

Marathon County Board of Health Minutes

Meeting Date/Time: Tuesday, March 8th, 2022, at 7:45 AM

Meeting Location: Marathon County Courthouse
Assembly Room
500 Forest Street
Wausau, WI 54403

Present - In Person: Tara Draeger, Craig McEwen, John Robinson

Present - Via WebEx: Sandi Cihlar, Dean Danner, Corrie Norrbom, Kue Her, Helen Luce

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

Others via WebEx: Chris Dickinson, Jean Maszk

Committee Members: John Robinson, Chair; Craig McEwen, Vice-Chair; Kue Her, Secretary;
Sandi Cihlar; Dean Danner; Tara Draeger; Tiffany Lee; Helen Luce;
Corrie Norrbom

1. Call to Order

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

John Robinson provided follow-up regarding questions relating to VAERS data. DHS was not available to meet with the board today. A representative that can speak to vaccine safety is being sought for a future meeting.

2. Public Comment Period (Limit to 15 Minute)

The following members of the public provided comments. Commenter voiced concerns regarding health system practices and vaccine safety.

Name	Residence
Melinda DeGier	Merrill, WI

Comments were limited to three minutes at the direction of the Chair and limited to the first 15 minutes.

3. Approval of the Minutes

A. February 8, 2021, Board of Health Meeting

Motion to approve the minutes of the February 8, 2022, Board of Health meeting made by Craig McEwen. Second by Sandi Cihlar. Motion approved.

4. Policy Discussion and Possible Action

A. None

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

A. None

6. Educational Presentations/Outcome Monitoring Reports

A. Update on Wausau's ongoing PFAS mitigation efforts and the role of the health department

- I. Environmental Health and Safety Director, Dale Grosskurth, gave a review of the PFAS sampling of Wausau and other municipalities.

PFAS is a chemical introduced in the 1940s for its water repellent qualities through consumer goods and manufacturing. There are two types, PFOA and PFOS. PFAS is currently not regulated but has set health advisory standards. The EPA and DNR has a guidance set at 70 parts per trillion and DHS at 20 parts per trillion. Marathon County Health Department's role has been to provide support and connect partners to DHS and DNR, provide education to residents and the impacted municipalities, and assist in strategies to reduce residents' levels of PFAS. United Way 211 received 54 calls with questions relating to what PFAS is, how to filter it, safety, and alternative water sources. A few restaurants also contacted the health department regarding how to use water and how to keep their water safe for customers. Grosskurth informed the board that there is currently three parts to the city's mitigation efforts:

1. Rapid response - ensuring point-of-use filters and bottled water is available to the community, including underserved populations. Water bottles are available from The Neighbor's Place and the Hmong American Center.
2. Conducting a small-scale pilot study to the treatment system and its associated cost with permeated treatments.
3. Conducting a bridge study for a larger scale application with a new water ION exchange treatment. In turn, the city is exploring filtering PFAS from 5 million gallons of water per day. Rothschild and Rib Mountain are working to adjust their water systems to current health advisory standards. Both municipalities have wells that were not affected by the chemical.

Chair John Robinson informed the board of health that Wausau Water Works Commission is meeting to talk about finances and how to rapidly respond. Emergency response and carbon filters have been placed. They are also working with DHS to look at the entire system, wastewater, and the Wisconsin rivers. Concentrated PFAS in bio solids can go into livestock and crops and is of concern. The EPA are also looking to review the DHS standards.

Grosskurth summarized that current standard are from DHS and DNR. The NFS NC 58 filter for certified osmosis systems meet PFAS filtering standards. Questions should be directed to the installer of the specific system. Certain systems are good at removing some but not all PFAS parts. Some municipalities have surveyed their water systems, and others have plans to test this year. Robinson also states that the EPA found PFAS in 2016 and set their standards at 70 parts per trillion. Other states such as MN and IL have set similar health

advisory standards. Based on the number of factors PFAS is causing in multiple counties, the State of WI has included funding to act on municipal drinking and wastewater treatment for PFAS.

B. Review of data relative to suicide rates in Marathon County

- I. Marathon County's Medical Examiner, Jessica Blahnik, provided a data on suicide deaths in the county from 2018 to 2021, which was reviewed by Laura Scudiere

Health Officer Laura Scudiere reiterated the health priority definition and key indicators selected in previous meetings. The health department is looking to the Board of Health to support the prevention strategies. Mental health is a key health priority for the Marathon County Health Department and is being actively addressed through the Community Health Improvement Plan process. An update on The CHIP process was given at the February 2021 Board of Health Meeting.

Western Marathon Coalition expanded services through telehealth but has reported a decrease in service usage after implementation. Telehealth has not been an effective mode in reaching patients. Robinson asked the Board of Health about strategies that could address the backlog and expansion of mental health services to the teenage population. What role can the Health Department and Board of Health play to help obtain funding for these sorts of services? Robinson also confirmed that school systems outreach continues.

Board members questioned the affordability of the program for underserved or rural students. Scudiere indicated that the services some programs have a sliding fee scale, and many students qualify for Medicaid. Board member Tara Draeger shared that the health consortium has funding specifically for students who may have barriers, such as rural students with high insurance deductibles.

County Board Supervisor Chris Dickenson commented that COVID stressors were a factor in poor youth mental health and suggested holistic approaches in addition to medical or behavioral health approaches. Board of Health members expressed that most teenagers may not always need a mental health professional, but the stress of life during teen years can be difficult and that this was true prior to COVID. County support in early childhood programs can support the child's environmental factors but is not a quick fix. Board of Health Members discussed that mental health initiatives cannot focus on just COVID or suicide. The focus must be on prevention. The Community Health Improvement Program process involves the key factors in turning the curve.

Board of Health member, Kue Her, suggested that key stake holders must help normalize this initiative within the Hmong community. Culture barriers will play a role in the Hmong community's ability to accept such programs and services.

Scudiere noted that the next update on CHIPP progress will be in June.

- C. Marathon County Health Department COVID Status Review
 - I. John Robinson reminded the board that the COVID status review was provided in written form in the board packet. No further updates were given at this time.

- D. Report From the Health & Human Services Committee Meeting on Policy Issues Impacting Public Health
 - I. John Robinson shared the North Central Health Care metro ride project is moving forward and waiting for a response from Conservation, Planning, and Zoning.

7. Next Meeting Date & Time, Location, Announcements and Future Agenda Items:

- A. Committee members are asked to bring ideas for future discussion.
- B. Next Board of Health Meeting: **Tuesday, April 12, 2022, at 7:45 a.m.**

8. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn made by Craig McEwen; second by Tara Draeger. Motion approved. Meeting was adjourned at 8:39 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

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