

Meeting Minutes from the TriCounty Board of Health Regular Meeting

July 31, 2024

LOCATION

TriCounty Health Department - 133 S 500 W - Vernal

ATTENDEES

Chairman Dr. John Mathis, Commissioner Randy Asay, Commissioner John Laursen, Commissioner Tracy Killian, Dr. Richard Jolley, Shanna Wheeler, Jodi Tinker, Keith Goodspeed, Kim Harding, Emmett Duncan, KayCee Asay, Madeline George, Ashley Linshoten, Director Kirk Benge, Bruce McKee, Raima Colledge, Sydnee Lamb, Darrin Brown, Joe Hadlock, Jon Stermer.

Virtual Attendance: Doug Rasmussen

EXCUSED

None

AGENDA

Call to order

12:15 p.m.

Approval of May 22, 2024 Minutes

Shanna Wheeler made a motion to approve the May 22, 2024 minutes. Tracy Killian seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Updates

- Active pertussis case(s) updated
 - TriCounty Health is aware of one confirmed pertussis diagnosis in a vaccinated 4-year-old with no travel history or clearly identified exposure. Given how contagious pertussis is, TriCounty feels it is very likely that more pertussis infections will be occurring in the Uintah Basin. TriCounty has advised local medical providers to be on the lookout for pertussis infections as they see patients.
- Follow up on Comfort Inn pool emergency
 - On July 13th TriCounty Health responded to dispatch calls regarding a situation at the Comfort Inn pool where pool users were experiencing respiratory distress, nausea and vomiting. Some of the pool users sought treatment at area hospitals. To the best of TriCounty's knowledge, all who sought treatment were discharged the same day. Deputy Health Director, Darrin Brown responded and found that an acid line used to maintain the pool chemistry had broken and had dissolved sheet rock and was injecting hydrochloric acid directly into the enclosed pool room. The pool was shut down immediately until an investigation could be carried out and repairs could be made.
 - Kim Harding asked if the investigation found any evidence that what happened at the pool was due to management negligence. Darrin Brown reported that it was likely unexpected wear and tear that led to the situation rather than pool operator carelessness.

Director Kirk Benge turned the time over to Madeline George to present her research on local trends in causes of death in TriCounty's jurisdiction.

- Review of local trends in causes of death
 - The data used in the presentation came from death certificates from the Office of Vital Records. The data shows that top causes of death across all ages are heart and respiratory disease, cancer, and substance use. Leading causes of death in people of working age (15-65) are accidental death and suicide.
 - Based on the data Madeline recommended preventative messaging for men aged 25-55 to avoid substance use.
 - The data prompted questions about fentanyl's prevalence among substance use data and if men having higher numbers of suicide were outside of national norms. Madeline reported that it's unlikely that fentanyl is taken on its own and is the sole cause of a substance use death, but it is likely reflected in mixed substance overdoses. Director Kirk Benge reported that the trend in men having higher rates of suicide is on trend with nationwide data, with Madeline confirming that this it's also consistent data for rural communities.

2023 Financial Audit Review

Doug Rasmussen of Smuin, Rich & Marsing accounting firm joined the meeting virtually at 12:48 p.m. to present the 2023 financial audit report.

- TriCounty Health operates primarily off of a general fund. Unassigned funds are where the department looks to see if and where it can afford additional expenditures. Final budget indicates what the board believes it will need for the year.
- Last year TriCounty budgeted \$5 million and spent \$4.9. Rasmussen suggested that TriCounty be careful when adopting a final budget to avoid coming so close to its spending limit.
- The audit did find a deficiency in TriCounty's adherence to budget hearing and state notice requirements and Open Meetings Act Compliance. TriCounty fell just short of the required 7-day prior notice on the public notice website. Page 5 in the audit offers recommendations to prevent this in the future.

Dr. Richard Jolley made a motion to approve the financial audit with the recommended adjustments to ensure compliance with public notice and Open Meetings Act requirements. Kim Harding seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

At 1:10 p.m. Emmett Duncan, TriCounty's new board seat appointed by the Ute Tribe, joined the meeting and introductions were made.

Approval of Check Register

Bruce McKee reported the check register for May through June of 2024.

- There was discussion about the charges for four dinosaur statues to be placed outside of the TriCounty Health buildings in Vernal and Roosevelt. The choice to purchase them was based on a grant that limited purchases to social determinants of health. TriCounty saw this as an opportunity to engage with the community by creating a coloring contest for children to choose the design for the dinosaurs and participate in the community's Passport to Summer activity. The aim of pursuing this avenue was to become more familiar to young children and their parents so that our services might be better known throughout the community.
- Members of the board voiced their concerns with how there may have been better ways to utilize the grant and TriCounty staff stated that the board's thoughts will be taken into account in the future.

Dr. Richard Jolley made a motion to approve the check register as presented. Shanna Wheeler seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Financial Report

- Bruce McKee presented the current financial report which included; all bank accounts, health department cash and cash equivalents, federal and state revenue vs total expenditures and the operational budget report.

Reception Consolidation & Building Renovations

Raima Colledge presented proposed building reorganization and renovation plans to improve customer experience, staff safety and optimize building space. The plans included bids from one company. Raima asked the board if this was a venture worth continuing to gather information on in the hopes of undergoing these renovations in the future.

Kim Harding made a motion to approve TriCounty continuing to seek contractor bids and communicating with Uintah County about renovation plans. Tracy Killian seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

New Contracts

Director Kirk Benge went over new and amended contracts.

New Contracts

SUBAWARDS - E-Cigarette, Marijuana, and Other Drug Prevention

- The Foundation for Healthy Communities of NE Utah
- NorthEastern Counseling

DHHS Contracts

- Electronic Case Amendment 1
- Syringe Services 2021 Amendment 6
- Community and Clinical Interventions Amendment 2
- Public Health Emergency and Healthcare FY 24-28

DEQ Contracts

- DEQ Contracted work
- DEQ Minimum Performance/Core

Director Kirk Benge highlighted an ongoing conversation among local health departments regarding unsatisfactory communication and contracts with DEQ. DEQ continues to change contracts despite health officer and governance agreements. Initially all 13 health districts refused to sign the most recent DEQ contract. DEQ made amendments and after reviewing it with TriCounty's legal advisor, Jon Stermer, Director Benge feels more comfortable signing this version. Local health officers are moving to work with legislators to get some of these issues resolved. Director Benge felt it necessary to make the board aware of these issues with DEQ leadership.

Kim Harding made a motion to sign the contract as is, having been reviewed by TriCounty's legal advisor, Jon Stermer. Shanna Wheeler seconded the motion. Dr. Richard Jolley and Randy Asay opposed. The motion carried.

Considerations of 2025 Fee Schedule

Director Kirk Benge, Darrin Brown, and Bruce McKee presented the proposed fee changes for 2025.

- Kim Harding raised concerns about increasing the fees associated with environmental health services amid inflation. He suggested TriCounty forgo putting money into the rainy day fund this year, and instead put money toward covering fees.
- Dr. John Mathis voiced his concerns about raising fees amid ongoing negotiations with DEQ. He advised waiting to raise fees until after meeting with DEQ and legislators to see if DEQ would allocate a greater amount of passthrough money to local health departments to help offset program costs.

Tracy Killian made a motion to take the fee proposal to public hearing. Dr. Richard Jolley seconded the motion. Dr. John Mathis opposed. The motion carried.

Additional Updates & Discussion

Director Benge and Jon Stermer met and signed a Kroger opioid litigation settlement earlier this week. The next meeting coincides with the Uintah Basin Energy Summit, which may create conflicts, but it was decided not to change the date.

Adjourn

Shanna Wheeler made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 3:19 p.m. Kim Harding seconded.