

Eastern Highlands Health District
Board of Directors Regular Meeting Minutes

Thursday, August 21, 2025

Members present: M. Capriola (Mansfield-virtual), J. Drumm (Coventry 4:33), H. Evans (Mansfield-virtual), J. Elsesser (Coventry), J. Rupert (Bolton), C. Silver-Smith (Ashford), M. Walter (Columbia - Virtual)

Staff present: R. Miller, M. Brosseau, K. Dardick (virtual)

Also present: P. Tanaka Town of Willington First Selectman

J. Elsesser called the meeting to order at 4:30 pm

Approval of Minutes J. Rupert made a MOTION seconded by C. Silver-Smith to accept the minutes of the June 12, 2025 meeting as presented. MOTION passed unanimously.

Medical Advisor Report

Dr. Dardick reported that COVID activity in the community is still low. To his knowledge there is no new COVID vaccine. The variant omicron has been upgraded to Nimbus. Nimbus is similar to omicron with upper respiratory symptoms and is highly contagious.

Proposed Reclassification Sanitarian II to Assistant Director of Health/Sanitarian II

R. Miller presented an overview of the reclassification noting that the personnel committee met and reviewed the proposal at the June 11, 2025 meeting. M. Capriola, chair of the personnel committee stated that the personnel committee is supportive of the reclassification.

J. Elsesser commented that this is not a guarantee that the person hired for this position will be automatically promoted to the position of Director of Health. That person will need to apply and be part of the hiring process.

J. Rupert comment that he was uncomfortable with the 35% salary range. R. Miller explained the 35% range that is built into the broad ban pay range as part of the personnel rules.

J. Rupert made a MOTION seconded by C. Silver-Smith to establish the classification titled Assistant Director of Health/Sanitarian II; and furthermore, approval of a salary range for this position of \$96,000 to \$130,000. MOTION PASSED unanimously.

Tolland Employee Wellness Service Agreement – Ratification

J. Rupert made a MOTION seconded by J. Drumm to approve the renewal of the Town of Tolland/Eastern Highlands Health District Employee Wellness Service Agreement, as presented August 21, 2025. MOTION passed unanimously.

Authorization to Negotiate and Execute Contact with CT DPH regarding Tobacco Best Practices Grant

R. Miller presented an overview of the grant contract and negotiating process, noting that the final contract will be brought to the Board for their information.

C. Silver-Smith made a MOTION seconded by J. Rupert to authorize the Director of Health to negotiate and execute a contract with the Connecticut Department of Public Health for the Best Practice Tobacco Control Programs grant award in the intended amount of \$166,050. MOTION PASSED unanimously with the friendly amendment by J. Elsesser of "intended" added to the motion.

Finance Committee

Financial Report period ending 6/30/2025

R. Miller presented the financial report, stating that the Finance committee met on 8/14. There was no quorum, but a discussion occurred. J. Rupert made a MOTION, seconded by C. Silver-Smith to accept the financial reports as presented. MOTION passed unanimously.

Fiscal year 25/26 Budget – DPH grant reduction impact

R. Miller reported that the state has reduced the per capita grant by 10% during year 1 and proposed an increase of 25% in year 2. R. Miller feels that the loss will be offset in operational savings and grant funding. He further stated that he is not recommending formal budget amendments at this time. The Board consensus supported this approach. J. Elsesser suggested that the Board compose and send a letter to DPH leadership and copy CCM and COST. J. Elsesser will draft the letter and make it available for the Board to review.

Personnel Committee

M. Capriola reported that she is compiling the results of the Director's Performance survey and will be reviewing with the Personnel Committee, with it being brought to the full board in October.

Directors Report

Strategic Plan Implementation – Progress report

R. Miller introduced the progress report format and discussed how it will be utilized to track the implementation of the strategic plan. He noted that the report will be sorted by status.

Quarterly Activity Report – Period ending 6/30/2025

R. Miller called attention to the significant staff time dedicated to the stops and starts of the grants. Currently he is working to spend down the grant quickly.

Advocacy efforts engaged in during this period included confidentiality laws of well data

R. Miller noted that EHHD is participating in the Hartford Healthcare Community Health Needs Assessment and Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP).

Community Health activities have included staff managing 24 cases of elevated blood lead levels in children; investigating 8 infectious disease outbreaks and continued educational series on blood pressure.

EHHD Staffing update

R. Miller reported that the hiring for the position of public health nurse is ongoing.

Communication/Other

Joe Courtney's office re: Change to PRWORA impacting grantees

R. Miller noted that this is a potential policy change. Federally funded social service and Human services programs will no longer be available to immigrants without legal status.

NACCHO re: Federal Funding Updates

R. Miller reported that the PHEP (Emergency Preparedness) grant may be going away. It is still unclear as the amount the district will receive for the current fiscal year. The EHHD Emergency Management program may be getting reduced.

Town Reports

Coventry J. Drumm reported that the second hydrilla treatment at the lake has been completed. He further noted that the public beach has been closed for most of the season due to high bacterial levels contributed by the geese. The town is looking at ways to mitigate. He thanked R. Miller for his efforts to demonstrate and report on the significance of churning the water in the bathing area.

Willington P. Tanaka noted that the town has been dealing with an issue where a contaminated well was pumped out onto state property.

Ashford C. Silver-Smith reported on a weed problem at Lake Chaffee. Association members are dealing with the issue. Japanese knotweed has also become a problem.

Columbia M. Walter informed the Board that Columbia had a goose patrol that harassed the geese at the lake and the geese moved on. Columbia experienced pond weed in the lake. An experimental process was implemented to remove it from the lake with an end date of July 15 as that is when it would go to seed and the process of removal would actually spread the seed, worsening the issue. The lake has a marine patrol inspection system in place to control weeds brought in on boats. M. Walter noted that there is an empty restaurant in Columbia Plaza.

Mansfield M. Capriola informed the Board of a training held by Mansfield on the issue of Hoarding. EHHD staff attended. She further noted that it is move in weekend at UConn.

Adjournment

J. Rupert made a MOTION, seconded by C. Silversmith to adjourn the regular meeting at 5:39 pm. MOTION PASSED unanimously.

Next Board Meeting – October 16, 2025, 4:30 PM

Respectfully submitted,



Robert Miller

Secretary