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**REGULAR MEETING MINUTES**  
**ASPETUCK HEALTH DISTRICT BOARD OF DIRECTORS**  
**FEBRUARY 10, 2025**

*Subject to change until approved by the Board of Directors*

**The Regular Meeting called to order by Chairman Shaum at 7:01pm.**

**The following voting Board Members were present in the room:** Chairman Paul Shaum, Director Edward Mally, Director Paul Fonteyne. Vice Chairwoman Catherine Revzon was present via Zoom.

**Also present:** Luci Bango, Director of Health, Pam Scott, Director of Finance and Human Resources.

1. **Review and approval of January 2025 minutes.** Chairman Shaum noted that we should look closely at the auditor's report and become familiar with our liabilities that are managed by the state. We have no control over these funds, as they are managed by the state of CT. Chairman Shaum made a motion to approve minutes. Director Mally seconded the motion.

**Motion approved unanimously.**

2. **Review of fee schedule by Luci Bango.** Ms. Bango gave an overview of the current fee schedule and proposed fee changes. She noted that the proposed changes are not significant. Chairman Shaum noted that the report was well organized and detailed. Late fees and restaurant renewals were discussed. Currently there is a one-time \$50 late fee for restaurants that have not paid for their renewal on time. There was discussion about increasing the fee to \$50 per day, up to 10 days and then closing the establishment.

There are approximately 20 restaurants that still owe their renewal fee and late fee. We have over 200 restaurants that we inspect and we could charge a flat fee or weekly fee and then close them after a set period of time. We have never closed restaurants for non-payment. Late fees are charged in addition to the establishment's license fee which is

dependent on its classification. Renewal packets are mailed out to establishments sometime in November to give owners plenty of time for January renewal. Chairman Shaum asked if the timing of renewals coincides with town tax bills. Director Fonteyne stated that tax assessments are mailed in July and January. Ms. Bango also discussed the issue with establishments that are delinquent in taxes. The town of Westport provides a list of establishments that owe back taxes and AHD issues a letter to try to collect taxes by threatening suspension or revocation of their license. Ms. Bango explained that there is a state statute allowing health departments and districts to revoke or suspend licenses for delinquent taxes, although this has never been done at AHD. We currently hold onto the permit per the tax collector's request until taxes are paid, however, this poses a problem because the establishment is then operating without a valid license. Ms. Bango discussed this issue with Westport via email and explained that we either close or release permit but holding onto the permit is not an option. Ms. Bango also discussed closure enforcement and Director Mally was concerned about staff safety. Ms. Scott stated that police would accompany staff during closures if necessary. Chairman Shaum stated that the Westport First Selectwoman is currently busy with other pressing issues which would put this issue on hold. Director Fonteyne stated that he does not believe it is the duty of AHD to act on behalf of the tax collector and collect delinquent taxes.

There was discussion on changing the current late fee structure to an escalating late fee scale with a cap on days not paid. Director Fonteyne suggested we provide owners with a grace period and information before implementing new scales. Chairman Shaum asked if we need board approval to approve fee schedule and Pam Scott confirmed that we do. The Board agreed that overall, fee increases are needed based on the last time that fees were assessed and increased, which was nearly 5 years ago. Director Mally asked about the methodology for increases based on surrounding towns. Ms. Bango stated that they were not percentage based but rather based on surrounding towns and adding small increases to fees. Director Mally stated that we should think about annual increases to account for the annual consumer price index. Mr. Mally also asked about the fees specially related to B100s and felt that this fee should be reviewed in depth and may need to be increased substantially based on other towns and work efforts associated with application. The B100 application process was discussed and Ms. Bango said she would look further into the process. Vice Chairwoman Revzon asked how fees can be paid and suggested that the process could be made easier and more efficient if online payments and applications were available. Ms. Bango explained that currently, applications can be paid in-person or by phone via credit card. She also explained that AHD is currently working with Westport to upload all applications and hopes to have restaurant renewals, including payment options online. Director Mally suggested that we develop a list of establishments who haven't paid and make it public as a way to increase compliance; however, there was discussion about the legality of this.

Director Fonteyne stated that any increases above 20% may receive push back and may not be the best approach as a new initiative for a new director. Chairman Shaum stated that the current fees associated with supermarkets were low and should have a significant increase based on time and effort of inspections due to size and departments.

Chairman Shaum suggested that restaurants may be having difficulty paying bills which could be way they aren't paying. Vice Chairwoman Revzon suggested a type of payment process that would allow owners to pay in installments.

Ms. Bango discussed the proposed fee changes for file searches. Currently there are no fees associated with file searches. Pam Scott stated that AHD stopped charging file searches during COVID. The Board discussed evaluating the time it takes for the staff to prepare a file search, and the cost associated with it. Ms. Bango explained the process of file searches.

There was further discussion that staff time associated with application review should be further researched to determine the fee schedule. The Board decided to table the discussion and postpone voting on the fee schedule until a further date.

3. **New logo-**Ms. Bango discussed the choice of the new logo for AHD provided in the Director's report. The Board members provided positive feedback.
4. **Director of Health Report-** Ms. Bango discussed the February Director report. She discussed the changes made to the report from previous months and discussed the biannual financial report attached. She also discussed the overall expenses and revenue provided. Community health and environmental health reports are now stats and data provided directly from staff not from FileMaker pro. This better reflects the staff's review time associated with each application and inspection. Director Fonteyne asked for revenue which was down compared to this time last year and Ms. Bango explained that AHD has received less grant funding. Ms. Bango reviewed the plan submission graph which is now presented year to year rather than going back to 2017 to get a more accurate description of current submissions.

The graph shows that plan submission has been steady over the past year and slower in the winter months due to weather. Ms. Bango reviewed the first page of the Director's report, which highlights current alerts and news important in public health. There was discussion of the current bird flu situation. Ms. Bango said she received an email from animal control regarding dead geese. DEEP handles reports and testing of birds.

Ms. Bango also discussed Governor Lamont's 2026-2027 budget, which was recently released and his plans to cut public health funding by 10%. Director Mally asked the basis for these cuts and Ms. Bango explained that while she didn't have all of the

information, a population decrease was one of the reasons. She also discussed the impact that this may have on per capita funding. Ms. Bango said she has been in email conversations with CADH regarding this and is waiting for further updates.

There was discussion about cuts and freezes of federal grants and the affects to the AHD. The Emergency Preparedness grant and the Immunization grant that provides AHD funding were some of the grants affected. Salaries associated with these grants have already been spent or DPH has instructed local health to continue to employ and pay staff. The Workforce Development grant has already been paid to us and has not been impacted by the cuts.

Ms. Bango asked if there were any changes that the Board would like to make to the Director of Health report for future meetings. Vice Chairwoman Revzon said she would like to see more information on vaccine comparisons each month and year to date. Director Fonteyne suggested a similar graph like the plan submission graph be used to illustrate vaccines administered. Director Fonteyne expressed his concerns that the community health department is not bringing in money and losing money. There was also discussion of the decrease in flu vaccinations given. Several reasons as to why there was a decrease were discussed, including the large number of pharmacies and the ease at which vaccines are being offered through them. Another reason could be that AHD does not accept insurance, so residents are going elsewhere. Ms. Bango discussed contracting with Vaxcare and said that this will help lower our costs and increase client traffic. If we contract with Vaxcare we will be able to accept all types of insurances and will not have to purchase the majority of our vaccines out of pocket. We will still have to purchase some of the travel vaccines and have clients pay out of pocket. Chairman Shaum discussed that he has heard good things about the travel presentation that Vanessa offered at the Westport library.

Ms. Bango stated that the travel clinic has been busy and there will be interns working on promoting the travel clinic. Promotion of the clinic will be shared on the AHD webpage and social media. Outreach will also be conducted at local universities participating in travel abroad programs to promote the ravel clinic. Chairman Shaum asked if the Board should vote on Vaxcare and all agreed to move forward with the contract as it had been reviewed by legal. Director Mally made a motion to approve the Vaxcare contract and Chairman Shaum seconded the motion.

**Motion approved 4 to 0.**

5. **Other:** Ms. Bango discussed the upcoming budget meeting with Westport scheduled for February 13<sup>th</sup> at 6:00pm. She stated that she felt Mark did not need to be in attendance.

Chairperson Shaum stated that he will be there for support. The next budget meeting for Westport is tentatively scheduled for March 5<sup>th</sup>. -

Ms. Bango presented the contract with Chuck from Costello and Costello for the 2025 audit. Chairman Shaum signed the audit contract.

Ms. Bango discussed the proposals that were presented for digitizing the AHD files. The first was Scan Optics, who came in at \$205,000. The other company, Joseph Merritt came in at \$85,000 with lower prices per page. Joseph Merritt said they expect that their costs will be increasing but they will honor the current quote if we lock in this year, even if we decide to phase out the project. Ms. Bango discussed a state grant that would cover some of the costs up to \$7000 toward digitizing files. She will be applying for the grant. The process of digitizing and the server called Rever was discussed. Westport was also provided with a quote from a company to digitize their files, although not sure which company and was given a similar quote of \$200,000. Director Mally stated that some files are currently available on Westport's website. Pam Scott and Ms. Bango stated that they were most likely new files that were uploaded to Accela or GIS files. It was suggested that we perform a cost analysis to determine cost savings associated with digitizing files. Ms. Bango stated that AHD is working with Westport to upload our applications. This will cut down on the time and costs associated with file searches and applications. Director Fonteyne suggested a demonstration from the companies of digitized files to present to staff. Pam Scott and Ms. Bango explained that an interactive presentation was shared by Joseph Merritt and was well received by staff. Discussion was also made about files after digitizing is initiated and where they will be stored. Files may need to be temporarily stored in cabinets and picked up by the company once or twice a year or scanned by staff. Digitizing will most likely be a future project. We will first focus on new staff and internal processes to improve workflow and if needed and financially feasible files may be digitized. We are continuing to find ways to consolidate funding and finding places such as our webpage where we were paying for the same services.

There was discussion regarding the purchase or leasing of company vehicles. It has been brought to Ms. Bango's attention that the sanitarian position was not being accepted because sanitarians are required to drive their personal vehicle. Ms. Bango believes company vehicles are important to attract staff and are a feasible and important expense. There is some grant funding available for vehicles.

**6. Executive Session 8:14pm** -Motion made to go into Executive Session by Chairman Shaum.

Discussion of personnel compensation and Sanitarian and Administrative Support applicants. At 8:13pm Chairman Shaum declared Executive Session over.

## **7. Adjournment**

Chairman Shaum asked if there was any other business to discuss. On a motion made by Director Fonteyne and seconded by Director Mally, the meeting was adjourned at 8:45pm.

**Approved unanimously.**