

**RiverStone Health  
Board of Health Meeting Minutes  
February 27, 2025**

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Jim Harris, Chairperson of the Board, Presiding

**Members Present:** Jim Harris; Spencer Anderson; Brent Cromley; Debbie Davis; Michael Dennis; John Dorr; Erin Lambert; Lionel Tapia (remote); Steve Wahrlich; Derek Yeager

**Members Absent:** Carol Beam; Mark Morse; Casey Wheeler

**Staff Present:** Jon Forte, President & CEO / Health Officer; Jeff Hert, Vice - President Human Resources; 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:** Stewart Kirkpatrick, legal counsel – Crowley Fleck; Jeana Lervick, legal counsel – Crowley Fleck

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**CALL TO ORDER**

Chairperson Harris called the February 27, 2025 Board of Health meeting to order at 7:00 AM.

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**PUBLIC COMMENT**

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

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**APPROVAL JANUARY 23, 2025 BOH MEETING MINUTES**

Chairperson Harris requested a motion to approve the minutes (copy on file) of the January 23, 2025 Board of Health meeting that were previously distributed in the February 27, 2025 Board of Health meeting packet.

**M O T I O N**

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

**VOTED: TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE JANUARY 23, 2025, BOARD OF HEALTH MEETING AS PRESENTED**

## CEO / HEALTH OFFICER REPORT

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Jon Forte provided updates and discussed highlights of the CEO “HELP” report (copy on file) that was previously distributed in the February 27, 2025 Board of Health meeting packet.

- Two weeks ago, Jon and Dr. Littlefield traveled to Washington D.C. to attend the National Association of Community Health Centers (NACHC) Policy & Issues Forum. During their visit, they met with the Montana Congressional Delegation to advocate for community health centers and public health initiatives, emphasizing their benefits and vital role in supporting communities.
- RiverStone Health was unable to access \$1.7 million in federal funding after the Trump administration issued a blanket freeze on federal funding late last month. This funding freeze posed a significant threat to community health centers and non-profit organizations across the country. However, the order was rescinded, and we were eventually able to access funds with assistance from our Montana Congressional leaders.
- We are closely monitoring developments related to the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022, which authorizes Health and Human Services (HHS) to begin negotiating prices on high-cost prescription drugs covered by Medicare Part D. We anticipate a significant negative impact in revenue as we prepare for the uncertainty of upcoming changes to drug pricing and reimbursement rates set to take effect in January 2026.
- RiverStone Health’s new mobile health unit is set to arrive in April 2025. Funded through grants supporting the expansion of School-Based Health Centers (SBHC) and improved access to healthcare, the unit will offer medical, dental, and behavioral health services to local and rural schools across Yellowstone County.
- This summer, the Eastern Montana AHEC at RiverStone Health will be hosting a free, three-day camp for high school students interested in professions in the behavioral health field. The Heads-Up Behavioral Health Careers Camp introduces Montana high school students to behavioral health professional pathways and helps them learn about the different careers within the behavioral health field. The camp is scheduled August 3-6, 2025 at MSU-Billings. Applications are due by April 11, 2025. Apply online:  
<https://www.cognitoforms.com/EasternMontanaAreaHealthEducationCenterAHECRiverStoneHealth/2025HeadsUpCampApplication>.
- RiverStone Health will assume responsibility for the coordination of Substance Abuse Connect (SAC) Coalition activities related to Yellowstone County’s Crisis Diversion Grant. As part of the transition, SAC will undergo rebranding, and a coordinator will be hired to lead the coalition, ensuring dedicated staffing and continuity of its efforts. Crisis Diversion Grant funds are still being dispersed, with contracts either finalized or in progress. We will work, along with Yellowstone County officials, to administer this funding, ensuring transparency, accountability, and a focus on meaningful outcomes.
- RiverStone Health is opening its Live Well Center Gym for employee use as an added benefit for staff. The Live Well Center has all the basic equipment needed to start or continue your fitness journey.
- Preliminary employee engagement survey results highlight an excellent employee Net Promoter Score (eNPS) of 75. This score, which measures employees' likelihood of recommending

RiverStone Health as a workplace, is significantly above the healthcare industry average (-6.5 to 27) and remains strong following our best-in-class score of 88 in 2023.

- Robert F. Kennedy Jr. has been confirmed as Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS).

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

- Influenza cases are at an all-time high, particularly influenza A. Over the past two weeks, Montana saw an increase of over 4,750 cases of influenza as flu season begins to reach its peak.
- COVID-19 Update: Since last month, there have been 899 newly confirmed COVID-19 cases (1,444 total) with 130 total hospitalizations (+73) and 9 deaths (+7).
- Tuberculosis Update: RiverStone Health and Montana DPHHS were recently made aware of a widely viewed thread on the social media site, X, which reported a high number of active TB cases in Eastern Montana. The information on that thread was inaccurate as Montana has had no TB cases reported so far in 2025 (year-to-date).
- Syphilis Update: We continue to see an increase in syphilis rates. Montana reported 608 cases in 2024 (congenital syphilis included). There was a slight increase in congenital syphilis, indicating that some mothers with untreated syphilis are not receiving the prenatal care and screenings needed to prevent transmission to their babies during childbirth. To address this, we will continue our efforts to inform the public of the risk through a public information campaign focused on syphilis prevention.
- Measles Update: Texas and New Mexico are currently experiencing a severe outbreak of measles. As of February 25, there were 124 cases, and one death reported. Tragically, the child who passed away was unvaccinated. The most effective way to prevent measles is through immunization with two doses of the measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) vaccine. This vaccine has been proven safe and highly effective, with a 97% success rate in preventing measles.
- Bird Flu Update (H5N1): A woman in Platte County, Southeast Wyoming, tested positive for bird flu this week, however the risk to Montanans remains low. H5N1 'bird flu' is widespread in wild birds worldwide and is causing outbreaks in poultry and U.S. dairy cows with several recent human cases in U.S. dairy and poultry workers. There have been about 70 confirmed human cases in the US with one death, however asymptomatic spread among veterinarians and dairy farmers makes the number of human cases likely higher. RiverStone Health is working closely with MT DPHHS to monitor situations across the US and regionally to mitigate local impacts.

## **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 February 27, 2025 Board of Health meeting packet.

- Recruiting and staffing update: we have hired four new physicians; new graduates who are scheduled to start in late summer to early fall.
- Two new PA hires including Trinity Walter, PA started 1/27/25, and Regan Mazour, PA starting in March 2025. Both are new graduates.

- Continuing 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.
- We have filled both of our behavioral health positions for Billings Senior High School's SBHC (School Based Health Center). We have a verbal acceptance from a behavioral health provider to backfill a position in the main clinic that has been open since early December. We will post a new position to expand behavioral health for the Career Center.
- A compensation gap continues to hinder our efforts to recruit behavioral health providers for open positions.
- We are seeing a positive trend in patient encounters. Compared to 2023, our 2024 unique patients increased to 14,308 (+654) and our encounters increased to 68,888 (+7,920).
- Syphilis: Growing epidemic across the state and particularly in Yellowstone County. Efforts to provide ongoing provider education include the development of a toolkit that was distributed to Yellowstone County providers a few weeks ago.
- Child Advocacy Center: We had our first official medical forensic evaluation this week. A reassuring sign that we are on track to get that service up and running.

## **FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT**

Finance Committee Chair Spencer Anderson provided a brief overview of the February 13, 2025 finance committee meeting and the December 2024 financial statements. Chairperson Harris requested a motion to accept the February 13, 2025 finance committee meeting notes, the December 2024 financial statements, and the November 2024 financial statements, (copies on file) that were previously distributed in the February 27, 2025 Board of Health meeting packet.

### **M O T I O N**

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

**VOTED: TO ACCEPT THE FEBRUARY 13 2025, FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING NOTES AS PRESENTED.**

### **M O T I O N**

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

**VOTED: TO ACCEPT THE DECEMBER 2024 FINANCIAL STATEMENTS AS PRESENTED**

Shanna Zier provided information about the *Salary Adjustments and Other Compensation Policy* (copy on file) that was previously distributed in the February 27, 2025 Board of Health meeting packet. Shanna explained that the policy combines the *Employee Recognition Awards Policy* into the *Salary Adjustments and Other Compensation Policy*.

#### **M O T I O N**

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

**VOTED: TO APPROVE THE *SALARY ADJUSTMENTS AND OTHER COMPENSATION POLICY* AS PRESENTED**

#### **SAFETY AND QUALITY COMMITTEE**

Committee chair, Lionel Tapia provided an overview of the December 3, 2024 Safety and Quality committee meeting.

Chairperson Harris requested a motion to accept the meeting notes (copy on file) of the February 4, 2025 Safety and Quality committee meeting that were previously distributed in the February 27, 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 FEBRUARY 4, 2025 SAFETY AND QUALITY COMMITTEE MEETING AS PRESENTED**

#### **PUBLIC HEALTH POLICY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE REPORT**

Committee chair, Brent Cromley provided an overview of the February 4, 2025 Public Health Policy Development Committee meeting.

Chairperson Harris requested a motion to accept the meeting notes (copy on file) of the February 4, 2025 Public Health Policy Development Committee meeting that were previously distributed in the February 27, 2025 Board of Health meeting packet.

#### **M O T I O N**

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

**VOTED: TO ACCEPT THE MEETING NOTES OF THE FEBRUARY 4, 2025 PUBLIC HEALTH POLICY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE AS PRESENTED**

## **GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE**

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The Governance Committee did not meet in the past month. Chairperson Harris noted that a meeting would be scheduled within the next couple of weeks.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

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No old business discussed

## **NEW BUSINESS**

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No new business discussed

## **MEETING SCHEDULE**

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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**

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The February 27, 2025 Board of Health meeting was adjourned at 8:39 AM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Spencer Anderson  
Secretary/Treasurer, Board of Health

Jonathan Forte  
President & CEO

cc: Leadership Team, County Commissioners, hd\BOH\2025\minutes\02.27.25 BOH Minutes