

Mar 9, 2026





Bear River Board of Health Meeting

Location: Bear River Health Department, 819 Parker Lane, Brigham City, Utah, 84302

Board of Health Attendees: Kevin Hall, Lee Perry, Sandi Goodlander, Cheryl Atwood, Rebecca Echols, Randy Williams, Cade Palmer, and Bill Cox

Bear River Health Department Attendees: Jordan Mathis, Josh Greer, Spencer George, Linda Brown, Estee Hunt, Alicia Toscano, Richard Worley, and Jared Bohman

Attachments  Bear River Board of Health Meeting

Meeting records  Recording

Summary

The board approved the Zone 2 Variance Proposal, which allows only modifications and repairs to existing septic systems within Zone 2 protection areas. It passed a motion to adopt proposed personnel policy changes, including adding a 25% sick leave cash-out option at retirement. Participants received a comprehensive data privacy update from Josh, which included the proposal to split Chief Administrative Officer duties between Estee (records management) and Josh (privacy), with the expectation that the board will approve a privacy policy in May. Richard introduced the Zone 2 Variance Policy. Spencer discussed the findings of a wage comparison study, which showed that while over 50% of positions meet or exceed entry-level market wages, competitiveness decreases at mid-career levels, with five positions, including Nurse and Dietitian, notably below market. The board authorized payment of the accrued leave liability for 21 departing employees transferring to Bear River Mental Health, with the total payout estimated at between \$300,000 and \$350,000. Additionally, Estee Hunt presented the 2025 Annual Report. Jordan discussed recent

legislative outcomes, and the board approved pre-authorization for the health officer to use remaining contract funds for severance pay in the event of an unexpected loss of federal funds.

Call to Order & Adopt Agenda:

- Lee Perry initiated the meeting by asking for the adoption of the agenda:
 - Motion to adopt: Bill Cox
 - 2nd: Sandi Goodlander

Meeting Minute Approval:

- Lee Perry initiated the approval of the minutes from January 12, 2026
 - Motion for approval: Kevin Hall
 - 2nd: Cheryl Atwood

Public Comment:

- There was no public comment

Details:

Opening Ceremony, Pledge of Allegiance, and Data Privacy Update Introduction:

- Josh led the Pledge of Allegiance as part of the opening ceremony. Following the pledge, Josh introduced a brief update on the department's data privacy efforts, noting that the board would likely be asked to approve a privacy policy in May. They provided context on the state's requirements, which are broken down into categories, starting with governance of data privacy.

Data Privacy Governance and Designation of Officers:

- The governance requirement mandates designating one or more chief administrative officers (CAO) for privacy and records management (including compliance with the GRAMA records act). The health department proposed splitting CAO duties between Estee and Josh, with Josh handling privacy and Estee handling records and GRAMA. Furthermore, records officers are designated for each service area and are responsible for GRAMA requests and retention schedules, a process that includes required officer training through the state.

Privacy Training and Reporting:

- The state's Office of Data Privacy provided an 8-minute training session, which was shown to all staff at the December meeting and is required annually. The department must also prepare a privacy program report each year to inform the state of the department's status.

Data Identification, Categorization, and Retention Schedules:

- The "identify" section of the requirements involves categorizing all collected data into record series and designating them as public, private, or sealed records. The department must then build retention schedules for these records, and they have successfully matched most records to the state-approved retention schedule, simplifying the process.

Privacy Notices and Annotations:

- The department must prepare privacy notices and annotations that inform individuals why data is collected, what it will be used for, and the consequences of not providing it. This notice must also specify whether data will be shared or sold; for example, immunization data is automatically shared with the state system. We will include a link or QR code on every form to make the privacy notice easy to access.

Data Control and Communication:

- The "control" section requires forms to handle requests for amendments to collected data, explanations for why data is held, and who has accessed it. The "communicate" section requires a public privacy notice, which is already posted in the main lobbies and on the department's website due to existing HIPAA requirements.

Data Protection, Retention, and Disposal:

- The "protect" section mandates collecting only the minimum necessary data to perform services. A major long-term challenge is establishing systems to dispose of data once the retention schedule ends, which may require working with software vendors and could take up to 10 years to fully implement. The "protect" section also covers cyber controls and procedures for notifying and assisting during a data breach.

Privacy Policy Approval and System Backup:

- A comprehensive privacy policy encompassing HIPAA and GRAMA requirements must be passed by the board, and the anticipated date for board approval is May. The Board inquired about a backup plan in case computer systems go down, a topic currently being discussed as part of the emergency response plan.

Redundant Data Storage:

- The department utilizes redundant storage locations for all databases and is working with IT staff to bring Google-stored data in-house for added protection against account hacking or system failure. Redundant servers are physically located in different locations, and backups are in place, but determining a solution if data cannot be accessed is still in progress.

Reschedule October 2026 Meeting:

- The October 14, 2026, meeting needed to be rescheduled because it conflicts with the conference and the scheduled fee hearing. A proposal was made to move the meeting to Monday, October 19th, from 4:30 PM to 6:00 PM.
- Lee Perry initiated approval to reschedule the meeting:
 - Motion for approval: Bill Cox
 - 2nd: Cade Palmer

Leave Transfer Proposal:

- A proposal reviewed by the finance committee was presented for transferring leave for 21 employees moving to Bear River Mental Health. These employees will transfer on June 26, and their accrued leave liability must be transferred as well.

Leave Conversion Details and Financial Impact:

- Bear River Mental Health uses a Paid Time Off (PTO) system with a single leave bucket, allowing a maximum of 384 hours. Sick leave will convert at a two-for-one ratio, while annual and converted sick leave will convert at a one-for-one ratio to fill the PTO bucket up to 384 hours. Any leave exceeding 384 hours for an employee will be paid out at their current wage on their final paycheck, with the total payout to Bear River Mental Health estimated between \$300,000 and \$350,000.
- Lee Perry initiated the approval of the Leave Proposal
 - Motion for approval: Randy Williams
 - 2nd: Kevin Hall

Proposed Personnel Policy Changes for Retirement Eligibility:

- Proposed changes were discussed regarding the sick leave benefit at retirement, which currently requires retirement through URS to be eligible. The proposed language would allow anyone eligible to retire to receive the benefit, even if they continue working for another URS participating employer, removing the requirement to retire directly through URS.

Sick Leave Conversion Options at Retirement:

- The existing policy converts 50% of an individual's sick leave into an HSA benefit. The new language would add an option for employees to choose a 25% cash-out, which provides employees with additional choice and reduces the health department's liability.
- Lee Perry initiated the approval of the Proposed Personnel Policy Change:
 - Motion for approval: Cheryl Atwood
 - 2nd: Bill Cox

Wage Comparison Study Introduction:

- A review of employee wages was initiated to assess the pay plan, using a high-level overview of a wage study supported by Paycale. An employee engagement survey showed high satisfaction with compensation, with 70% to 80% of employees expressing favorable views over the past few years.

Turnover Data and Market Comparison Strategy:

- Over the past two and a half years, 20 employees left with the intent to seek other employment, with 75% moving to the private sector and only 25% moving to other public health jobs. Payscale was used for market analysis by matching the department's job descriptions to other industries and sectors in the market. Comparisons were made using entry-level and mid-market wages across specific markets, including Logan, Utah Hospital, other area hospitals and healthcare, area government, and area environmental facilities.

Wage Analysis and Competitiveness:

- The department's wages were adjusted by 6.2% in comparison to account for the lack of Social Security participation for benefited employees. Overall, more than 50% of the department's 40 positions are at or above the market rate for entry-level wages, accounting for the Social Security adjustment. However, competitiveness decreases at the mid-career level.

Positions Below Market:

- Five positions were identified as notably below market, including Disease Investigator, Nurse, and Dietitian. Public Health Nurses showed the largest wage discrepancy, which may be partially attributed to their different work schedule (not shift work) compared to hospital nurses. Dietitians' required master's degrees also affect competitive wages in other markets. The Environmental Health Water Sampler and Lab Tech position, historically part-time and non-benefited, is being converted to a part-time benefited position to improve longevity, but it remains one of the lowest-paid positions.

Discussion on Nurse Wages and Social Security Participation:

- Randy Williams highlighted that Public Health Nurses do significant after-hours work for non-profits and people with dire needs, suggesting that factors beyond shift work should be considered in compensation. Linda Brown explained the lack of Social Security participation. Dating back to an IRS audit in 2015, the department decided not to participate. The board at that time adjusted the pay scale by 6.2% and encouraged employees to invest that money themselves.

Employee Education on Social Security and Investing:

- The department continues to pay the Medicare portion and pays Social Security for part-time, non-benefited employees. Employees are encouraged to use the additional 6.2% pay to purchase life insurance and invest for retirement, as they do not receive dependent benefits from Social Security. URS is used to educate employees on retirement planning.

Proposal for Default Retirement Contribution:

- Randy Williams continued with concerns that young employees may not be financially savvy and could miss out on dependent benefits if they do not invest the 6.2%. It was proposed that the department implement an "opt-out" system in which 6.2% is automatically contributed to a retirement plan by default, requiring employees to opt out. This approach is supported by URS and is shown to increase plan savings.

Retirement Account Matching and Employee Participation:

- Linda Brown noted that their workplace offers a simple retirement account with a 3% match and expressed difficulty getting employees to match this 3% contribution, despite constant communication, indicating it is challenging. They asked for recommendations on competitive pay strategies, specifically noting that employee positions should not be below market rates.

Zone 2 Variance Policy Approval:

- Richard Worley from the Environmental Health service area provided background on the department's commitment to protecting drinking water sources, noting that protection laws were established in the 1980s and 1990s. Water system owners were required to create source-protection plans that outlined protection zones around wells and springs. Richard then introduced the topic of the zone two variance policy approval.

Defining Protection Zones and Time of Travel:

- Protection zones around water sources are created based on the time it takes for groundwater to reach the wellhead. Zone one is a 100-foot protection zone, which is highly protected, while zone two is defined by a 250-day time of travel and can be quite large, ranging from 1,500 feet to a quarter mile. Zones three and four are larger areas defined by three-year and fifteen-year travel times, respectively.

Septic Systems in Zone 2 and Current Land Use Ordinance:

- Septic systems are considered a source of contamination and are not allowed in Zone 2. Since many water sources are outside the water system owners' jurisdictions, they rely on local government agencies, such as planning and zoning, to protect them. Cache County has a land-use ordinance prohibiting new septic systems in Zone 2, but existing systems permitted before the 1980s and 1990s are grandfathered in.

Need for a Zone 2 Variance Policy for Existing Systems:

- The current county ordinance restricts homeowners with existing Zone 2 septic systems from remodeling or expanding, such as a church in Cove that wants to expand its facility and septic system. New technology is available to treat effluent to higher levels, which could result in a larger, less-polluting septic system than the existing one. Under Jordan's leadership, the health department should lead in creating a variance policy to govern modifications and repairs to these existing systems.

Details of the Zone 2 Variance Policy:

- The proposed policy applies exclusively to existing septic systems in Zone 2 and does not allow new systems. Approvals are contingent on providing equal or greater public health protection, and the applicant must demonstrate that a

connection to a public sewer is unavailable. Complex expansions, such as the Cove church's, require hiring a professional engineer or geologist to prepare a report detailing the system design and treatment methods, including consideration of alternatives such as moving the drain field.

Concerns Regarding Zone Boundaries and Re-evaluation:

- A concern was raised that some protection zones, particularly Zone 2, seemed arbitrary, severely limiting what property owners within them can do, and the process of drawing them was revisited. The zones were finalized in the early 2000s. Although a re-evaluation of the zone boundaries is possible, it would be expensive and time-consuming, as it would require engineers and groundwater flow studies to confirm the 250-day travel time. The new ordinance does provide a small option to pipe wastewater out if an area outside the zone is owned or an easement is granted.

Approval of the Zone 2 Variance Policy:

- The discussion concluded with an acknowledgment that Box Elder and Rich Counties have similar restrictions to Cache County's, and the proposed policy was drafted to be neutral so it could apply to the entire district.
- Lee Perry initiated the approval for the Zone 2 Variance Policy:
 - Motion for approval: Sandi Goodlander
 - 2nd: Bill Cox

2025 Annual Report Presentation and Approval:

- Estee Hunt presented the 2025 Annual Report, which highlights the health department's work and features photos representing the three different counties. The report is structured around the four strategic goals: building a great organization, community partnerships, access to opportunities, and the healthiest people.

Highlights of the Annual Report: Strategic Goals:

- Under "building a great organization," the report highlighted positive cultural changes, specifically the reported growth in open, honest, two-way communication among staff. The "community partnership" section highlighted the phenomenal measles response that involved partnerships with Intermountain and the Department of Health and Human Services. For "access to opportunities," the report highlighted a coordinated five-year suicide prevention plan grant that was awarded.

Healthiest People Goal and Data Dashboard:

- The "healthiest people" section highlighted the work done with the CDC Foundation, which involved creating a live dashboard accessible via a QR code in the report. Significant updates to this dashboard are expected before the report is presented to the county councils or commissions.

Review of Provisional Health Statistics and Department Data:

- The report included provisional state health statistics that may change in July, noting a large and unexplained increase in kidney disease. The department's specific data showed a decrease in STI cases, which is believed to reflect reduced testing at the department rather than an actual decrease in STIs. There was also a 2 percentage point decrease in fully vaccinated two-year-olds in 2024, lowering the district rate to 74%.

Media Update and Communication Success:

- Estee Hunt provided a media update, highlighting that the highest viewed social media post of the year, with nearly 71,000 views, was about West Nile virus-positive mosquitoes in Cash County. The measles post was the second-highest, and the related photo was the most-shared, leading to coverage across local and national media. Content interactions on the department's Facebook and Instagram pages increased by 150% and 100%, respectively, with overall visits and new followers also increasing, indicating successful community outreach.

Worst-Case Scenario Planning Consideration:

- Jordan Mathis led a discussion which was held regarding worst-case scenario planning in light of unexpected losses of federal contract funds, which are generally expected to be flat-funded. The proposal was to pre-authorize the health officer to maximize remaining contract funds as permitted under federal code and personnel policy, which could provide up to six months of severance pay for affected employees in situations of sudden, unexpected fund loss.
- The proposed motion to pre-authorize the health officer to utilize remaining contract funds for severance pay in the event of unexpected federal contract loss was approved by the board. This pre-authorization allows the department to act swiftly on behalf of affected employees without requiring an emergency board meeting.
- Lee Perry initiated the approval of the Worst Case Scenario Plan:
 - Motion for approval: Bill Cox
 - 2nd: Randy Williams

Health Officer Report:

Behavioral Health Integration Update:

- Jordan reported that the behavioral health integration process is progressing successfully, with regular meetings and ongoing checks with Medicaid. They noted that the transition consumes a significant amount of staff time but is expected to conclude around June 26th.

Measles Outbreak and Staff Exclusion Regulation Discussion:

- During a recent measles outbreak, the department had to implement an exclusion process for students in accordance with clear legal authority and immunization records. However, there is a "gray area" regarding staff who work in the same schools, as the law is unclear on how to address them and their immunization data is not readily available. A former health director in Salt Lake County dealt with this issue by implementing a regulation requiring school staff to provide proof of immunity upon request during an outbreak.

Proposed Regulation for School Personnel Immunity Records:

- The school districts, including Cache County, favor a consistent health regulation that would require school personnel to be informed at the time of hiring that they must provide proof of immunity (vaccine record or blood test) in the event of an outbreak, or they would be subject to exclusion for 21 days. This regulation would not mandate vaccination, and the department would not collect data unless an outbreak occurred, leaving the individual responsible for maintaining their record. The board was asked if they were willing to entertain a regulation of this kind.

Rationale for School Staff Regulation:

- Randy Williams offered an administrator's perspective, highlighting the extreme stress caused when administration must manage not only anxious parents but also numerous teachers without immunity records, which led to a near shutdown of a school due to a single measles case. The regulation aims to proactively ensure staff know their responsibility, enabling minimal measures to preserve the learning environment. The logistical challenge of the department handling all testing and record requests was discussed to direct staff to other labs and digital resources for titer tests and record-keeping.

COVID-19 Exclusion and Vaccination Policy:

- Jordan Mathis described the approach to managing exposure in schools, which avoids immediate full exclusion by categorizing risk as high, moderate, or low based on factors such as classroom proximity or bus use. The goal is to minimize exclusions, reducing the potential number of excluded students from 60 to fewer than 10, a method implemented successfully in Box Elder County and Salt Lake County without additional cases. For high schools, due to greater intermingling, there are no low-risk exposures; therefore, either exclusion for high-risk individuals (same class/extracurricular) or active monitoring for moderate-risk individuals is required.

Active Monitoring Capacity Challenge:

- The current challenge for the school district is the capacity required to actively monitor moderate-risk students for 21 days, which replaces the need to exclude a large number of students. The public health department is working with schools to build this capacity so that, if symptoms develop during active monitoring, the individual can be promptly excluded before entering the school.

Legislative Session Review - Kratom Regulation:

- The legislative session concluded, and Senator Vickers' kratom bill, SB45, passed and now schedules certain concentrations of kratom components as a Schedule I controlled substance. This law requires kratom to be sold only in tobacco shops or dispensaries.

Legislative Session Review - Raw Milk Sales and Outbreak Costs:

- A milk amendment by Representative Chevier passed, allowing for raw milk to be sold in additional places. Jordan Mathis expressed concern that increased raw milk availability might lead to more outbreaks, and there is a plan to work with processors over the next year to recoup costs for investigating outbreaks, which are currently an unfunded mandate.

Legislative Session Review - Tobacco and Vaping Products:

- Representative Thompson successfully banned non-nicotine products, including vitamin vapes and CBD vapes. Additionally, Clancy passed a tobacco tax of 50 cents, with the funds intended for the general fund. However, there was an underlying push to use some of the money to fund homelessness initiatives.

Legislative Session Review - Regulatory Streamlining and Scarification:

- Furthermore, legislation passed required the Department of Health and Human Services to create rules for scarification and required facilities to comply with certain rules. It established a criminal offense for the unlawful scarification of minors.

Legislative Session Review - Public Health Bills and Cleanup:

- The legislative session was generally good for public health, especially because the bill to remove the vaccination requirement for students failed. The final cleanup bill requested by the department and sponsored by Senator Sandall passed, allowing the department to receive funds from the Department of Environmental Quality for large-scale environmental health work.

UALBOH Symposium and Board Retreat Scheduling:

- The registration link for the UALBOH symposium, to be held at the Davis County Conference Center, is now available, and participants can carpool if they do not wish to stay overnight. For the board retreat, the last week of September was discussed for scheduling, with the 28th or the 30th being potential half-day options, as the first two weeks of September and the period between September 14th and 18th were unsuitable for most participants due to conflicts. The plan is to move forward with securing a venue within their jurisdiction for either September 28th or 30th.

Board Retreat Venue Consideration:

- An alternative, non-traditional venue suggestion for the board retreat was offered: at Randy's cabin in Logan Canyon with sufficient indoor and outdoor space and available parking.

Motion to Close Session:

- Lee Perry initiated a motion to close the meeting
 - Motion to close: Bill Cox
 - 2nd: Cheryl Atwood