

RiverStone Health
Board of Health Meeting Minutes
December 7, 2023

Michael Dennis, Past Chairperson of the Board, Presiding

Members Present: John Dorr - via phone; Spencer Anderson; Carol Beam; Brent Cromley; Debbie Davis; Michael Dennis; Anne Giuliano; Jim Harris; Lionel Tapia; Steve Wahrlich – via phone; K.C. Williams

Members Absent: Don Jones; Bea Ann Melichar; Casey Wheeler

Staff Present: Kandra Diefenderfer, Senior Director, Homecare and Hospice; Jon Forte, President & CEO; Megan Littlefield, Chief Medical Officer; Carrie Ludwig, Executive Assistant; Eric Owen, Vice-President of Public Health and Clinical Services; Barbara Schneeman, Vice President, Communication & Public Affairs / Public Information Officer / RiverStone Health Foundation Executive Director; Shanna Zier, Chief Financial Officer

Guests Present: Stewart Kirkpatrick, Legal Counsel – Crowley Fleck; Jeana Lervick, Legal Counsel – Crowley Fleck; Steve Williams, In-house Counsel - Yellowstone County Attorney's Office

CALL TO ORDER

Past Chairperson Dennis called the December 7, 2023 Board of Health meeting to order at 7:01 AM.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Past Chairperson Dennis invited members of the public to address the Board. Upon hearing no comment, Past Chairperson Dennis proceeded to the next agenda item.

APPROVAL

October 26, 2023 Meeting Minutes: Past Chairperson Dennis requested a motion to approve the **MINUTES** (copy on file) of the October 26, 2023 Board of Health meeting that were previously distributed in the December 7, 2023 Board of Health meeting packet.

M O T I O N

Upon a motion duly made (Cromley), seconded (Tapia), and unanimously carried, it was

VOTED: TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE OCTOBER 26, 2023, BOARD OF HEALTH MEETING AS PRESENTED

December 7, 2023 consent agenda: Past Chairperson Dennis requested a motion to approve the **CONSENT AGENDA** (copy on file) of the December 7, 2023 Board of Health meeting that was previously distributed in the December 7, 2023 Board of Health meeting packet.

M O T I O N

Upon a motion duly made (Cromley), seconded (Tapia), and unanimously carried, it was

VOTED: TO APPROVE THE CONSENT AGENDA OF THE DECEMBER 7, 2023, BOARD OF HEALTH MEETING AS PRESENTED

CEO REPORT

Jon Forte provided updates and discussed highlights of the CEO “HELP” report (copy on file) that was previously distributed in the December 7, 2023 Board of Health meeting packet.

- RiverStone Health continues to experience the negative financial impacts of a significant decrease in Medicaid covered patient visits in the CHC. Since the Medicaid redetermination process began last April, more than 100,000 Medicaid beneficiaries in Montana have lost coverage.
- On November 21st, the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) held a public hearing on Pacific Steel and Recycling’s proposed construction of a landfill for auto shredder residue in Yellowstone County. Members of the ‘Stop the Shepherd Landfill’ group contacted RiverStone Health seeking clarification on the local health department roles and responsibilities in the matter. In response, an explanation was provided to the group stating that the Yellowstone County Health Officer’s signature on the application is required by the state of Montana and only certifies that the proposed site meets the legal requirements outlined in MCA and is not an approval or endorsement of the project.
- Open enrollment through the Health Insurance Marketplace (www.healthcare.gov) began on November 1, 2023. Open enrollment runs through Jan. 15, however, for coverage to begin on January 1, 2024, individuals must enroll by Dec. 15, 2023. Information regarding coverage options and local enrollment assistance is available through the Cover Montana website – covermt.org.
- December 1, 2023, marked the 35th annual, World AIDS Day. This annual event serves as a reminder of the global struggle to end HIV-related stigma, an opportunity to honor those we have lost, and a commitment to working toward a day when HIV is no longer a public health threat.
- RiverStone Health is partnering with Rimrock Foundation on application of a grant to attend the National Council for Mental Wellbeing’s Behavioral Health Training Institute (BHITI) to enhance mental health and substance use treatment in Yellowstone County. If awarded, individuals from Rimrock and RiverStone Health will attend the National Conference on Mental Wellbeing and participate in an 8-month training program with up to 22 public health and behavioral health officials from across the nation.
- RiverStone Health’s Home Care & Hospice programs were recognized during the month of November in celebration of National Home Care & Hospice Month.

- RiverStone Health participated in Billings' Best Coat Drive, organized by People's Community Outreach, to distribute more than 800 coats to community members in need in Billings and Worden.
- Catholic Social Services of Montana has opened a free Childrens Boutique at RiverStone Health. The boutique is staffed by volunteers and stocked with diapers, clothing, and other supplies for babies and toddlers, all available at no cost. The boutique is open on Mondays and Thursdays from 11:00 AM to 1:00 PM and accepts donations during open hours.
- As of the November 30th, 2023, deadline, RiverStone Health reached 100% compliance with the updated employee influenza vaccine requirements. Per policy requirements, all staff provided proof of vaccination or an approved religious or medical exemption by the deadline date.

Jon provided a brief report of health officer related activity in Yellowstone County:

- Jon reported that the burden of COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations remains manageable while the demand for COVID-19 vaccinations remains low. There were seven COVID-19 related deaths reported in Yellowstone County during the month of November, bringing the total number of COVID related deaths in Yellowstone County to 39 so far in 2023.
- Yellowstone County is beginning to see a notable increase in the number of reported influenza cases this season while the overall number of cases is lower compared to the same time last season.

CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER REPORT

Dr. Littlefield provided an update of activity in the CHC and the December 2023 Chief Medical Officer Report (copy on file) that was previously distributed in the December 7, 2023 Board of Health meeting packet.

- James Miller, PA has started his new role as Lead APP (Advanced Practice Provider). Dr. Littlefield explained that the Lead APP essentially serves as the assistant medical director for the CHC.
- The Montana Family Medicine Residency's (MFMR) interview season is well underway. MFMR anticipates interviewing 150 residency candidates this season.
- A CHC leadership and management retreat was held November 29-30. Attendees focused on leadership development, communication strategies, and ways to further develop and foster shared culture among health center staff.
- Lutheran Family Services Rocky Mountains (LFSRM) is starting a refugee resettlement program in Billings. An anticipated 100 individuals, mostly in family units, will relocate here. RiverStone Health will partner with LFSRM to offer required medical services and ideally become the patient centered medical home for these families.

FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT

Past Chairperson Dennis requested a motion to accept the December 5, 2023 finance committee meeting notes, the September 2023 financial statements and the October 2023 financial statements (copies on file) that were previously distributed in the December 7, 2023 Board of Health meeting packet.

Finance Committee Chair Jim Harris provided a brief overview of the financial statements and answered Board member questions.

M O T I O N

Upon a motion duly made (Williams), seconded (Giuliano), and unanimously carried, it was

VOTED: TO ACCEPT THE DECEMBER 5, 2023, FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING NOTES AS PRESENTED

M O T I O N

Upon a motion duly made (Williams), seconded (Tapia), and unanimously carried, it was

VOTED: TO ACCEPT THE SEPTEMBER 2023 FINANCIAL STATEMENTS AS PRESENTED

M O T I O N

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

VOTED: TO ACCEPT THE OCTOBER 2023 FINANCIAL STATEMENTS AS PRESENTED

SAFETY AND QUALITY COMMITTEE

Past Chairperson Dennis requested a motion to accept the meeting notes (copy on file) of the November 7, 2023 Safety and Quality committee meeting that were previously distributed in the December 7, 2023 Board of Health meeting packet.

M O T I O N

Upon a motion duly made (Cromley), seconded (Harris), and unanimously carried, it was

VOTED: TO ACCEPT THE MEETING NOTES OF THE NOVEMBER 7, 2023 SAFETY AND QUALITY COMMITTEE MEETING AS PRESENTED

PUBLIC HEALTH POLICY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE REPORT

Past Chairperson Dennis requested a motion to accept the meeting notes (copy on file) of the November 7, 2023 and December 5, 2023 public health policy development committee meetings (copy on file) that were previously distributed in the December 7, 2023 Board of Health meeting packet.

M O T I O N

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

VOTED: TO ACCEPT THE MEETING NOTES OF THE NOVEMBER 7, 2023 PUBLIC HEALTH POLICY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MEETING AS PRESENTED

MOTION

Upon a motion duly made (Harris), seconded (Cromley), and unanimously carried, it was

**VOTED: TO ACCEPT THE MEETING NOTES OF THE DECEMBER 5, 2023
PUBLIC HEALTH POLICY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MEETING
AS PRESENTED**

GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

Past Chairperson Dennis provided an overview of Committee activity and requested a motion to accept the meeting notes (copy on file) of the October 26, 2023 meeting that were previously distributed in the December 7, 2023 Board of Health meeting packet.

MOTION

Upon a motion duly made (Tapia), seconded (Williams), and unanimously carried, it was

**VOTED: TO ACCEPT THE MEETING NOTES OF THE OCTOBER 26, 2023
GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE MEETING AS PRESENTED**

Past Chairperson Dennis requested a motion to accept Governance Committee nomination recommendations, of Brent Cromley, John Dorr, and Steve Wahrlich, for reappointment to the Board of Health for a three-year term beginning January 1, 2024.

MOTION

Upon a motion duly made (Melichar), seconded (Cromley), and unanimously carried, it was

**VOTED: TO ACCEPT GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE NOMINATION
RECOMMENDATIONS, BRENT CROMLEY, JOHN DORR, AND
STEVE WAHRlich, FOR REAPPOINTMENT TO THE BOARD OF
HEALTH FOR A THREE-YEAR TERM BEGINNING JANUARY 1, 2024**

Past Chairperson Dennis requested a motion to accept the Governance Committee's proposed slate of officers for election to the Board of Health for a one-year term beginning January 1, 2024:

- Chair: John Dorr
- Vice-Chair: Steve Wahrlich
- Secretary-Treasurer: Jim Harris

There was no response to a call for BOH officer nominations from the floor.

MOTION

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

**VOTED: TO ACCEPT GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE PROPOSED SLATE OF
OFFICERS, AS PRESENTED, FOR ELECTION TO THE BOARD OF
HEALTH FOR A ONE YEAR TERM BEGINNING JANUARY 1, 2024**

OLD BUSINESS

Board recommendation of appointment for new health officer: During its October 26, 2023 meeting, the Board of Health reviewed and discussed the succession process of a new health officer as defined by Montana Code Annotated MCA 50-2-116 (a), noting that the process begins with the Board of Health's recommendation for appointment of a health officer to the local governing authority (as required under HB121), which will then meet to consider and take action on the Board's recommendation.

Past Chairperson Dennis requested a motion from the Board to recommend the appointment of Jon Forte, President and CEO of RiverStone Health, as Yellowstone County Health Officer.

MOTION

Upon a motion duly made (Williams), seconded (Giuliano), and unanimously carried, it was

**VOTED: TO APPROVE BOARD RECOMMENDATION OF JON FORTE,
PRESIDENT AND CEO OF RIVERSTONE HEALTH, FOR
APPOINTMENT AS YELLOWSTONE COUNTY HEALTH OFFICER**

NEW BUSINESS

RiverStone Health Foundation update: Carol Beam, Vice-Chairperson, RiverStone Health Foundation, and Barbara Schneeman, RiverStone Health Foundation Executive Director, provided an overview of the RiverStone Health Foundation including its mission, important milestones since the Foundation was established in 2008, Foundation Board volunteer leadership, and Foundation staff.

Barbara discussed the current fundraising mix including the HELP Campaign, the RiverStone Health Hospice Golf Tournament, application-based grants from private philanthropic foundations, and memorials and bequests among other fundraising events and activities. Barbara also discussed fundraising opportunities yet to be realized including a \$5M endowment & board directed campaign benefitting the RiverStone Health Hospice program. She noted that the endowment fund will create a legacy of compassionate care for those facing terminal illness, establish a stable and permanent source of funding, and ensure continued education and training for staff. Carol noted that the endowment is already halfway funded, and a plan is underway to meet the fundraising goal of \$5M by the time the RiverStone Health Hospice Home celebrates its fifteenth birthday in 2026. Barbara noted that the internal Hospice Endowment Campaign will begin in January 2024 with an external kickoff in February 2024. Carol invited and encouraged Board members to stay connected and support the campaign in any manner they wish to engage.

MEETING SCHEDULE

The next scheduled meeting will be Thursday, January 25, 2024 beginning at 7:00 AM in the first-floor conference rooms of the Lil Anderson Center.

MEETING ADJOURNMENT

The December 7, 2023 Board of Health meeting was adjourned at 9:00 AM.

Respectfully Submitted,

James D. Harris
Secretary/Treasurer, Board of Health

Jonathan Forte
President & CEO

cc: Leadership Team, County Commissioners, hd\BOH\2023\minutes\12.7.23