

**RiverStone Health**  
**Board of Health Meeting Minutes**  
**March 21, 2024**

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John Dorr, Chairperson of the Board, Presiding

**Members Present:** John Dorr; Spencer Anderson; Brent Cromley; Michael Dennis; Anne Giuliano; Jim Harris; Bea Ann Melichar; Lionel Tapia; Steve Wahrlich via phone; Casey Wheeler; K.C. Williams

**Members Absent:** Carol Beam; Debbie Davis; Don Jones

**Staff Present:** Kandra Diefenderfer, Senior Director, Homecare and Hospice; 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; Amy Moser, Senior Director of Compliance and Risk Management; 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:** Jeana Lervick, Legal Counsel – Crowley Fleck; Steve Williams, In-house Counsel - Yellowstone County Attorney’s Office

**CALL TO ORDER**

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Chairperson Dorr called the March 21, 2024 Board of Health meeting to order at 7:03 AM.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

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

**APPROVAL**

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**February 20, 2024 Joint Boards meeting minutes:** Chairperson Dorr requested a motion to approve the **MINUTES** (copy on file) of the February 20, 2024 Joint Boards meeting that were previously distributed in the March 21, 2024 Board of Health meeting packet.

**MOTION**

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

**VOTED: TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE FEBRUARY 20, 2024 JOINT BOARDS MEETING AS PRESENTED**

**February 22, 2024 Meeting Minutes:** Chairperson Dorr requested a motion to approve the **MINUTES** (copy on file) of the February 22, 2024 Board of Health meeting that were previously distributed in the March 21, 2024 Board of Health meeting packet.

**M O T I O N**

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

**VOTED: TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE FEBRUARY 22, 2024, BOARD OF HEALTH MEETING AS PRESENTED**

**CEO 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 March 21, 2024 Board of Health meeting packet.

- More than 36,000 children in Montana have lost Medicaid coverage since the unwinding process began in early April last year, including 5,500 children in Yellowstone County alone. Montana ranks among the worst for children, with 1 in 3 losing Medicaid coverage. 70% of Montanans who were disenrolled lost coverage due to procedural reasons, like returning incomplete paperwork, not because they were ineligible.
- A federal funding package that extends mandatory funding for community health centers through December 31, 2024, was passed last week. The bill provides \$4.4 billion for community health centers, and \$201 million (increased from \$126M) for Teaching Health Center Graduate Medical Education programs (THCGME). However, it is now up to HRSA to clarify if there will be a Per Resident Amount (PRA) increase to assist with resident recruitment and retention.
- RiverStone Health is pursuing grant funding through the Montana Healthcare Foundation’s (MHF) School-Based Health Initiative. The School-Based Health Initiative supports partnerships between schools and health care providers to create school-based health centers in communities that need them most. Grant funding of \$300K over three years, would support expanded school-based health services in Billings School District 2. Based on positive experience with our current school-based health centers, School District 2 is very interested in expanding our partnership.
- For many years, RiverStone Health has provided health care services, health education, and support to rural schools across Yellowstone County through its school nursing program. Unfortunately, financial, and operational challenges have led to the discontinuation of the program beginning with the 2024-2025 school year. Montana’s Office of Public Instruction does not currently mandate or fund the position of a school nurse for Montana’s public schools.
- The Montana Family Medicine Residency (MFMR) matched all nine residency slots for the incoming Class of 2027.

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

- From February 25 to March 2, there was a 19% increase in COVID cases, ending the week with 89 cases compared to the previous week’s 75 cases.

- As influenza cases dramatically decreased from 360 in Week 5 to only 82 last week, influenza hospitalizations have slightly increased over the last few weeks.
- Chlamydia cases have dropped significantly after a previous spike at the end of 2023. While chlamydia and gonorrhea experienced more than a 60% decrease in new cases, syphilis cases doubled resulting in eight new cases. According to DPHHS, in 2024 there have been four congenital syphilis cases reported to date, which is an increase compared to the same time last year.
- In mid-January, Yellowstone County saw an increase in lead poisoning cases. Two products found to contain lead have been recalled, RiverStone Health Sanitarians have worked to ensure that local stores are aware of the recall. We continue to monitor elevated blood lead levels in Yellowstone County.
- We received a Health Alert Network (HAN) advisory regarding an increase in global and domestic measles cases and outbreaks. As of March 14, there have been 58 confirmed cases of measles across 17 states. The CDC reminds people to ensure children in the United States and those traveling internationally, 6 months and older, are current on MMR vaccination.

## **CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER REPORT**

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Dr. Megan Littlefield provided highlights, of the Chief Medical Officer Report (copy on file) that was previously distributed in the March 21, 2024 Board of Health meeting packet.

- Dr. Littlefield shared statistics related to Montana Family Medicine Residency’s interview season that was completed last month:
  - 522 applicants
  - 406 comprehensive reviews
  - 14 interview days: 75% virtual, 25% in-person
  - 135 candidates were interviewed.
  - Ranked 125 candidates and successfully matched all 9 MFMR spots
- Dr. Littlefield introduced and shared biographical information on the incoming class of 2027 interns that will join the Montana Family Medicine Residency (MFMR) in late June of this year.
- Health promotion received a Lead Poisoning Prevention Grant to work on increasing education on lead poisoning, increase screening, and develop an approach for environmental surveillance and assessment when elevated lead levels are identified. A task force has been created and work has started on this effort.
- Working on an education campaign to re-educate pediatric providers in our community about the recommendations for lead screening to help increase screening efforts. This information is being developed and will be distributed soon.

## **FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT**

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Finance Committee Chair Jim Harris provided a brief overview of the financial statements and answered Board member questions. Chairperson Dorr requested a motion to accept the January 2024 financial statements (copy on file) that were previously distributed in the March 21, 2024 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 ACCEPT THE JANUARY 2024 FINANCIAL STATEMENTS AS PRESENTED**

**SAFETY AND QUALITY COMMITTEE**

Chairperson Dorr requested a motion to accept the meeting notes (copy on file) of the March 5, 2024 Safety and Quality committee meeting that were previously distributed in the March 21, 2024 Board of Health meeting packet.

**M O T I O N**

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

**VOTED: TO ACCEPT THE MEETING NOTES OF THE MARCH 5, 2024 SAFETY AND QUALITY COMMITTEE MEETING AS PRESENTED**

**PUBLIC HEALTH POLICY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE REPORT**

Chairperson Bea Ann Melichar provided an overview of Committee activity and asked Barbara Schneeman to provide a legislative update. Barbara provided an update of the progress made on the working timeline she created to advocate for the continuation of Montana Medicaid Expansion.

Chairperson Dorr requested a motion to accept the meeting notes (copy on file) of the March 5, 2024 Public Health Policy Development Committee meeting that were previously distributed in the March 21, 2024 Board of Health meeting packet.

**M O T I O N**

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

**VOTED: TO ACCEPT THE MEETING NOTES OF THE MARCH 5, 2024 PUBLIC HEALTH POLICY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE AS PRESENTED**

**GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE**

Chairperson Dorr provided an overview of Committee activity and requested a motion to accept the meeting notes (copy on file) of the February 22, 2024 meeting that were previously distributed in the March 21, 2024 Board of Health meeting packet.

**M O T I O N**

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

**VOTED: TO ACCEPT THE MEETING NOTES OF THE FEBRUARY 22, 2024 GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE MEETING AS PRESENTED**

**OLD BUSINESS**

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Jon provided an update on the RiverStone Health Hospice Home transition process and answered Board members questions.

**NEW BUSINESS**

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**Set public hearing for Rule #5 variance request:**

Chairperson Dorr requested a motion to set a public hearing at the next Board of Health meeting on Thursday, April 25, 2024, at 7:00 AM to hear a variance request pertaining to Rule #5 – Body Art.

**M O T I O N**

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

**VOTED: APPROVE SETTING A PUBLIC HEARING TO HEAR A VARIANCE REQUEST PERTAINING TO LOCAL RULE #5 – BODY ART, ON THURSDAY, APRIL 25, 2024 BEGINNING AT 7:00 A.M.**

**MEETING SCHEDULE**

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

**MEETING ADJOURNMENT**

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The March 21, 2024 Board of Health meeting was adjourned at 8:44 AM.

Respectfully Submitted,

James D. Harris  
Secretary/Treasurer, Board of Health

Jonathan Forte  
President & CEO

cc: Leadership Team, County Commissioners, hd\BOH\2024\minutes\03.21.24