

**BENZIE-LEELANAU DISTRICT HEALTH DEPARTMENT**  
**BOARD OF HEALTH MEETING**  
**Wednesday, July 28, 2021 2:00 p.m.**  
**Benzie Resource Center**  
**6051 Frankfort Highway**  
**Benzonia, MI 49616**

Chairperson Dr. Barbara Conley called the meeting to order at 2:00 pm.

**Members Present:**

Gary Sauer - Benzie County Board of Commissioners  
William Bunek – Leelanau County Board of Commissioners  
Patricia Soutas-Little – Leelanau County Board of Commissioners  
Dr. Barbara Conley – Leelanau County Member at Large  
Rhonda Nye – Benzie County Board of Commissioners

**Members Absent:** None

**Members Excused:** Dr. Mark Kuiper – Benzie County Member at Large

**Staff Present:**

Lisa Peacock – Health Officer  
Dr. Joshua Meyerson – Medical Director  
Dodie Putney – Director of Administrative Services  
Eric Johnston – Director of Environmental Health  
Michelle Klein - Director of Personal Health

**Pledge of Allegiance**

**Approval of Minutes:**

**Motion By:** Bunek to approve the May 26, 2021 BOH Meeting Minutes with the correction to the one typo.

**Seconded By:** Sauer

**Roll Call Vote:** Sauer-yea, Nye- yea, Conley- yea, Bunek- yea, Soutas-Little- yea  
**5 yeas 0 nay 1 excused Motion carried**

**Approval of the Agenda:**

**Motion By:** Soutas-Little to approve agenda as is.

**Seconded By:** Nye

**Roll Call Vote:** Sauer- yea, Nye- yea, Conley- yea, Bunek- yea, Soutas-Little- yea  
**5 yeas 0 nay 1 excused Motion carried**

**Public Comment – None**

**Remote Meeting Ratification - Dodie Putney**

**Motion By:** Bunek to accept the Ratification as is.

**Seconded By:** Nye

**Roll Call Vote:** Sauer- yea, Nye- yea, Conley- yea, Bunek- yea, Soutas-Little- yea  
**5 yeas 0 nay 1 excused Motion carried**

**Discussion:** Bunek wanted to clarify that this was a precaution to make sure that all actions taken during remote meetings would still stand. The answer was yes.

### **Health Officer Update – Lisa Peacock**

Written Public Health Statement was distributed for review prior to the meeting. Peacock began speaking on the effects that Covid has had on the mental wellbeing of health care professionals. Studies have been done showing that through the whole pandemic Health Care Professionals have had a higher rate of PTSD than other front-line workers. To help combat this within the BLDHD, the organization is doing their best to make sure everyone can use their vacation time. BLDHD had also received a grant to help promote employee mental health. This grant is going to be used to host an employee retreat on August 13, 2021 at the Reining Liberty Ranch.

There will be a new employee policy that will be presented to the Board at the September meeting. It is being reviewed by the Employee Committee and then will be sent back to the Human Resource Agency that is contracted for review. They will make sure that the language is correct for all legal purposes. Once this is completed it will be brought to the Board for their approval.

The Agency is working on a new Agency Strategic Plan. Part of this plan is a mission statement. The last mission statement was a generic saying that was borrowed from the Health Code. BLDHD had asked for employee input on what this should be. It is being constructed right now. The new vision statement has been drafted. It reads, “Optimal community health and well-being supported by equitable services, outreach, and education, delivered by expert, caring and compassionate trusted public health professionals.” The new strategic plan is to cover years 2021, 2022 and 2023. The committee has broken it down into four different categories to be written.

- 1) How to accomplish the vision by monitoring eight different categories.
- 2) Look into any underlying contradictions that may be hindering the accomplishment of the vision.
- 3) Strategic Directions
- 4) A timeline to accomplish all goals.

Bunek asked why the strategic plan would include 2021, why not start in 2022, as it is so late in the year. Peacock responded that there really should not be a missed year. There will be a note stating what timelines were pushed back due to the Covid pandemic.

Peacock then gave a Covid update. The CDC has broken the risk factors into four different categories to label areas. The categories are low, moderate, substantial, and high. Currently Benzie and Leelanau are in the moderate zone. Soutas-Little inquired about the demographic trend with the Delta variant. Peacock responded that she would need to research that. Klein responded that currently in the BLDHD’s district there are 15 active cases of Covid, 11 unvaccinated individuals and 4 vaccinated individuals. One of them is currently hospitalized. Peacock stated that the CDC also changed their recommendation of when a person should be tested for Covid. Previously it was only people who were unvaccinated and exposed should be tested. Now it is anyone who has been exposed to someone with Covid should be tested. Bunek asked if there has been any monitoring of individuals who have had Covid getting Covid again or if they have had Covid then they were vaccinated and then after getting the vaccination that person being reinfected with Covid. Myerson responded that, no, it has not been done yet. Nye asked how long the vaccines are effective. Myerson responded that they were not entirely sure. Dr. Conley injected that even vaccinated people can spread the Delta variant. Much of the time these individuals do not show any symptoms of Covid. The CDC is also now recommending that everyone in a school setting or in any high-risk indoor setting are to wear a face mask regardless of their vaccination status. Peacock stated that it is a recommendation that there are no State mandates. The CDC measures the risk of individuals being infected by 1 in a 100,000 where the State measures it by 1 in a 1,000,000. So the CDC’s percentages and the State’s percentages do not always line up.

**Accounts Payable**

**Motion By:** Sauer to approve accounts payable and pay the bills.

**Seconded By:** Bunek

**Roll Call Vote:** Sauer- yea, Nye- yea, Conley- yea, Bunek- yea, Soutas-Little- yea  
**5 yeas 0 nay 1 excused Motion carried**

**June 2021 Financial Statements**

**Motion By:** Conley to accept the financial statements as presented.

**Seconded By:** Nye

**Roll Call Vote:** Sauer- yea, Nye- yea, Conley- yea, Bunek- yea, Soutas-Little- yea  
**5 yeas 0 nay 1 excused Motion carried**

**Office Closure Request**

**Motion By:** Sauer to accept the closure of the BLDHD offices on August 13, 2021 for an all staff retreat.

**Second By:** Soutas-Little

**Roll Call Vote:** Sauer- yea, Nye- yea, Conley- yea, Bunek- yea, Soutas-Little- yea  
**5 yeas 0 nay 1 excused Motion carried**

**Discussion:** Bunek expressed concerns about Worker’s Compensation Liability with the retreat. Klein answered that in the case someone did get hurt it more than likely would be covered by the Ranch’s insurance as that is their business.

**Staff Reports:**

**Medical Director – Dr. Joshua Meyerson**

Written report distributed prior to the meeting for review. Meyerson began speaking about Hepatitis. There are five different types. The most common are A, B and C. D and E exist but they are extremely rare. Hepatitis A is transferred from person to person. A person normally recovers from this without seeking any treatment. More recently there have been a few fatalities from this disease. It is mostly a third world problem. Hepatitis B is transferred by blood. It is generally chronic and asymptomatic. The biggest issue with it is pregnant woman having it and transferring it to their babies. All newborn babies are given a vaccine for this. A person can be vaccinated for Hepatitis A and B. There is no vaccination for Hepatitis C. Hepatitis C is transferred through blood. In 2000 there was a big outbreak of this. The outbreak was actually no new infections but individuals finding out that they had contracted this disease back in the 1960’s. Currently most of the individuals who test positive for this disease are in their teens through their thirties. There are new drugs that will cure this disease. Thankfully the cost of these drugs is coming down in price and more doctors are now able to prescribe it. Previously only a specialist could prescribe it. The cause of Hepatitis C is mostly due to intravenous drug use. So, this is a preventable disease. The number of individuals who have this disease is slightly higher in Benzie than Leelanau but both Counties are below the percentages in other Rural Northern Michigan Counties.

A newspaper article had been released earlier about the HIV cases in Kalkaska. Which sparked Meyerson’s curiosity about the numbers in Benzie and Leelanau. In the past five years there has been one new case of HIV in the Benzie/Leelanau area. Currently there are 15 active cases of HIV in both Counties.

Dr. Conley asked if insurance companies were/would pay for the Hepatitis C treatment plans. Meyerson responded, yes, they are, even Medicaid is paying for the treatment. It was mentioned that Hepatitis B can reoccur with certain cancer treatments. Meyerson stated that it has become the practice to help prevent this or any other Hepatitis infection that when someone is seeking treatment for any one of the types of hepatitis that the individual is vaccinated for A and B. Bunek asked if there was a treatment for Covid. Meyerson responded that there is no real “treatment’ but

there are products that are used to help ease the symptoms. One of the products is having antibodies infused into a person. This is only done if the person has a high-risk factor. If a person does not have any high-risk factors they are generally sent home. Peacock mentioned that in some larger areas Covid recovery clinics are being created. These are to help individuals who are experiencing chronic, long term effects from the virus.

### **Personal Health – Michelle Klein**

Written report distributed prior to the meeting for review. Benzie County is now working with Harm Reduction to implement a syringe exchange program. The purpose of this is to provide clean syringes to individuals to help prevent diseases such as Hepatitis C and HIV. Along with disease prevention the other objective is to try to get individuals admitted into a drug rehab program. As individuals seek out the clean needles the BLDHD is hoping to establish a trusting relationship with the person. With this relationship the BLDHD is hoping to be able to get the client tested for the various diseases that drug use can cause and vaccinate for any potential illnesses that can be preventable. Then hopefully get the individuals the help that they need to overcome their addiction. Currently Benzie has five individuals who are continuously coming to exchange needles. The Health Department has been able to distribute Narcan medication throughout Benzie County as well. This has been given to establishments and families who have reached out asking for it. Sauer asked if Centra Wellness is a part of the recovery outreach for this program. Klein responded that yes, they are, BLDHD is working closely with them. Soutas-Little inquired about what the average age is for the individuals who are seeking the clean needles. Klein responded that she would need to research that as she did not know. Bunek asked if this program helped enable people who have a drug addiction problem. Peacock responded that no, it in fact opens a trusted line of communication between the addict and health services. It has been shown through studies that a person is more likely to reach out for rehabilitation services using one of these programs. Klein added that this helps with public safety as well because the used needles are not being dumped in areas that the public, especially children, could be harmed by them.

Nye asked Klein if there were any resources that could be shared with the Benzie County Jail. Nye explained that the jail has been seeing a rise in individuals being arrested for drug related crimes. The jailors have been dealing with the inmates going into withdrawal and it has been causing the jailors to feel the mental strain of having to deal with situations that they were not specifically trained to deal with. Nye was curious to see if there might be some grant funding available for the training and/or counseling of County Staff. Peacock said that the County should have an Employee Assistance Program that would be able to help with this. Klein added that one method that the BLDHD has used to assist with employee stress is by having an onsite Reflective Supervision Group. It is when a group of employees will gather and discuss what they are seeing and experiencing. This is done in a nonthreatening environment. It has been very beneficial for PH while dealing with Covid.

It was mentioned that Chloe Willetts was leaving BLDHD to go work for Health Department of Northwest Michigan. Bobbie Scott, who has worked as a temporary Covid employee will be taking Willetts's position. Scott will be a remote employee as BLDHD is running out of office space. Leelanau office space is being moved around as the Montessori School has grown and is taking more space in the building. Danielle Portillo will be starting with BLDHD on August 16, 2021. She is going to be the in-house Counselor for Suttons Bay Schools. Her position is being funded by a grant through MDHHS and BLDHD is subcontracting with HDNW, who is the fiduciary for the MDHHS funding. We continue to seek funding sources for Benzie County Schools.

Parenting Communities through the Early Childhood program will be hosting some more MOM Power groups. These are designed to help parents develop a more robust set of parenting skills. The Early Childhood program has been hosting play groups five days of week. There has been approximately 72 children and 48 adults repeatedly participating. This program employs a part time Social Worker and two Community Health Workers. They are anticipating hiring a third Community Health Worker as the demand is growing. In Leelanau County a survey had gone out in the newspaper to gather information for what types of services the community would like to see offered. The most sought-after service was play groups, the second was large events hosted once a month for families to gather and the third was home visits for new parents.

#### **Environmental Health – Eric Johnston**

Johnston began speaking about MDARD finding a potential loophole in the Smoke-Free Air Law which prompted the submission of two bills in the State House of Representatives. The bill would, if adopted into law, prevent butane processing and smoking marijuana in food service establishments. The current Smoke-Free Air Law specifically references tobacco only. Bills HB 5128 and HB5129 have been drafted and have been referred to the House Committee on Regulatory Reform.

The digitalization of well and septic records has greatly reduced the amount of phone calls that the Leelanau office has had in regards to pulling these records. The calls are down by two thirds. All of the townships in Leelanau have been uploaded except for Leland. Most of the calls that are currently coming in are for property records in Leland Township. This township is approximately forty percent complete on the redaction process. Benzie County's well and septic records are in the process of being redacted. The price of the uploading of the records was approximately \$7,700 less than estimated. The unspent money has been used to cover the wages for the Covid temporary employees who are assisting with the redaction process. The most populated townships are the ones that are going to be redacted first. As each township is completed it will be uploaded. Johnston thanked Bunek for bringing this idea of digitalizing the well and septic records to EH's attention as it has proven to be a very useful tool.

Johnston stated how thankful he was that BLDHD was able to hire an additional Sanitarian last December. The workload for the Department has been way higher than expected. The number of permits issued in all areas is already higher than what had been issued all last year. It is believed that most of this demand is from the increase of individuals who have decided to move to the area.

Sauer asked about the Food Bill that was discussed at the last meeting. This bill would excuse licensed food establishments from paying their food license fee for the 2021 license year and if a business had already paid they would be refunded their money. Johnston answered that this bill has not been acted on in the Senate yet and he hopes it does not pass if there is no financial assistance to local health departments to cover the cost of the lost revenue if the bill became law. Johnston is not aware of any discussions on where the funding, that these licenses provide, would come from to help cover the local health departments wages and expenses that are associated with providing services to the food industry.

#### **Administrative – Dodie Putney**

Written report distributed prior to the meeting for review. Putney asked if there were any questions regarding the report she had submitted and there were none. She talked about the Reimbursement Specialist position that has been posted. This position will be full time. Part of the responsibilities will be medical billing and the other portion of the job will be assisting EH. The job was posted on the BLDHD website, the local newspaper and Indeed. So far there has been 159 applicants, 149 of the applicants live outside of the State.

**Public Comment – None**

**Board Comments** – Dr. Conley asked if there have been any discussions between the local school districts and the BLDHD on developing a program where students are “grown” into becoming employees for Health Departments. The answer was, no, they have not had this discussion. Conley also brought up what tremendous support the BLDHD has from volunteers. As the Covid clinics have wound down and the need for volunteers has declined, a common conversation for those who did volunteer was that they would be more than happy to volunteer in whatever capacity that they could be useful for BLDHD in the future. It was also brought up that as the Early Childhood group events are advertised to make sure dads are included. Soutas-Little mentioned that there is a male volunteer in Leelanau who is trying to get a Dad’s play group together.

**Adjourn:**

**Motion By:** Bunek to adjourn the BOH meeting at 3:46 p.m.

**Second By:** Sauers

**Roll Call Vote:** Sauer- yea, Nye - yea, Conley- yea, Bunek-yea, Soutas-Little- yea  
5 yeas    nay    1 excused    **Motion carried**

  
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Dr. Barbara Conley, Chair

  
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Shelley Jablon, Recording Secretary