



**BUDGET PUBLIC HEARING
&
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
ASPETUCK BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

April 10, 2023

Subject to change until approved by the Board of Directors.

Present at the Hearing were: Vice Chairwoman Catherine Revzon, Director Paul Fonteyne, Director Ilisa Nussbaum, Director Edward P. Mally, and Mark Cooper, Director of Health. Present via Zoom was Chairman Paul Shaum. Also present for the Hearing in the Health District's conference room was Thane Grauel, from the Westport Journal.

There were no members of the public present.

Chairman Shaum requested Vice Chairwoman Revzon to Chair the meeting from the Health District Conference room because he was attending the meeting via Zoom. Chairwoman Revzon agreed and called the Public Hearing to order at 7:03 PM and asked Mr. Cooper to read the Notice of the meeting.

Mr. Cooper read the Notice: *Notice, Budget Public Hearing and Regular Meeting of the Aspetuck Health District to be held in the Health District Conference Room, 180 Bayberry Lane, Westport, Ct. 06880 on Monday, April 10, 2023, at 7:00pm. There will be a Budget Public Hearing on the proposed Aspetuck Health District Budget for the fiscal year 2023 - 2024, which begins July 1, 2023. The Public Hearing will take place on Monday, April 10, 2023, at 7:00 PM. Immediately following the Budget Public Hearing there will be a Regular Meeting of the Aspetuck Health District Board of Directors. Sincerely, Mark A. R. Cooper, MPH, RS, Ex-officio, Secretary Treasurer.*

Mr. Cooper noted that the Notice has been posted with the Town Clerks of Easton, Weston and Westport, the Health District's website since March 23rd. A Public Notice has been run in the Westport News with run dates 3/31/23 and 4/7/23, the Fairfield Citizen with run dates 3/31/23 and 4/7/23, as well as being posted on Weston Today since March 23rd, as well as listed in the Westport Journal "Town Events". He also noted that the Health District's budget has gone through each member town's budget hearing process, which he has attended to present the budget, and answered any questions. All three member towns have accepted the budget.

Vice Chairwoman Revzon asked Mr. Cooper to summarize the budget request. Mr. Cooper noted that the budget before the Board has not changed since being discussed by the Board and presented to the towns of Easton, Weston, and Westport. Each town has already accepted their public health assessment. The proposal is a maintenance budget with a 2.5% increase in each town's assessment. The increase is needed to cover the increase costs of electricity, heating oil, and staff. Finding qualified staff continues to be an issue across the state with the majority of local health jurisdictions looking for the same personnel. The problem is compounded by Connecticut's adoption and implementation of the FDA Food Code because of the shortage of trained and certified inspectors required by CT-DPH. This year's

budget was prepared aligning the various expenditure items in the same categories as the auditor uses. This should help reduce the number of year-end adjustments.

Mr. Cooper noted that the Health District continues to provide COVID-19 vaccinations, although not at the large community clinics in years past but more office based, and the home bound. With the elimination of State masking mandates, there has been a resurgence of common influenza and other respiratory illnesses a levels higher than before the pandemic. One unforeseen consequence of the pandemic has been the effect on the workforce. As in every sector of the economy it has been difficult to find qualified workers. The Health District has been working on updating its 5-year strategic plan and looking to undertake a community needs assessment. Mr. Cooper noted that this was the first-year staff provided environmental permit activity numbers separately for each town and will continue to do so. He also noted the publication the *Microbial Source Tracking in the Sasco Brook, Lower Farm River, and Goodwives River Watersheds of Long Island Sound* study in the December 2022 Journal of Environmental Health, with the Health District supported.

There was general discussion on the budget and the ongoing work of the District.

Vice Chairwoman Revzon asked if there were any questions relating to the budget. Hearing none, she declared the Budget Public Hearing closed at 7:12pm.

The Regular Meeting was called to order by Vice Chairwoman Revzon at 7:13 pm.

The following voting Board Members were present: Vice Chairwoman Catherine Revzon, Director Paul Fonteyne, Director Ilisa Nussbaum, Director Edward P. Mally, and Mark Cooper, Director of Health. Present via Zoom was Chairman Paul Shaum. Also present in the Health District conference room was Thane Grauel, from the Westport Journal.

Also, present was Mark A.R. Cooper, Director of Health

Approval of Minutes

Vice Chairwoman Revzon asked if there were any other comments on the February 13, 2023, Regular Meeting Minutes.

Director Paul Fonteyne noted that he thought they were an accurate description of the meeting. Director Mally indicated he found nothing out of order.

On a motion made by Director Mally, and seconded by Director Fonteyne, the Board voted to approve the February 13, 2023, Regular Meeting Minutes. Chairman Shaum voted yes; Vice Chairwoman Revzon voted yes, Director Nussbaum voted yes, Director Mally voted yes, and Director Fonteyne voted yes.

Motion was approved 5 to 0.

Communications

Mr. Cooper noted he had received a February 2, 2023, memo from Easton Land Use Dept. inviting him to a meeting on 3/13/23 concerning their review of the town's Plan of Conservation and Development. He thought Health District representation at this meeting important enough to reschedule the March 13th Board of Directors meeting.

The Health District received a February 17, 2023 letter from Deputy Commissioner Morrissey indicating that the CT-DPH Commissioner would like to visit Health District offices. Board members and municipal leaders are encouraged to attend. Once a meeting date has been arranged, Mr. Cooper will send out invitations.

In a memo dated March 2, 2023 from Easton's Finance Director the Health District was invited to present the proposed FY 23-24 Budget at their meeting on 3/15/23. Mr. Cooper did so, the meeting went very well.

Mr. Cooper noted that included in communications was the letter he discussed with Easton's P&Z Commission at their March 9, 2023 meeting.

Mr. Cooper noted that for the first time, reports for Easton, Weston, and Westport with separate annual environmental permit activity numbers were prepared. They seem to have been received well by community leaders, so they will be continued and provided as part of the annual budget presentations.

FY 2023 - 24 Budget Discussion and Action

Mr. Cooper summarized the proposed budget as a maintenance budget with an increase of 2.5% increase in each member town's assessment, due in large part to the increase in electrical, heating and staffing costs. It is anticipated that there may be some savings in expenditures in the current year as well as higher than projected revenues due to secured grants. All three-member towns have accepted their portion of the proposed town assessments during their budget review process.

On a motion made by Director Fonteyne, and seconded by Director Mally, the Board voted to approve the proposed FY 2023-24 Budget as presented and discussed with revenue and expenditure totals of \$1,725,415. Chairman Shaum voted yes; Vice Chairwoman Revzon voted yes, Director Nussbaum voted yes, Director Mally voted yes, and Director Fonteyne voted yes.

Motion was approved 5 to 0.

Strategic Planning Update and the CHNA and CHIP Proposal – Professional Services Agreement

Strategic Plan

Mr. Cooper noted that the staff have been working with the Harvard Business Club of Connecticut for about one year to develop the draft plan. Included in each Board member's Board meeting package is a copy of the Harvard Business Club of Connecticut's Strategic Plan Discussion Document's objectives, dated January 30, 2023. The partners recently recommended that the Board approve the strategic initiatives presented through page 10 ending on the summary of each balanced scorecard quadrant and provide the detail that follows as an appendix. A page summarizing the initiatives with budget details would also be helpful.

Mr. Cooper noted that this is a five year strategic road map with some of the priority initiatives having already been started such as the computer upgrades, a look at health digital work platforms, and as will be discussed in the next agenda item a community needs assessment to see if the Health District is providing the services really needed and/or wanted by the communities being served.

Chairman Shaum noted that the District has been working on this for a long time noting that implementing the plan will be a work in progress. There is a lot of work to do and approving pages one through ten will allow the District to get started with a commitment to continued progress. He stressed that the needs assessment is a very important input in evaluating the Health District's service.

Director Nussbaum asked if there have been any changes from the last draft that the Board has reviewed. Mr. Cooper responded that there has not.

On a motion made by Director Nussbaum, and seconded by Chairman Shaum, the Board voted to approve adoption of the first ten pages of the Strategic Plan Discussion Document's objectives and key plan strategies. Chairman Shaum voted yes; Vice Chairwoman Revzon voted yes, Director Nussbaum voted yes, Director Mally voted yes, and Director Fonteyne voted yes.

Motion was approved 5 to 0.

Community Needs Assessment – Professional Services Agreement

Mr. Cooper noted that he and Chairman Shaum had a Zoom conference call with Colleen Milligan, President of Community Research Consulting, LLC to discuss the consultant's approach and experience with smaller organizations such as the Aspetuck Health District.

Chairman Shaum stated that the consultant has had a lot of experience with large hospital systems in Connecticut and know the demographics of Fairfield County very well. In working with the hospital systems, the consultants indicated they had to work with a lot of local health and other local providers that make up and/or partner with the hospitals. The consultants felt they would have no problem working with our local networks.

On a motion made by Vice Chairwoman Revzon, and seconded by Chairman Fonteyne, the Board voted to approve signing of the professional services agreement with of Community Research Consulting, LLC. Chairman, provided they change the state of jurisdiction from Pennsylvania to Connecticut. Shaum voted yes; Vice Chairwoman Revzon voted yes, Director Nussbaum voted yes, Director Mally voted yes, and Director Fonteyne voted yes.

Motion was approved 5 to 0.

Director of Health Report

Mr. Cooper summarized the Operational and Permit Activity reports for February. He noted that the March report numbers from staff have not come in, mostly due to the computer upgrade process in the past two weeks. Director Fonteyne noted that the plan submittal number seems to be back to pre-COVID levels. Mr. Cooper responded that it could be, however, it could also be the traditional seasonal lull. It has been busy the past few days.

Vice Chairman stated that there has been an increase in deer tick activity because of the warm winter. Mr. Cooper agreed indicating staff is anticipating an increase in submittals for identification and lab referrals.

Director Fonteyne asked about the plan review wait time. Mr. Cooper indicated it has gotten better but not the traditional two weeks from submittal as he would like it. It is between two, perhaps closer to three weeks depending on the complexity of the plan. However, this is the seasonal lull, and he is still authorizing the sanitarians to take plans home to review evenings and weekends. The review time could get longer if there are a lot of spring submissions. He added that the Health District is still looking for qualified staff.

Requests for Reimbursement

Mr. Cooper noted there have been requests for reimbursements. The first regarding services provided by Community Health. Being sensitive to HIPPA requirements, Mr. Cooper summarized the request as a client receiving services, paying for them by check, and seeking reimbursement from their private insurance carrier who refused indicating the Health District should not have charged for said services. The Health District's policy for charging insurance companies, and the Health District's contracts with the limited number of insurance carriers accepted, is for flu and pneumonia only. The services provided were not flu or pneumonia related. The client submitted a request for several visits of the same service, going back to 2009 that had been paid for.

There was general discussion on the Health District's contracts with various insurance carriers over time. The Health District's contracts have consistently been for flu and pneumonia only. At one time the District began to pursue contracts with various insurance carriers for more than just flu and pneumonia but found it to be a very difficult administrative task. Insurance carriers would give staff a hard time in paying claims, finding some fault with many of the submissions. The decision was made to cancel contracts with the most difficult insurance carriers but continue with those that would accept claims for flu and pneumonia. Large hospitals or other providers have a large enough volume to take losses and pay full time staff dedicated to collecting insurance claims. The insurance issue is complicated. The Health District doesn't know what individual policies cover. Is the request for reimbursements for deductibles, uncovered services, or something else. It may be time to consider ending providing certain services or ending relationships with all insurance contracts and letting those using community health services seek payment from their insurance provider. This seems to be the direction many health care providers are moving. As part of the Strategic Plan, an assessment of Community Health services could be undertaken to determine what services are not easily replicated by other providers in the community with the goal of having the Health District fill any service voids that may exist to the benefit of the community. It was noted that the Health District has a policy of not denying service to hardship cases that are vetted through town social service departments, at the time of service. The Board's consensus was not to approve the request for reimbursing charges for Community Health services.

The next four requests for reimbursements are from a number of applicant or licensed food operators working out of an incubator kitchen that apparently will be closing. The annual licensing

period is from January to December. Having paid for a full year's license this past January, that they will not be able to use, they are requesting refunds. Mr. Cooper noted that Health District's policy has been to allow applicants to pay for pro-rated licensure when applying after January and thought it fair to refund on a pro-rated refund. If these operators can find another local kitchen to operate out of, they may reapply for licensure. The Board's consensus was that pro-rating rebates are acceptable.

Need To Update Health District's Sanitary Code

Mr. Cooper noted the process of transitioning from the Westport Weston Health District to Aspetuck continues. The IRS has now officially recognized the change and staff have begun to look at changes in the Health District's Sanitary Code which should now reference the FDA food code and not Connecticut's old code. He added the By-laws also need to be looked at, it could be simply changing the title page, but there is an official process for doing so.

Vice Chairwoman Revzon noted that the email address on the bottom of letterhead being used needs to be corrected. Mr. Cooper noted that the letterhead is computer generated and will be an easy fix.

Vice Chairwoman Revzon asked if there was any other business to come before the Board.

Hearing none, on a motion made by Chairman Shaum, and seconded by Director Collins, the Board voted to adjourn the meeting at 8:17pm. Chairman Shaum voted yes; Vice Chairwoman Revzon voted yes, Director Nussbaum voted yes, Director Collins voted yes, Director Mally voted yes, and Director Fonteyne voted yes.

Motion was approved 5 to 0.

Respectfully submitted.



Mark A.R. Cooper Director of Health
Aspetuck Health District