

Calhoun County Board of Health
Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, August 31, 2005

ATTENDANCE

Board of Health

Larry Anderson
Jean Cook-Hughes
Byron McDonald
Ben Miller
George Perrett
Ken Ponds

Health Department

Ginger Hentz
Brigette Reichenbaugh

Calhoun County

Greg Purcell
Jennifer Bucienski

Absent

Jeff Mitchell (excused)

Anderson called the meeting to order at 7:00 a.m.

Anderson moved the Health Officer's report to the beginning of the meeting. Perrett moved. Ponds supported.

COMMENT

McDonald: Addressed his opinion about two comments that were stated at the last Board of Health (BOH) meeting regarding two Health Department (HD) employees as the reflection on the remaining 70+ employees. Someone stated that "We need to go in a new direction" at the last meeting. McDonald does not recall the BOH stating that a new direction was needed. Purcell responded that as a Board that we would be supportive of an employee not spending tax dollar money on upgrades and compensatory time for an evening reception and feels that it is inappropriate and was not inferring that this was a reflection on all employees. McDonald agreed with Purcell but felt that the timing was inappropriate being that up during the discussion of Health Officer candidates. Hentz stated that the employee that requested the upgrade was denied the reimbursement and the situation did not go to grievance. The compensatory time issue was an example of a question raised by staff asking for clarification of County Travel Time Policy.

INTERIM HEALTH OFFICER REPORT

Contracts for Health Partnership (HP) and Albion Student Health Center (ASHC) would like to be back dated when presented in the September 2005 BOH meeting. Hentz signed an intent to sign an agreement with the ASHC once the BOH approves.

Budget updates: The Teen Parent Program/Department of Human Services funding was given to another provider. We received notice that the United Way of Greater Battle Creek (UWGBC) Teen Pregnancy funding will be discontinued November 1. The impact on staff will be a loss of two employees from the Teen Parent Program but both may be able to reallocate their time to other programs. UWGBC Teen Parent Program is a loss of 1.0 FTE.

The City of Battle Creek Emergency Preparedness Exercise is today...This is a TEST!

Addition to the consent agenda: Resolution 38-2005 influenza fee vaccine. We learned yesterday that Medicare will allow up to \$28 of reimbursement which would result in additional revenue for the immunization program. We need to obtain additional facts including impact on constituents.

Consent Agenda: Perrett moved approval as presented. Miller supported. Approved.

MEMBER RESIGNATION

Defer at this time. Perrett suggested that we take action and we politely decline and ask Dr. Mitchell to reconsider. His value to this Board is valued and we would like him to continue to participate. McDonald supported. All in favor.

HEALTH OFFICER SEARCH PROCESS

Purcell summarized his interpretation/composite of comments from the Board of Commissioners (BOC) regarding the Health Officer (HO) candidates.

Miller: It appears that the BOH must decide what we want fundamentally from a HO. Second we need to look at ourselves and say we have two very clear choices and both are qualified and can run a HD. But we have to ask why is it that a majority of this Board would be inclined to support a candidate that is least like the previous HO and why is that. We also need to ask why is it that those that actually deliver the service have a very different opinion from the Selection Committee. Why is it that we want to make a significant change and the delivering staff feels differently? If you're on the side of change is it health indicators, personnel, programming, etc.?

Anderson: The seriousness of the Health Indicators was the driving force for looking for someone who could be a change agent. That was not changing the HD, it was maintaining an accredited HD with commendation. Larry thought the Selection Committee was looking for someone who could work inside and outside in the community, collaborating with others bringing appropriate resources to improve Health Indicators and NOT changing direction or mandated services.

Ponds: The impression was that they were to choose the best candidate to not change the department but lead the department into the future and meet the needs of our citizens in the community. Ponds thought the committee followed the direction.

Miller feels that Ponds is accurate in describing the Committee's approach. Elements in the SC have strong beliefs that the department has holes and that a dramatic change is needed. It is important that the employees that work directly in the programs have input. He agrees with Anderson that this department is much better off than the last time we took this action. He feels that several Selection Committee members do not feel that way. One candidate has a record of eliminating programs, mentioned that in the interview process in a flippant way, one candidate exercised less discretion when answering questions. The fundamental focus of one of the candidates is very detailed in infrastructure. He wishes that we could integrate all departments and provide all upgrades, however, budget does not allow for that. He wonders why we have such a different perception.

Perrett: Was not at last meeting but did a lot of research and speaking with BOH members. Disbanding the BOH does not suggest that the BOH opinion is valued and that we should go back and beat our head against the wall again. The Selection Committee members were selected because they are intelligent and are influential within the community. We, as a Health Board, are competing for dollars spent and these members dedicated amounts of time, effort, and energy and deserve respect. The fact that one candidate is less measured in her responses is probably a refreshing thing. Not viewed as something that is dismissed out of hand. The fact that she has an opinion and has the temerity to state her opinion in an interview session is appreciated by Perrett and knows what he's evaluating and knows where she stands. He stated that his children have used the immunization and the hearing and vision services of the HD. The large majority of the workers here support one candidate or there is a very vocal minority or there has been some further communication on this issue and he is not updated. If the BOC will not choose Ms. Bowersox or look favorably on Mr. Thoun then we need to be clear of what the BOC wants. The comments that Mr. Purcell summarized is all over the board. We have a lot of problems with the two candidates -- get us some more names. If in fact the BOC views the BOH recommendation as a viable decision then move forward with Ms. Bowersox. If not, then let's communicate with her that we are opening the search but we appreciate her time. If I was Mr. Thoun, I'm not sure I am signed up to come to a community where there is obviously conflict. Perrett asked Miller if there will come a time that he would recommend Bowersox at any time.

Miller answered not today but believes it is possible at some time. Miller was also asked if he could support a candidate that the employees might not support. Miller answered that he is not at the belief that every employee needs to support the choice for HO, but he thinks that people in the whole HD spectrum have significant concerns that are justifiable. The candidate that is most copasetic to those concerns is not any better. I think they are both in a tenable situation. Clarified the BOC amendment.

Perrett stated that he needed clarification from Miller whether or not we are wasting our time. You will go into this process with an open mind and will engage all of the BOH in an open and constructive way and to address the issues and concerns then let's do it. But if in fact that it is just window dressing, let's stop and reopen.

Cook-Hughes stated she came to this meeting to obtain something more basic. Sees no reason for this Board to proceed if we are hanging on by a thin thread.

Miller: The BOC will not have any problem adopting what this BOH says if all questions and concerns are addressed. A large part of the BOC reservations was that candidates were offered up with various questions and concerns.

Cook-Hughes: It appears that the two issues that concern the employees are the Albion Health Department (AHD) and the Nursing Clinic of Battle Creek (NCBC) from a HD service delivery. We never had any thought in our minds to have any effect on the AHD or the NCBC services. This Board would not allow that to happen.

Miller: Dr. Harrington sat here and expressed an opinion on his meetings with both candidates and for the Board to disregard his comments, he feels that is cause for concern.

McDonald noted that he walked through this department and spoke with employees. He offered at the last meeting that he would pay for both candidates to come back for the BOH to interview them. He would have liked to meet both candidates and ask them about Dr. Harrington's concerns. He asked what direction you want us to go that you feel we are not going. Unless he can speak with the candidates, he is not voting for either.

Miller. We have three decisions. 1) Have both candidates come in front of BOH provide the opportunity to ask the questions and concerns and move forward or 2) Allow the first group of finalists to remain as finalists and repost the position and allow more candidates to be considered; or 3) Scrap the two candidates and repost.

Anderson asked if Miller is considering a national search. Miller clarified put it on comparable organizations in OH, WI, IL, IN (MALPH-type) sites. Post on Monster and Career Builder also. He feels that Commissioners have a commitment to contact people they know to locate potential candidates.

Cook-Hughes: Word spreads fast. She feels that we have insulted and distracted ourselves and if we reopen we may not get a lot of interested and qualified candidates. We need to focus on 1) Obtaining a HO and 2) Minimizing the negative perception of community members, including a member of our Board who is very well respected in health care and with the public at large who must be questioning what is going on including these two candidates. We have scarred relationships with about five different interest groups that we are charged to work with and support.

Perrett moved for a resolution: We get these two candidates in for full interviews with the BOH in a point of time within the next two weeks. We have a meeting and we discuss these two candidates and get these questions answered. We either take the SC's recommendation or we don't. Make the decision right then and move on. Jean supported. Ponds agrees with Perrett. Must be a tight ship and move forward in the next three weeks.

Greg: One of the candidates is applying for a position in Wisconsin. The other candidate is applying for Ottawa County. Both candidates would be interested in another interview.

We have at least done our due diligence within the next two weeks. It is clean. We have done our jobs.

Miller feels it is perfectly acceptable speaking on behalf of the BOC.

Anderson asked Hentz if she is willing to continue as Interim Health Officer. Hentz answered yes.

Perrett: Move that within two weeks time both candidates be brought back to the BOH for an interview. It is a one time shot. We make a decision one way or another at that time. If no consensus is reached we reopen. Jean supported. All in favor.

Prior to bringing the candidates back, we should develop a profile of HO. Provide comments to Hentz in relation to this as a guiding post for interviews by Friday. Purcell stated that we can cover the cost. Purcell has notes of the Selection Committee to share with the BOH. Hentz has a more specific summary of staff comments that she will share with the BOH. Anderson stated how we move forward. It will be a public meeting.

Cook-Hughes: She would love to hire someone that all employees and all BOC are happy with. We have an entirely different function than the employees do to run the HD. We should take into account the employee feedback. Hentz: said the staff wants a visionary leader and a solid public health professional.

The ends policy retreat is postponed at this time. Miller stated that he would really appreciate the BOH do their best to find a Monday or Friday for the ends policy retreat.

The interviews will be held on September 9th at 8:00 at 9:15.

Motion for adjournment at 8:39 a.m.