

Marathon County Board of Health Minutes

Meeting Date/Time: Tuesday, January 11, 2022, at 7:45 AM
Meeting Location: Marathon County Courthouse
Assembly Room
500 Forest Street
Wausau, WI 54403

Present - In Person: Craig McEwen, John Robinson

Present - Via WebEx: Sandi Cihlar, Dean Danner, Tara Draeger, Corrie Norrbom

MCHD Staff: Eileen Eckardt, Dale Grosskurth, Rachel Klemp-North (Online),
Amanda Ostrowski (Online), Becky Mroczenski (Online), Jon Schmunk,
Laura Scudiere, Kim Wieloch (Online), Kang Chu Yang

Others via WebEx: Tim Buttke, Chris Dickinson, Sarah Dowidat

1. Call to Order

John Robinson called the meeting to order at 7: 45 AM.

2. Public Comment Period (Limit to 15 Minutes)

The following members of the public provided comments. Comments voiced concerns regarding safety and efficacy of vaccination, vaccination mandates, masking mandates, among other items.

Name	Residence
Steve Frazier	Schofield, Wisconsin
Stacy Morache	Wausau, Wisconsin
Julie Thiel	Wausau, Wisconsin
Alex Hartinger	Weston, Wisconsin
Melinda DeGier	Merrill, Wisconsin
Tim Sondelski	Mosinee, Wisconsin
Chad J. Bender	Weston, Wisconsin
Ride Pixley	Ringle, Wisconsin
Robin Baker	Wausau, Wisconsin

Comments were limited to three minutes at the direction of the Chair and limited to the first 15 minutes. Additional time was allotted at the end of the meeting agenda to public comment.

3. Approval of the Minutes

A. December 14, 2021 Board of Health Meeting

Motion to approve the minutes of the December 14, 2022, Board of Health meeting made by Craig McEwen. Second by Sandi Cihlar. Motion approved.

4. Operational Functions Required by Statute, Ordinance, or Resolution

A. None

5. Policy Discussion and Possible Action

A. Potential recommendation to schools in relation to 252.05 and 252.21

John Robinson, Chair, informed the board that the letter proposed by Health Officer, Laura Scudiere, for potential recommendation to schools in relation to 252.05 and 252.21, has been withdrawn. Scudiere noted that after much discussion with school superintendents, she is confident that they understand their statutory responsibilities and would not recommend moving forward with any further communication at this time.

6. Educational Presentations/Outcome Monitoring Reports

A. COVID Status Review

Scudiere shared that the data in the packet reflected the status of COVID one week prior, when the board packet was posted. Since the last board meeting, COVID numbers had risen. There was a total of 349 cases and the county's current 7-day average was 320. Scudiere reported that the continual rise in COVID cases is disrupting many of our systems, causing staffing shortages in all sectors including businesses, health care systems, and delaying non-urgent care in our hospitals. Scudiere also announced that new COVID treatments are being approved. Paxlovid (Pfizer) was approved December 2021. Wisconsin received very low amounts of this treatment but are expected to get more in coming weeks.

The Health Department continues to offer community PCR testing. Testing is now available on January 8 and 10, and additional testing with the National Guard on Monday January 24. In partnership with the UW, the Health Department continues to hold rapid testing. Testing is available every Thursday from 9-5 at Eastgate Hall. Rapid testing kits can be found online and at local pharmacies also. Testing continues with local health care agencies and pharmacies.

The steep rise in cases has changed the focus of the operations of the health department. Staff are focused on preventing hospitalizations and supporting residents that are most impacted by COVID and have higher incident of severe disease. The department continues to provide guidance to positive cases through mail, by calling priority cases, and the staff continues to operate in crisis standards of care. The health department also plans to open a resource line for the community to answer questions about isolation and quarantines. The health department continues to work with local partners to coordinate messaging to the community about how to keep healthy.

B. Start Right Evaluation Review

Scudiere and Communicable Disease and Family Health Director Eileen Eckardt gave an overview of the evaluation provided by UniverCity. Scudiere shared that Start Right provides support and parent coaching to residents throughout Marathon County from pregnancy to age 5. The First Steps component offers prenatal support, education, and referral. The second component, Step by Step, provides support for postpartum families up until the child's age of 5. Former Health Officer, Joan Theurer, initiated the evaluation looking to further quantify the return on investment of the program. UniverCity found that the program met performance targets and had "laudable results," and was an "effective

program,” but that the model lacked sufficient data to prove that the observed outcomes were “large enough to matter.” Scudiere also expressed to the board that the recommendations by the evaluator were not meant to improve the effectiveness or quality of the program itself but rather how can the program improve the ability to assess its program.

Eckardt shared the following recommendations made by UniverCity. 1) Secure a command database to support both programs. 2) Track the programs with longitudinal studies. 3) Evaluate that benchmarks set are being met. 4) Obtain more demographic and social demographics. 5) Identify comparison/control groups. 6) Document First Step cases. 7) Obtain other forms of feedback. 8) Have a staff work closely with the evaluator. 9) Include other public agency that incur fees.

The evaluation was conducted to further quantify the benefit of continuing this program. If the health department is able to effectively demonstrate return on investment, Scudiere reports, it can give the program the potential opportunity to apply for federal and/or state funding. MCHD staff expressed that the goal this year is to have a clear direction on the future of Start Right before the next budgetary cycle. Board member, Corrie Norrbom indicated concerns over control groups and cautioned care in implementing these recommendations. Eckhardt shared that additional models were being reviewed that have completed long-term studies. Concerns were expressed over whether the program could be outsourced to other organizations, and it was pointed out that in the last 3 years, the Start Right program has been put on to the list of programs to possibly discontinue. Board members noted that prevention of health and social issues is necessary for the health department but acknowledged that prevention is difficult to evaluate.

After the health department has completed an analysis of potential costs, Scudiere will provide a report to the Board in April 2022.

C. PFAS Chemicals and Health Impacts

Robinson and Environmental Health Director Dale Grosskurth gave an overview of Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) and related environmental impact. Robinson shared the challenges with PFAS. Regulations in Wisconsin are being approached. The PFAS Advisory Council External Advisory Committee is working to provide better information of PFAS to the public.

Grosskurth shared traces of PFAS was confirmed in a well in Rib Mountain in the months of November and in December 2021. A small but concerning amount of PFAS was found in 1 of the 4 wells in Rib Mountain. He also explained that the source of the chemical and the duration of the exposure cannot be determined presently. More testing is expected. Grosskurth indicated that Rib Mountain has reached out to Rothchild municipality and are looking to sample their own water. Currently, no other municipality has reached back out to Rib Mountain municipality or the health department. He also mentioned that testing is voluntary, and it can cost around \$600-\$700 per sample.

Robinson concluded that there are no standards available for PFAS regulations, but proposals are in the works.

- D. Report from the Health & Human Services Committee meeting on policy issues impacting public health

County supervisor, Tim Buttke shared that Health & Human Services Committee met on Jan 5, 2022. The Public Safety Committee discussed the potential reduction of the fine for small possession of marijuana from \$250 to a \$50 fine. It would not be a decriminalized offense.

7. Announcements

- A. None

8. Next Meeting Date & Time, Location, Future Agenda Items:

- A. Confirm February 8, 2022, meeting date and determine agenda topics

9. Adjourn

**Motion to adjourn made by Craig McEwen; second by Dean Danner. Motion approved.
Meeting was adjourned at 9:05 AM.**

Respectfully submitted,

**Kue Her, Secretary
Kang Chu Yang, Recorder**