

RiverStone Health
Board of Health Meeting Minutes
January 23, 2025

Jim Harris, Chairperson of the Board, Presiding

Members Present: Jim Harris; Spencer Anderson; Debbie Davis (remote); John Dorr; Erin Lambert; Mark Morse; Steve Wahrlich; Casey Wheeler

Members Absent: Carol Beam; Brent Cromley; Michael Dennis; Lionel Tapia; Derek Yeager

Staff Present: Jon Forte, President & CEO / Health Officer; Bob Janicek, Chief Information Officer; Megan Littlefield, Chief Medical Officer; Carrie Ludwig, Executive Assistant; Eric Owen, Vice-President of Public Health, and Clinical Services; Shanna Zier, Chief Financial Officer

Guests Present: Jeana Lervick, legal counsel – Crowley Fleck

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Harris called the January 23, 2025 Board of Health meeting to order at 7:00 AM.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Chairperson Harris opened the floor for public comment. Hearing none, he proceeded to the next agenda item.

APPROVAL

December 5, 2024 Meeting Minutes: Chairperson Harris requested a motion to approve the minutes (copy on file) of the December 5, 2024 Board of Health meeting that were previously distributed in the January 23, 2025 Board of Health meeting packet.

M O T I O N

Upon a motion duly made (Dorr), seconded (Morse), and unanimously carried, it was

VOTED: TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE DECEMBER 5, 2024, BOARD OF HEALTH MEETING AS PRESENTED

Joint Boards Meeting Minutes: Chairperson Harris requested a motion to approve the minutes (copy on file) of the January 21, 2025 Joint Boards meeting that were previously distributed in the January 23, 2025 Board of Health meeting packet.

M O T I O N

Upon a motion duly made (Morse), seconded (Dorr), and unanimously carried, it was

VOTED: TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE JANUARY 21, 2025 JOINT BOARDS MEETING AS PRESENTED.

CEO / HEALTH OFFICER REPORT

Jon Forte provided updates and discussed highlights of the CEO “HELP” report (copy on file) that was previously distributed in the January 23, 2025 Board of Health meeting packet.

- We are focused on expanding access to care and increasing patient census with the recent addition of a new School-Based Health Center (SBHC) at Billings Senior High School, which opened in early December, and the launch of a new mobile health unit designed to help us meet healthcare needs at schools across Yellowstone County.
- Our advocacy efforts remain strong as we continue to engage with local and federal legislators to emphasize the vital role of public health and community health centers, urging their support on health policy priorities and continued funding for community health centers. Additionally, we are collaborating with state and national advocacy organizations to develop strategic pathways forward and participate in upcoming legislative days and advocacy events.
- The RiverStone Health Foundation received a \$400,000 gift from the Fortin Family Foundation in support of the continued expansion of School Based Health Centers (SBHC) and mobile health services to help us meet the healthcare needs of local and rural schools throughout Yellowstone County.
- On December 18, a severe windstorm caused a major utility outage at RiverStone Health’s Billings Campus. A voltage drop in Northwestern Energy’s supply line prevented our emergency generator from activating and damaged critical systems, disrupting phones, network connectivity, and power in multiple clinical and administrative areas. As a result, many appointments were canceled on December 19.
- On Friday, January 10, the CEOs of RiverStone Health, Intermountain St. Vincent, and Billings Clinic met for our quarterly Healthcare Alliance meeting. The Alliance remains committed to addressing behavioral health challenges in our community, advancing crisis stabilization efforts, and exploring collaborative opportunities to leverage our organizations' resources for a meaningful impact on the well-being of those we serve.
- The Local Governing Authority, consisting of City and County elected leaders, met last month to discuss the ongoing behavioral health crisis in our community, review local overdose data, and discuss the risks of unregulated substances such as Kratom and other designer drugs affecting Yellowstone County residents.

- We are working with Yellowstone County and the City of Billings to assume responsibility for the Yellowstone County Crisis Diversion Grant following the resignation of the Substance Abuse Connect (SAC) Coordinator. While the grant includes oversight of the Mobile Crisis Response Unit (CRU), RiverStone Health aims to collaborate with partners across the county to enhance and expand mobile crisis response efforts. We envision a comprehensive, community-wide approach that relies on collaboration with hospitals, city agencies, and other behavioral health providers to establish a sustainable and effective crisis response system.
- RiverStone Health's employee turnover rate for 2024 was 10.90%, down from 12.88% in 2023. Over the past nine years, our average turnover rate has been 11.42%, significantly lower than the industry average of 36.61%, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.
- We recently completed a wellbeing workbench survey, along with our annual employee engagement survey. Data from both surveys is currently being analyzed and reviewed for correlation between both assessment tools. Once the data has been analyzed, we will share an executive summary of the results with the Board.

Jon provided a report of Health Officer-related activity in Yellowstone County:

- Influenza remains a concern across Montana. Two weeks ago, Yellowstone County reported its first influenza-related deaths, including a man in his 50s, a woman in her 80s, and a woman in her 60s, all of whom passed away in Billings hospitals. Statewide, there have been 2,650 reported cases, 165 hospitalizations, and nine total deaths. Notably, 78% of hospitalizations have occurred in individuals aged 50 or older.
- In 2024, Montana recorded 17,713 confirmed COVID-19 cases, a decrease from 25,675 in 2023. Of those infected, 1,193 individuals (6.7%) were hospitalized, and 74 deaths (0.4%) were reported. So far in January 2025, the state has seen 545 confirmed cases, with 57 hospitalizations and two reported deaths.

CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER REPORT

Megan Littlefield provided updates on activity in the CHC and the Chief Medical Officer Report (copy on file) that was previously distributed in the January 23, 2025 Board of Health meeting packet.

- Recruiting and staffing update: we have hired two mid-level providers to backfill positions that were vacated in the last several months. The providers are scheduled to begin in the next few months.
- Working to develop a plan to establish a structured residency program for Advanced Practice Providers (APPs) to better train new graduates and support their integration into the healthcare system. We continue to work to identify funding sources to offset the administrative costs associated with its setup and operation.
- Recruiting for the Montana Family Medicine Residency (MFMR) Class of 2028 is now complete, with 114 candidates interviewed. The rank list is due by March 5, and match results will be announced during the week of March 17.
- Our accredited Addiction Medicine Fellowship has been in place for about a year, but we have lacked the necessary funding to fully support its infrastructure. We are currently applying for a

HRSA grant to help offset administrative costs. Last week, we had a successful ACGME accreditation visit, and the fellowship has been approved for continued accreditation.

- We are in the process of interviewing candidates for the behavioral health position at Billings Senior High School's SBHC (School Based Health Center).
- Our first mobile health unit has been ordered and is expected to arrive by the end of February. We have assembled a start-up team to launch the unit, beginning with medical services two days per week and dental services one day per month. Additionally, we plan to offer behavioral health services once staffing levels stabilize.
- We have implemented various strategies to increase patient encounters throughout the year, resulting in a positive trend. Compared to 2023, the number of unique patients in 2024 has grown to 14,308 (+654), while total encounters have risen to 68,888 (+7,920).
- Respiratory illness cases are on the rise in Yellowstone County. Influenza remains the most prevalent, followed by continued elevated cases of COVID-19. We have also seen an increase in RSV cases.
- The CDC issued a Health Alert to expedite the identification of influenza A(H5N1), or avian flu, which has been sporadically detected in humans in the United States. To date, there have been no cases reported in Montana.

INTRODUCTION OF NEW BOARD MEMBERS

Chairperson Harris welcomed newly appointed Board members to the Board of Health. Mark Morse, appointed by Yellowstone County, and Erin Lambert, appointed by the City of Billings, introduced themselves, sharing their background and interest in serving on the Board. Board members and RiverStone Health staff also introduced themselves and extended a warm welcome to the new members.

FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT

Finance Committee Chair Spencer Anderson provided a brief overview of finance committee activity and the October 2024 and November 2024 financial statements. Chairperson Harris requested a motion to accept the December 2, 2024 joint finance committee meeting notes, the January 16, 2025 finance committee meeting notes, the October 2024 financial statements, and the November 2024 financial statements, (copies on file) that were previously distributed in the January 23, 2025 Board of Health meeting packet.

M O T I O N

Upon a motion duly made (Morse), seconded (Dorr), and unanimously carried, it was

VOTED: TO ACCEPT THE DECEMBER 2, 2024, JOINT FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING NOTES AS PRESENTED.

M O T I O N

Upon a motion duly made (Wahrlich), seconded (Morse), and unanimously carried, it was

VOTED: TO ACCEPT THE JANUARY 16, 2025, FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING NOTES AS PRESENTED.

M O T I O N

Upon a motion duly made (Anderson), seconded (Wahrlich), and unanimously carried, it was

VOTED: TO ACCEPT THE OCTOBER 2024 FINANCIAL STATEMENTS AS PRESENTED

M O T I O N

Upon a motion duly made (Wahrlich), seconded (Morse), and unanimously carried, it was

VOTED: TO ACCEPT THE NOVEMBER 2024 FINANCIAL STATEMENTS AS PRESENTED

SAFETY AND QUALITY COMMITTEE

In the absence of the committee chair, Jon Forte provided an overview of Committee activity and the December 3, 2024 Safety and Quality committee meeting before Chairperson Harris requested a motion to accept the meeting notes (copy on file) of the December 3, 2024 Safety and Quality committee meeting that were previously distributed in the January 23, 2025 Board of Health meeting packet.

M O T I O N

Upon a motion duly made (Dorr), seconded (Morse), and unanimously carried, it was

VOTED: TO ACCEPT THE MEETING NOTES OF THE DECEMBER 3, 2024 SAFETY AND QUALITY COMMITTEE MEETING AS PRESENTED

PUBLIC HEALTH POLICY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE REPORT

In the absence of the committee chair, Jon Forte provided an overview of Committee activity and highlights of the January 7, 2025 Public Health Policy Development Committee meeting.

Chairperson Harris requested a motion to accept the meeting notes (copy on file) of the January 7, 2025 Public Health Policy Development Committee meeting that were previously distributed in the January 23, 2025 Board of Health meeting packet.

M O T I O N

Upon a motion duly made (Wahrlich), seconded (Dorr), and unanimously carried, it was

VOTED: TO ACCEPT THE MEETING NOTES OF THE JANUARY 7, 2025 PUBLIC HEALTH POLICY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE AS PRESENTED

GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

Chairperson Harris briefly discussed Board of Health committee assignments, noting that Mark Morse has been appointed to the finance committee. Additional committee appointments will be announced as new members become familiar with the Board's committees and indicate their interest in joining specific ones.

OLD BUSINESS

No old business discussed

NEW BUSINESS

No new business discussed

MEETING SCHEDULE

The next scheduled meeting of the Board of Health will be held on Thursday, February 27, 2025, starting at 7:00 AM in the first-floor conference rooms of the Lil Anderson Center.

MEETING ADJOURNMENT

The January 23, 2025 Board of Health meeting was adjourned at 8:36 AM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Spencer Anderson
Secretary/Treasurer, Board of Health

Jonathan Forte
President & CEO

cc: Leadership Team, County Commissioners, hd\BOH\2025\minutes\01.23.25 BOH Minutes