable sources for accurate guidance.

Ms. Bethge said that our local health department remains committed to protecting the health of our community through education, prevention, and access to immunization services. We will continue to share updates as appropriate and support residents in making informed decisions that keep Connecticut healthy.

She stated that for more information on immunizations in Connecticut, residents can visit the CT Department of Public Health website or reach out to HVHD directly.

Measles Update

Ms. Bethge shared that last month, the first measles case in Connecticut in more than four years was confirmed by CT DPH. The case was identified in an unvaccinated child who had traveled internationally.

Ms. Bethge shared that measles is a highly contagious viral illness that can spread quickly among people who are not immune. Symptoms start with fever, cough, runny nose, and watery eyes, followed by a rash that typically begins on the face and spreads downward. Measles cases in the U.S. reached their highest levels in over 30 years in 2025, with more than 2,000 confirmed cases nationwide. Outbreaks have occurred across dozens of states, largely in communities with lower vaccination coverage.

She continued, saying that public health authorities are monitoring whether the U.S. can maintain its measles elimination status (no sustained transmission over 12 months). Efforts include detailed genetic analysis and outbreak tracking to distinguish sporadic importations from sustained spread. Canada recently lost its measles elimination status.

Ms. Bethge said that fortunately, for our state, Connecticut continues to lead the nation in MMR (measles, mumps, rubella) vaccination coverage among kindergarten students, with rates well above the 95% threshold needed for community (herd) immunity. This strong vaccination coverage helps reduce the risk of widespread transmission even when individual cases are introduced through travel or external outbreaks.

Guidance for Residents:

- Stay up to date on MMR vaccination
- Two doses of MMR vaccine are highly effective at preventing measles
- Review vaccination records for children, teens, and adults
- Talk to your healthcare provider about immunization status if you're unsure
- Individuals planning international travel should ensure they are current on MMR vaccination before departure, especially young children and people without documented immunity
- Watch for symptoms
 - If you or a family member develop fever and rash after travel or exposure, contact your healthcare provider immediately before seeking care in person, and follow isolation guidance to prevent spread

Emerging Fungal Pathogen: Candida Auris

Ms. Bethge shared that *Candida auris* is an emerging fungal pathogen that causes serious infections. This is a particular concern for those within healthcare facilities who have serious medical problems. Rapid and accurate identification of *Candida auris* is a priority for the Connecticut Department of

Public Health (CT DPH), Healthcare-Associated Infections & Antimicrobial Resistance (HAI-AR) Program. *Candida auris* is a public health threat for three main reasons:

1. It is often multidrug-resistant
2. It can be misidentified in laboratories without specific technology, leading to missed opportunities for containment
3. It has caused outbreaks in healthcare settings

Influenza

Ms. Bethge shared that Connecticut is currently experiencing a significant increase in influenza activity, with case counts much higher than this time last year. Recent data shows that flu cases increased from about 831 in late November to nearly 4,755 by late December, and hospitalizations have risen from the dozens to the hundreds. Also worthy of note, the surge is occurring earlier in the season than usual.

She reported that the major driver of this season's surge appears to be a mutated strain of influenza A (H3N2), known as subclade K. This strain spreads rapidly and may partially evade the current flu vaccine formulation, however it is important to note that vaccination still provides important protection against severe illness and is protective against hospitalization.

Guidance for Residents:

- Get vaccinated if you have not already:
 - Even if this year's vaccine isn't a perfect match for the circulating strain, flu shots substantially reduce the risk of severe disease, hospitalization, and death. Vaccination remains the single best tool to protect individuals and their communities
- Practice preventive measures:
 - Stay home and avoid contact with others when you are sick
 - Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or your elbow
 - Wash hands frequently with soap and water
 - Consider masks in crowded indoor settings during peak activity
- Watch for symptoms and seek care early
 - Flu symptoms typically include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, fatigue, and sometimes vomiting or diarrhea. People at higher risk, such as young children, older adults, pregnant people, and those with chronic health conditions, should seek medical advice early, as antiviral treatments work best when started promptly

Environmental Health Update:

Ms. Bethge shared that January is National Radon Action Month. Radon is an odorless, colorless radioactive gas that can enter homes from the natural breakdown of uranium in soil and rock. Radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer in the United States and the leading cause among non-smokers. Because radon cannot be seen or smelled, the only way to know your home's exposure level is to test. Testing is recommended every two years for all Connecticut households.

She stated that homes in Connecticut and across New England often have elevated radon levels due to regional geology. The EPA and CT DPH recommend testing every home, regardless of age, foundation type, or recent renovations. If levels exceed 4 pCi/L, certified radon mitigation professionals can install reduction systems that reliably lower indoor concentrations.

This month, HVHD encourages residents to take proactive steps by testing their home with a free radon test kit provided by HVHD/CT DPH. Those interested may stop by one of our offices located in New Milford, Southbury, or Sharon to pick up a kit.

Building and Septic Report

Ms. Bethge shared that average turnaround time for building and septic activities is 1.76 days for FY 25/26. The environmental health team is currently working on completing food inspections, daycare inspections, and lead inspections due to reduced building and septic work in the 'off season.'

She shared the updated [Environmental Health Dashboard](#) with the Board.

Community Health Update:

Ms. Bethge reviewed HVHD's [Flu Dashboard](#) with the Board.

This month's community conversations will focus on Seasonal Affective Disorder and will be held at senior centers and libraries throughout the district. HVHD will begin hosting the Impact Teen Drivers Parent-Teen workshop at the Oxford Library later this month.

Ms. Bethge shared that HVHD is offering childhood vaccine clinics throughout the month. Vaccines are free and available to children under 19.

Administrative Updates:

Ms. Bethge shared that bi-annual performance reviews are currently in progress.

Old Business

No Report

New Business

Budget:

Ms. Bethge presented the FY Budget 26/27 to the board. The updated budget reflects an increase in the per capita rate from \$9.68 to \$9.98.

Motion to approve the FY 26/27 budget for review at public hearing

Mr. Michaels made the motion

Second: Dr. Levin

All in favor

Motion Carries

Motion to add the scheduling of a public hearing date to the agenda

Mr. Michaels made the motion

Second: Chris Cosgrove

All in favor

Motion carries

Motion to set the public hearing date for January 21, 2026 at 5:30pm

Mr. Kelly made the motion

Second: Deb Fuller

All in favor

Motion Carries

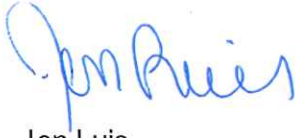
Motion to adjourn

Mr. Michaels made a motion to adjourn at 6:50pm

Second: Jack Kelly

All in favor
Motion Carries

Recorded by:



Jen Luis