

Dec 8, 2025






Bear River Board of Health Meeting

Location: Bear River Health Department, Brigham City Building, 817 Parker Lane, Brigham City, Utah, 84302

Board of Health Attendees: Kevin Hall, Randy Williams, Cheryl Atwood, Rebecca Echols, Sandi Goodlander, Yohana Vernon, and Cade Palmer

Bear River Health Department Attendees: Jordan Mathis, Josh Greer, Linda Brown, Estee Hunt, Spencer George, Alicia Toscano, Carol Merrill, and Jordan Miller

Attachments  Bear River Board of Health - Budget Hearing

Meeting records  Transcript  Recording  Recording 2

Summary

Jordan Mathis introduced Carol Morrell, the in-house tuberculosis (TB) expert, who provided an overview of rising TB cases in the US and Utah, noting the Health Department's response involves Direct Observed Therapy, including a video program, and collaboration with primary care physicians due to limited funding. The board unanimously adopted the minutes from the November meeting and elected Randy Williams as the new vice chair, also reviewing the 2026 Board of Health schedule. Jordan Mathis updated the board on legislative priorities, advocating for Body Art licensing under the Department of Professional Licensing (DOPL) and also reported on strategic updates, including a salary assessment, the One Health symposium, and the upcoming capitation of behavioral health services, receiving approval to sit on the Behavioral Health Commission's prevention and early intervention committee. Following a closed session, the board adjusted the health officer's compensation, reviewed the amended 2025 and proposed 2026 operating budgets—noting a significant increase in the 2025 budget due to mental health funding—and the 2026 capital projects budget, before voting to approve all three budgets despite concerns about anticipated federal and state funding reductions, as shared by Jordan Mathis.

Call to Order & Adopt Agenda:

- Randy Williams initiated the meeting by asking for the adoption of the agenda:
 - Motion to adopt: Sandi Goodlander
 - 2nd: Cheryl Atwood

Meeting Minutes Approval:

- Randy Williams initiated the approval of the minutes from the November 10th meeting:
 - Motion for approval: Kevin Hall
 - 2nd: Cade Palmer

Details

Opening Ceremony and Pledge of Allegiance

- Jordan Mathis opened the meeting and then introduced Carol Morrell, a registered nurse and the in-house tuberculosis expert, who has worked with the department for 28 years, to provide a broad overview of tuberculosis (TB) efforts and trends in the community.

Overview of Tuberculosis (TB)

- Carol explained that TB is typically a lung disease because the causative *mycobacterium* favors oxygen, but it can affect other body parts like the brain or spine. Contagion occurs when the disease is present in the lungs and is spread from person to person through coughing or sneezing, although a bovine form can also be transmitted from an animal. Carol noted that TB is one of the most common problems worldwide, with approximately 8.3 million active cases diagnosed annually and an estimated 2 million going undiagnosed.

TB Trends and Treatment

- Globally, TB remains a significant killer, but treatment with antibiotics is now available. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been an uptick in active TB cases, which increases exposure and the risk of inactive disease becoming active in about 10% of those exposed. Carol Morrell noted that approximately a quarter of the world would test positive for the inactive disease, but in the United States, the goal is to find and treat these inactive cases to prevent them from becoming active later.

Rising TB Cases in the US and Utah

- The US has seen a rise in TB cases, with 10,300 cases reported in 2024, the highest number since 2011, reflecting an 8% increase from 2023. The highest risk group for contracting TB includes foreign-born individuals who may have been exposed in their home countries. Utah is following this national trend, with active cases increasing from 17 in 2021 to 51 in 2024.

Health Department Response to TB

- The Health Department responds to active cases by conducting home investigations, identifying contacts, and ensuring patients receive 6 to 9 months of treatment via Direct Observed Therapy (DOT). They implemented a video program two years ago to allow patients to record themselves taking their medication, which is a practical alternative to in-person observation. The Health Department also screens for latent TB and offers medication; due to rising cases and limited funding, they are working with primary care physicians (PCPs) across the state to follow and treat their non-TB patients with latent disease. This process has been received positively by providers.

TB Program Funding and Meeting Minutes

- Jordan Mathis emphasized that the contract dollars received for the TB program are quickly depleted, requiring prioritization of county tax dollars to maintain this essential control program within the community. The board then unanimously adopted the minutes from their November virtual meeting.

Public Comment:

- None

Board Elections and 2026 Schedules

- Following the departure of the previous vice chair, David Zook, an election was held for the new vice chair. Randy Williams was nominated and elected as vice chair. The board also reviewed the 2026 Board of Health schedule, confirming the continuation of the second Monday meeting day every other month, totaling six in-person and two virtual meetings, with the option for a half-day strategic planning meeting in September.
- Randy Williams initiated the approval for vice chair elections:
 - Motion for approval: Sandi Goodlander
 - 2nd: Kevin Hall

- Randy Williams initiated the approval of the 2026 Board Schedule
 - Motion for approval: Sandi Goodlander
 - 2nd: Kevin Hall

Health Officer Report

- Jordan Mathis updated the board on two legislative priorities, one being the regulation of body art procedures like scarification, which involves invasive techniques such as using an Xacto knife and poses risks of infection or neurological damage. They are advocating for body artists to be licensed under the Department of Professional Licensing (DOPL), similar to cosmetologists, because they are currently only required to work in a permitted facility. The second priority is to increase tobacco retailer permit fees to achieve parity with alcohol licensing fees, ensuring the enforcement costs are covered by the fees rather than reliance on tobacco tax dollars.

Strategic Updates and Behavioral Health Commission Role

- Jordan Mathis provided updates on internal strategic initiatives, including a salary assessment scheduled for completion by the May meeting and continued work on the merit system. He also discussed outreach to city managers regarding temporary mass gatherings and progress on contacts for the One Health symposium. Furthermore, Jordan Mathis reported on ongoing meetings regarding the capitation of substance use and mental health services, with a Medicaid deadline of July 1, 2026, to adopt the capitated model. The agency also secured an extension of funding for its data modernization project through June 2027. Jordan Mathis sought and received approval from the board to accept an invitation to sit on the newly formed Behavioral Health Commission's prevention and early intervention committee, contributing to policy development.

Motion to Close Session

- Randy Williams initiated approval to move to a closed session:
 - Motion to approve: Cade Palmer
 - 2nd: Cheryl Atwood

Motion to Open Session

- Randy Williams initiated approval for an open session:
 - Motion to approve: Sandi Goodlander
 - 2nd: Cheryl Atwood

Budget Hearing

- Following a closed session, the board made a motion and carried it to adjust the health officer's compensation in line with other informed employees. The board then reviewed the amended 2025 and proposed 2026 operating budgets. The 2025 amended budget increased substantially from \$15.6 million to \$24.3 million, with the difference entirely attributable to mental health funding being funneled through the department for expenses like Medicaid match and paying Bear River Mental Health. The 2026 budget projects a slight reduction to \$20 million due to one-time funds received in 2025.
- Randy Williams initiated approval for the health officer compensation:
 - Motion to approve: Cade Palmer
 - 2nd: Cheryl Atwood

Capital Budget and Financial Management

- The capital budget for 2024 totaled just over \$5 million, with most funds designated for future projects such as the potential high facility expansion, HVAC, roof repairs, and a required reserve for employee leave cash-out. The funds are held in two separate bank accounts at Zions, with the capital money moved daily into a higher interest-bearing sweep account, currently earning about 3% interest, to maximize returns while remaining safe as taxpayer money. The board then moved to open a public hearing for budget comments.

Public Hearing and Fiscal Management

- Jordan Mathis opened the meeting to a public hearing and confirmed that the board had a quorum. Randy Williams praised Josh and Linda as exceptional fiscal managers and announced that Linda would now be managing the money because of a change in the law.

Discussion on DOPL and Body Art Regulation

- The discussion turned to the Department of Professional Licensing (DOPL), which licenses various professions, including some that intersect with the board's area, such as dietitians and therapists. Jordan Mathis was concerned about the lack of organization among tattoo artists, suggesting that a legislative route might be necessary to establish a better process for licensing and governance. The current goal is to shift governance of individuals to DOPL through a licensing procedure, which would include a board of professionals setting standards like Continuing Education Units (CEUs). Jordan Mathis noted that some other states license tattoo artists.

Discussion of Scarification

- The question was asked about how long scarification had been allowed under the body art rule, noting that it had been permitted for a long time, but that the board was unaware of any facilities in their area currently performing it. The conversation briefly touched on the intensity of pain associated with certain body art procedures, with Cheryl Atwood sharing a personal experience with micro-needling.

Federal and State Funding Concerns

- Jordan Mathis shared information from a conversation with Representative Blake Moore, who indicated that while the current year's funding was stable, "real hurt" in funding is expected in 2026, largely due to allocated COVID-19 money having been spent. A report from a legislative meeting indicated that state legislators are considering "decent-sized cuts" to meet budget demands. Brad Schultz reported at a USA meeting that a budget reduction of \$500 million to \$535 million is anticipated, and all state agencies have been asked to plan for a 5% budget cut.

Budget Approvals and Adjournment

- The board moved to close the public hearing and then voted to approve three separate budget motions. The board approved the amended 2025 budget, the proposed 2026 operating budget, and the proposed 2026 capital projects budget. The meeting was then adjourned.

Motion to Approve Budget

- Randy Williams initiated a motion to approve the amended 2025 budget:
 - Motion to approve: Sandi Goodlander
 - 2nd: Cheryl Atwood
- Randy Williams initiated a motion to accept the proposed 2026 operating budget:
 - Motion to approve: Cheryl Atwood
 - 2nd: Kevin Hall
- Randy Williams initiated a motion to accept the Capitol Budget:
 - Motion to approve: Cheryl Atwood
 - 2nd: Cade Palmer

Motion to Close Session

- Randy Williams initiated a motion to close the meeting
 - Motion to close meeting: Kevin Hall
 - 2nd: Cade Palmer

