



Westport Weston  
Health District

## REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

### WWHD BOARD OF DIRECTORS

SEPTEMBER 9, 2019

Subject to change until approval by the Board of Directors

**The Regular Meeting was called to order by Chairman Otis Crawford at 7:31 pm. The following voting Board Members were present:** Chairman Otis Crawford; Vice Chairman Catherine Revzon, Director Linda Lewis Bruce, Director Ilisa Nussbaum and Director Paul Shaum.

**Also present were:** Mark A.R. Cooper, Director of Health; Louis D'Onofrio, Director of Community Nursing.

#### **Approval of Minutes**

Chairman Crawford asked if there were any questions or comments on the May 13, 2019, Regular Meeting Minutes.

Director Bruce noted that although present at the meeting she is not listed as being present. Mr. Cooper acknowledged the oversight and indicated it would be corrected. There were no other questions or comments. On a motion made by Director Nussbaum and seconded by Vice Chairman Revzon, the Board voted to approve the amended May 13, 2019, Regular Meeting Minutes. Chairman Crawford voted yes; Vice Chairman Revzon voted yes, Director Bruce voted yes, Director Nussbaum voted yes, and Director Shaum voted yes.

**Motion was approved 5 to 0.**

#### **Communications**

Mr. Cooper provided a summary of each item of correspondence for the months of June, July and August. There were no questions or comments on the correspondence.

#### **Director of Health Report**

##### *Consolidated Income Statement and Operational & Permit Activity Reports*

Mr. Cooper stated that the Board package contains Consolidated Income Statements and Operational and Permit Activity Reports from May, June, July and August. He noted that it has been a busy month with such things as sewer spills, standardizing WWHD software with migration to the Cloud, and expansion of Community Health programs and licensure. With the changeover to the new IT platform, it has taken a few days to get all things working as they should, therefore the August reports did not get completed.

Mr. Cooper gave a brief explanation of the report formats for new members and noted that because July is the start of a new fiscal year, the report “To date” figures reset to zero. Fiscal year 2019 ended June 30<sup>th</sup>, Fiscal year 2020 began July 1. Director Bruce noted that on the July Operations report, in the second box where it says FY 19 To Date, it should say FY20. Mr. Cooper agreed.

Director Shaum asked how the District is doing, plan versus actual? Are there any problems, successes, etc. Mr. Cooper stated that he believes the WWHD is doing better than it was and gave a brief outline of the WWHD’s history since he became Director. From having a large balance in the bank with over 16 employees, a loss of state funding due to Legislative changes, a planned spend down which turned into a recession driven economic free fall; the WWHD has cut spending, reduced staff, changed the model of operations and developing new revenue streams while balancing expenditures with income. Other major challenges included the State Public Health Commissioner working to eliminate all local health departments/districts, complete overhaul of our insurance packages, and the need to upgrade WWHD’s IT, which was just completed. Mr. Cooper added that he thinks the WWHD is where it should be now in terms of surviving past challenges, and that one of the WWHD’s next goals, which has been in the works for a couple of years, is growing the District by having other towns join. Doing so will reduce everyone’s costs and improve service. Mr. Cooper stated that local public health is somewhat subject to the winds of the economy and political thinking of the moment. He is watching permit activity, talking to builders, local political leadership and others to try and get a feel for what the future may bring. There is concern that the economy will slow down and reduce fee revenue.

Director Bruce questioned the accuracy of June and July’s activity reporting, noting that the numbers are the same. Mr. Cooper indicated he would look into it; it had been noted while putting the reports together that the numbers were very close, but they should not be the same.

Chairman Crawford inquired about the letter dated July 17 from the State of Connecticut, Office of the Treasurer, requesting receipt verification of funds received from the state. Mr. Cooper responded that the \$4,398.00 was the total grant funding received from the state’s Preventative Block Grant program, which was used for lead poisoning prevention activities.

Mr. Cooper explained to the Board how the WWHD has been tracking plan submittals since 2016 and plotting that data on a histogram titled “Figure 1 – Plan Submittals April 2016 thru December 2018”. He explained that the data is used in forecasting fee revenue in the budget process. A significant drop in plan review submittals would mean a similar drop in permit fee revenue, something he is keeping an eye on.

## **Community Health**

Mr. Cooper introduced Louis D’Onofrio, Director of Community Nursing. Mr. D’Onofrio was recently hired as part of WWHD’s reorganization/restructuring of Community Health and ending employment relationships with physicians. Under Mr. D’Onofrio’s supervision the WWHD has applied for and obtained a State of Connecticut Outpatient Clinic License, which allows the WWHD to provide additional services not permitted previously. Mr. D’Onofrio has been working on an outline of new services that can be offered to the public for a fee, some of which the District will need to purchase equipment to provide the services. He is here to discuss the potential services, the costs associated to provide them, and what we believe to be the potential payback time frame.

Mr. D'Onofrio stated that staff have been going through the clinic to prepare for expanded licensure to provide additional services to the community with the goal of making the clinic self-sustainable financially. With the new Outpatient Clinic license the WWHD can now function as a full capacity clinic, with a waiver to do FDA approved testing. Existing clinic protocols have been reviewed and updated and new ones developed for the proposed new services, they are included in each Board members meeting package. Relationships have been developed with area medical providers to facilitate referrals for advanced medical care and/or testing, as well as to let them know what services the WWHD can provide. There was general discussion on the testing, screenings, and the exams the WWHD can provide inhouse and the equipment needed to do them.

As part of the WWHD's transition to a new secure IT platform, Community Health is now set up to use electronic health records which can be made available online through a secure portal. Additionally, the WWHD is ready to connect with the State of Connecticut's live vaccine reporting system when it becomes fully operational.

Director Nussbaum asked what kind of demand there would be for an electrocardiogram machine. Mr. D'Onofrio stated that he likes to do an ECG with sport physicals to be sure there are no undetected heart abnormalities, but it is hard to project the usage because the volume of clients is unknown at this point. His guess is that it would take about one year to recoup the cost of the machine. He noted there is a clear demand in the area for pediatric health assessments needed before children can enter schools. Norwalk has been trying to refer many students to the WWHD because Norwalk's Clinic is booked to capacity until December. Another piece of equipment needed to complete the pediatric health assessment is a hemoglobin test, a finger stick. The current WWHD hemoglobin test machine is outdated, and supplies cannot longer be found. Additionally, many of the pediatric clients use Husky Insurance which will pay for the administration of vaccine received free from the State. By doing pediatric health assessments and providing vaccine, he estimates an additional eight to ten thousand dollars in revenue next year.

The WWHD has in the past billed insurance providers for flu vaccine. There was a general discussion on billing and collecting payments from insurance and what other administrative and/or reporting requirements might be involved. Mr. D'Onofrio noted that Husky claims are submitted on-line using the codes the WWHD already has, payments come twice a month from the state as direct deposits. It was estimated that the such billing would take approximately ten minutes of existing staff's time. Many of our services are provided on a fee basis, especially travel clinic services. If someone came in for service but did not have insurance and indicated they could not pay, they would be counseled on how to apply for Husky coverage.

Chairman Crawford asked if there would be any push back from the local medical community. Mr. Cooper indicated that the WWHD is reaching out to them to see how we might compliment their medical services and obtain referrals from them for such things as blood pressure monitoring. There is no intention of being competitors. Mr. D'Onofrio added that the WWHD would also be making referrals to the local medical providers, especially for clients who do not currently have a primary medical provider. There was general discussion on potential grants for providing some services supported by the state and reaching out and working with town agencies such as the senior centers and social services departments with programs and educational sessions such as a matter of balance, cholesterol screening, diabetic screening, Lyme Disease, etc.

Chairman Crawford asked how much it would cost to purchase the proposed equipment. Mr. D'Onofrio estimated the ECG machine would cost about twelve hundred dollars, the hemoglobin machine about five hundred dollars. Mr. Cooper added that everything needed to operationalize what Mr. D'Onofrio has outlined in the Board package should not exceed two thousand dollars. Mr. Cooper is supportive of the proposal with the understanding the expected payback period is about one year.

Director Bruce asked where the funds would come from. Mr. Cooper indicated that as part of the current year's budget, the Board approved fifty thousand dollars to upgrade and standardize WWHD's IT platform and programs. That estimate had been based on responses to requests for proposals sent out the previous year. It was decided to retest the waters. As a result, with the recent hiring of CVM as WWHD's IT consultant and much of the transition to the cloud complete, the cost has come in much lower leaving plenty of funds in the Capital Account to purchase this equipment. Mr. D'Onofrio added that a grant was also secured to pay for some of the IT upgrade that would have come from the Capital Account, as well as saving about six hundred dollars by changing Community Health's on-line scheduling system for the flu clinic.

Mr. D'Onofrio summarized the proposed new services, their associated protocols, the cost to conduct new proposed testing and what the actual cost to WWHD to provide them. He indicated that in his opinion, the funds generated will quickly pay for the cost of the equipment needed to provide them.

There was a general discussion on reporting requirements, HIPAA compliance, general client protocols and the kind of procedures Mr. D'Onofrio can perform in the Clinic.

Chairman Crawford asked if a Board vote is needed. Mr. Cooper indicated that he would like the Board to approve the purchases since these were not discussed as part of the budget process, and that for our Out Patient License, the Board needs to vote on the services and their policies; Additionally, he would like the Board to approve the filing of an application to accept Husky Insurance (Medicaid)

On a motion made by Director Bruce and seconded by Vice-Chairman Revzon, the Board voted to approve the purchase of equipment, the expansion of services and associated policies as outlined during the meeting, along with the application to the Husky Insurance program. Chairman Crawford voted yes; Vice Chairman Revzon voted yes; Director Bruce voted yes; Director Nussbaum voted yes and Director Shaum voted yes.

**Motion was approved 5 to 0.**

Director Nussbaum asked what happens during a travel clinic consultation. Mr. D'Onofrio stated that it can vary between who give it; The WWHD consult takes about thirty minutes going over an individual's travel itinerary and based on CDC's and Traver travel guidelines, the risks and vaccine preventable diseases and non- vaccine preventable diseases associated with particular destinations are discussed along with travel diarrhea, water hygiene, strategies to prevent malaria or other vector borne illnesses and answer any questions. Vaccines are offered based on CDC's and Traver travel guidelines. Vice-Chairman Revzon, suggested a new tri-fold or other brochure be developed to advertise the new services. Mr. D'Onofrio indicated he has been working on it but wanted to make sure the Board approved everything prior to finishing. The intent is to hand a tri-fold out to each person seeking a flu vaccination.

## **Emergency Preparedness Report**

Mr. Cooper summarized the Emergency Preparedness Report and noted there were two sewage backup/leaks in Westport, one significant. There was a general discussion on what the WWHD's role and response to such events. Mr. Cooper noted that the WWHD worked with Earth Place in the collection of water samples and shared test results to get a better understanding of the impact on the Saugatuck River. Some of the results between the two testing labs were significantly different. Based on this work with Earth Place, additional collaborative testing in a non-emergency response situation (with Earth Place) was agreed to, in part to compare collection methodologies and to validate each other's lab results. By doing so, a higher level of confidence will be developed so that in future events that need water testing we can call on each other when help is needed.

Chairman Crawford commented that the differential in the river test results could have been the result of ducks and geese and asked about the WWHD's DNA study. Mr. Cooper agreed and gave a brief outline of the DNA study of bacteria found in Sasco Brook. It was a 5-year project from start of seeking funding to the final report. The report has been presented around the country at various environmental meeting by the project's other partners, highlighting what an important tool DNA sequencing of bacteria can be in identifying their source. The projects goal was to develop a protocol that could be followed for future water analysis using DNA technology. The State of Connecticut and his project partners are discussing a phase 2, because due to time constraints, Mr. Cooper has encouraged the partners to be the lead on any project moving forward.

## **Budget Update**

### *Technology Support Update*

Mr. Cooper reminded the Board that back in March as part of the budget approval process, fifty thousand dollars was put in the budget for capital items and IT upgrades needed to get all staff on the same program platform and help prepare for the implementation of Westport's new computer-based permit system. The staff member who used to oversee WWHD's IT retired, and it was decided to outsource that need. The initial fifty-thousand-dollar estimate came from a highly recommended company but who turned out to be less than responsive, so it was decided to obtain additional quotes. A contract was signed with a local Connecticut company CVM after consulting with Westport's IT department who found the proposal would meet WWHD's needs to move forward with the computerized permit system. They are essentially complete with the upgrades and to date, about ten thousand dollars have been spent, leaving a comfortable balance.

### **Staff**

Mr. Cooper summarized the recent staff changes that included re-organization and consolidation of a couple of staff positions. Although the number of positions has decreased, the overall work load has not. Performance evaluations have been completed and staff has risen to the challenges of our reorganization and are working much more as a team. Funds were put into this year's budget so this could be considered. No salary increases were given last year. He is recommending staff be given raises this year.

On another matter, one staff member just requested a significant pay boost to match the pay being offered for a similar position at another health department. A discussion of the benefits of accepting a

job somewhere else for personal and professional growth was held with the staff member, acknowledging the importance of work and good job they are doing here. To replace this person would likely result in an increase in the salary being offered to find someone qualified and able to “hit the road running” versus someone inexperienced right out of school. The WWHD needs the experienced person.

There was general discussion on the personnel policies of who would qualify for a raise and how much it would cost. It was made clear the Director of Health is a contractual employee by Statute and does not qualify for a general wage increase, it is something that must be negotiated with the Board separately.

Chairman Crawford asked what the cost would be for a two percent increase for those eligible and whether the funds are available to support it. Mr. Cooper responded that it would add seven thousand three hundred and sixty-six dollars to the salary budget line and that two percent was built into the budget when there was more staff with higher salaries, so there is plenty to cover this proposal.

There was discussion on the rate of inflation, that the towns have been giving their employees and when it would become effective. Mr. Cooper suggested any increases be retroactive to July 1, the start of the new fiscal year.

On a motion made by Director Shaum and seconded by Director Bruce, the Board voted to approve a two percent increase, retroactive to July 1, 2019, in WWHD staff wages for those who qualify in accordance with WWHD Personnel Policies. Chairman Crawford voted yes; Vice Chairman Revzon voted yes; Director Bruce voted yes; Director Nussbaum voted no, stating she thought the increase should be a little larger, and Director Shaum voted yes.

**Motion was approved 4 to 1.**

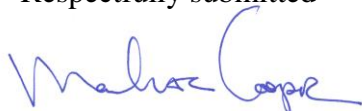
Mr. Cooper asked for Board guidance on the staff member’s request for a significant boost. There was general discussion and consensus that the position and rate of pay should not be considered at this time.

## **Adjournment**

Chairman Crawford asked if there was any other business to come before the Board. On a motion made by Director Nussbaum and seconded by Vice Chairman Revzon the meeting was adjourned at 9:15pm. Chairman Crawford voted yes; Vice Chairman Revzon voted yes; Director Bruce voted yes; and Director Nussbaum voted yes.

**Motion was approved 5 to 0.**

Respectfully submitted



Mark A.R. Cooper Director of Health  
Westport Weston Health District