

MINUTES
May 18, 2026

Members Present:			
Carl Hanson, Chair	X	Sonia Pineda	Electronic
Jeffrey Ogden, Vice-chair	Excused	Ryan Schooley	Excused
Christopher Gordon	Electronic	Bill Wright	Excused
Amelia Powers Gardner	X	Francine Jensen	X
Jordan Singleton	Excused	Rick Nielsen	Excused
Scott Smith	X		

Others present:

Eric Edwards, MPA, MCHES UCHD Executive Director
 Tyler Plewe UCHD Deputy Director
 Heather Murrish UCHD Secretary
 Zachary Zundel Deputy County Attorney

Number of people in attendance: 11

1. Welcome by Prof. Carl Hanson, Board of Health Chair

Prof. Hanson welcomed everyone and let them know that the approval of the minutes would be delayed as we waited for a complete quorum.

2. Approval of minutes from January 26, 2026

MOTION: Prof. Francine Jensen motioned to approve the minutes from the January 26, 2026, Board of Health meeting, seconded by Dr. Scott Smith. No discussion. Motion carries and approved unanimously.

3. UALBOH Symposium Report by the Board of Health Members

Eric Edwards provided an overview of the UALBOH symposium, where Board of Health members from across Utah met to learn about public health, statewide issues, and educational initiatives. He highlighted a presentation by Dr. Blodgett from St. George on

the importance of sleep, health, and wellness. Dr. Blodgett noted that both Davis County and Southwest Utah have actively used his work to educate their communities, and our county is considering doing the same.

Eric also mentioned that during a breakout session, data from the Utah Wellbeing Project was referenced, particularly findings on social isolation, loneliness, and their connection to suicidal ideation.

Prof. Hanson was recognized as the new Chair of the Utah Association of Local Boards of Health (UALHD). This board includes one representative from each local health district, eventually totaling 13 members once Southwest is fully represented. Dr. Christopher Gordon commented on the sleep data as well, sharing that he found it compelling and was looking at ways to apply it personally.

Prof. Jensen discussed the presentations that focused on the use of statistics to help the public make informed decisions, as well as a regional communication initiative aimed at improving public information outreach. The board expressed interest in the mail pamphlets used by other counties to distribute public-health information; however, it was noted that due to the size of our county, such an approach would not be cost-effective.

4. Employee Recognition by Eric Edwards

Eric recognized the outstanding work of the Health Department's business partners, Karen Allen and Zachary Zundel. He noted that both have made significant contributions across many areas of the department and provide vital support in numerous projects and operations. Eric emphasized how stellar they are as employees and how significantly their work benefits the Health Department. He also highlighted that both have been honored not only within the department but by the County as a whole, with each being selected as Employee of the Month.

5. UCHD Finances Update by Eric Edwards and Jackie Karsies

Eric informed the board that while 64% of the fiscal year remains for 2026, the Health Department still has 77% of its budget available. The few budget categories in the red are not concerning. The health department pays for employee memberships, subscriptions, contracts, and other things early in the year. This will even out in the coming months. For Mosquito Abatement, they are overspent in a few categories as they make large seasonal purchases to prepare for the upcoming Mosquito Abatement season. Overall, the budget is very healthy and tracking well.

Dr. Smith asked about anticipated upcoming expenses. Eric responded that personnel costs and salaries/benefits remain the department's largest expenditures. Commissioner Powers Gardner then noted that the construction of the new Saratoga Springs Clinic, which recently opened, could have potential budget impacts. Eric addressed this by

explaining that the closure of the American Fork Clinic and the decision not to renew its lease will help offset costs. Additionally, he noted that the transition from eClinicalWorks to CureMD for the department's medical record system was funded through a grant.

Eric also reported that the school nursing program will transition to being operated by each school district beginning July 1, 2026. We hope to maintain a strong working relationship with the districts moving forward. He added that a large payout of accrued sick leave and related benefits will occur as part of this shift.

Dr. Smith then asked whether the measles outbreak would lead to any increased expenses. Eric explained that the Health Department received a measles response grant to help support response efforts. He also shared that, due to changes in clinic operations, the Provo WIC offices were recently remodeled to accommodate a higher volume of families. The American Fork clinic was closed and consolidated into the existing Provo WIC clinic, which will result in savings in rent and other associated facility costs.

6. County Independent Audit by Eric Edwards

Eric presented an update on the Utah County Audit. He explained that the audit covered the 2024 fiscal year. The 2025 audit is scheduled to begin in June or July of this year.

In the 2024 independent audit, it stated a finding that the Health Department was over budget. A memo from the Utah County Auditor was sent to the Health Department's Executive Director, explaining that the health department was not responsible or at fault for this finding. The finding stemmed from a county-level decision, and the health department was found to be in the clear and not at fault. The independent audit did not find any issues with the health department.

Commissioner Powers Gardner clarified that, at times, the county may receive audit findings related to the way it chooses to conduct certain financial procedures, rather than issues within individual departments.

Eric then recognized Jackie Karsies and Juli Van Ginkel for their significant contributions in helping the department stay on track with its budget and financial processes. He noted that the 2025 audit results will be presented in January 2027, alongside the County Commission's approved budget.

7. Vital Records Presentation by Alisha Earl

Deputy Registrar Alisha Earl gave a presentation on the Vital Records program. She reviewed the vital records team, their experience, and the various responsibilities handled across different locations within the department. She explained that the state's online portal, Silver, generates approximately 60-80 additional certificate requests each day. While many of these requests do not actually belong to Utah County, individuals

often select the wrong county during the submission process, which increases the team's workload.

Alisha reported a significant increase in records requests due to the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act (RECA), also known as the Downwinders program. This has required additional staff attention and detailed documentation efforts, including searching for older records through the state archives. She emphasized the importance of regulatory compliance to ensure that all processes meet local, state, and federal requirements. Protecting personal information while ensuring authorized individuals receive their documents remains a top priority.

She also clarified roles within the broader vital records system. The State Registrar, Nicole Bissonnette, oversees the registration of all births, deaths, legal changes, and system updates. In contrast, the county's role focuses primarily on the issuance of records and assisting the public. All fees are set by the Utah Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Vital Records and Statistics, based on statutory authority. Access to records is strictly governed by Utah Code and Administrative Rule, and the team verifies that all requestors are legally entitled to the documents they seek.

Prof. Hanson asked for additional clarification about Downwinders. Alisha explained that the department is not tracking data for RECA itself; rather, they issue birth and death certificates that applicants may need when submitting claims. Individuals may qualify for compensation if they or their family members experienced cancers or related illnesses associated with radioactive fallout from Cold War-era atmospheric nuclear weapons testing at the Nevada Test Site between 1951 and 1962.

8. Utah Health Status Survey by Eric Edwards

Eric presented the health status of Utah County through three different health measurement tools.

Eric also reminded the board that last year, Linnea Fletcher presented on the Healthy Places Index (HPI), which is part of the Utah Health Status Survey.

Eric presented graphs illustrating the results of the Utah County health department's Community Health Needs Assessment (CHA). He first showed a graph that illustrated what Utah County residents like about living in Utah County. The top five were: sense of community, environment, access to resources, safety, and outdoor recreation. The self-reported data validated that this is a great place to live.

Of the ten priority health issues identified in the CHA, the top three major health priorities identified were air quality, mental health, and chronic diseases. The health department shares CHA data with other public health agencies, sister agencies within Utah County, and other key stakeholders. We will continue to utilize Qualtrics to update our CHA on a regular basis.

Commissioner Powers Gardner observed that the top three concerns suggest that most basic needs within the community are likely being met, aligning with concepts similar to Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Eric added that identifying these priorities allows the Health Department and its partners to better pinpoint areas where additional support is needed and focus efforts for meaningful impact.

Eric then described a tool that was presented at the UALBOH conference a few weeks ago. He explained how Dr. Courtney Flint, from Utah State University, conducts a biennial survey that asks residents across various cities about their personal well-being, their perceptions of the city they live in, their sense of community connection, and the concerns they face.

Dr. Flint's work tracks individual and community wellbeing across several areas, gathering perspectives on local concerns, social connections, population growth, economic development, and more. Participation is optional for cities, and currently eight cities are involved. This data helps public health refine approaches, anticipate needs, and understand where intervention may be most effective.

Statewide, the top concerns identified through this survey were water supply, traffic, and water quality. Within Utah County specifically, the top three were traffic, water supply, and air quality. Eric shared that he would like to invite Dr. Flint to an upcoming Council of Governments (COG) meeting to explore opportunities for additional cities to join the project. He confirmed that any updates or decisions will be shared with the board, and their input will be requested as needed.

After discussing the health status as reported through the CHA, the Utah Well Being Project and the Healthy Places Index, he explained to the board that the Health Department will use these three tools as well as other metrics to help improve our public health service delivery and prioritize needs of the public.

Dr. Scott Smith asked whether the survey's water quality concerns were linked to contamination issues. Eric clarified that Utah County has very clean groundwater systems and that it has been years since any drinking-water issues were reported. The survey feedback likely reflects concerns related to recreational water rather than the municipal drinking supply. Eric emphasized the importance of repeating these surveys regularly due to rapid population growth and changes across the county.

Prof. Hanson noted that he appreciates this survey because, while the Healthy Places Index focuses on social determinants of health, Dr. Flint's work focuses more on the environmental aspects of community wellbeing. He also mentioned that traffic remains a significant community concern. Commissioner Powers Gardner agreed, adding that traffic is an ongoing challenge in the county. She reported that four major road projects are currently underway as the county works to catch up with growth, and significant improvements are expected over the next three to five years.

9. Employee Engagement Survey by Tyler Plewe

Deputy Director Tyler Plewe presented the results of the recent employee survey. He explained that the county comparison reflects how the Health Department's scores measure against other county departments. In the overall satisfaction category, 93% of Health Department employees rated their satisfaction as a 4 or 5, which is 6% higher than the countywide response. This also represents a 2% increase from last year. The department scored higher than the county in all categories except three. Tyler will be meeting with each division head to review their individual results and identify opportunities for improvement to ensure continued employee support.

One of the lower-scoring items was "I have open and honest communication with my manager." While this was identified as a weakness, Tyler noted that overall trust in managers—as well as access to department heads and division leaders—has increased. Trust and approachability are strengths, while communication remains an area for continued improvement. Tyler will be further analyzing the survey responses to identify specific concerns and create actionable steps.

Another lower-scoring area involved opportunities for advancement within the Health Department. Tyler attributed this to the rapid growth the department has experienced in recent years, and he is actively working on evaluating career-pathing and development.

The department's net promoter score is 36, which is considered high. Tyler shared that despite significant changes this year and an increase in staffing numbers, the survey indicates that employees remain largely happy with the direction of the department. Prof. Hanson expressed appreciation for the department's commitment to continuous improvement. Prof. Jensen asked who creates the survey. Tyler explained that Human Resources administers the survey and changes the questions each year to better explore employee needs and identify trends.

Sonia Pineda asked whether the results are shared with staff. Tyler confirmed that the information presented to the Board is also provided to all employees, and he plans to share additional insights and feedback summaries as he continues reviewing the data. He emphasized that transparency throughout the year will support improvements in communication.

Dr. Smith asked about the drop in responses from 190 to 168 in certain survey questions. Tyler explained that the variation was likely linked to the health-insurance section—employees with private insurance typically skip those questions, which accounts for the lower response count.

10. Employee Changes

It was noticed that Mosquito Abatement had a large number of hires, this is due to the seasonal work for the summer.

11. Other Items

Dr. Smith asked for an update on measles cases. Eric reported that during the weekly statewide measles briefing, the trend continues to move downward, following the pattern seen over the past several weeks. Utah County has not had a doctor- or lab-confirmed case for over a week, and the most recent confirmed case in the entire state occurred on Saturday. Eric noted that cases may decrease further once school is out for the summer. Wastewater testing still shows the presence of the virus in our county, indicating ongoing community cases. Statewide data suggests the peak for Utah likely occurred in February.

Eric also provided information about another situation involving the Andes strain detected on a cruise ship. Utah has one confirmed case, but the Department of Health and Human Services has issued guidance stating that they do not believe this poses a threat to the public.

As part of our measles prevention efforts, Eric additionally updated the board on the recent MMR vaccine event held at the Spanish Fork Fairgrounds. While in-person attendance was low, the promotional video gained significant public attention, receiving approximately 72,000 views online.

12. Public Comment

No public comments.

MOTION: Commissioner Powers Gardner motioned to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Prof. Jensen. No Discussion. Motion carries and approved unanimously.

Eric Edwards, MPA, MCHES
Executive Director/Local Health Officer
Utah County Health Department

Carl Hanson
Chair
Utah County Board of Health