

BOARD OF HEALTH MINUTES
TAMA COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH & HOME CARE

Wednesday November 6, 2024 - 12:00 P.M.

Special Meeting

Meeting held at Tama County Annex Building and via Zoom

Members Present:	Sally Custer	Micki Ferris	Sherry Parks, PA-C – via Zoom
	Lori Johnson	Jolynn Harger	Chris Behrens
	Shannon Zoffka	Curt Hilmer	Casey Schmidt

Members Absent: Dr. Hineman

The meeting was called to order by Sherry Parks, Chairman at 12:04 p.m.

Micki Ferris moved to accept the Agenda as presented. Sally Custer seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

New Business:

Shannon stated that the purpose of this special meeting was that the Board of Health had questions for Chris about the Well Program Study he was involved in. They wanted some background information, as they were unclear about the Program from the email that Tammy had sent Shannon, that was forwarded to the BOH.

Sherry Parks asked Chris if he wanted to go into closed session per Iowa Code Section 21.5i. Chris replied that no he did not want to go into closed session.

Chris said that he was contacted by Heather Knebel, Tama County Resident, who was made aware of a study that was being done on effects on well water by wind turbine installation. Since Heather is a Tama County Resident and it had to do with groundwater, Chris felt it was right in line with the job he is in.

He was told that Jackson County was involved in the study, so Chris called the Jackson County EHO. She did tell him that they wanted to do water tests pre and post installation of wind turbines. She told him Jackson County doesn't permit turbines so they could not be involved in the study, but if Chris was interested she could give him the information of the University of Iowa Professor that was conducting the study.

Chris called the Professor to find out more about the study. He said they were wanting to get a baseline sample before and after of any well that was within 800 yards of a turbine. Chris said they talked about how it could be his job to figure out if Tama County had any wells that fit in that criteria.

Chris emailed Bob Vokoun, Tama County Zoning Administrator, requesting information. Chris said the information requested should have been public information. Ten days went by with no response. Chris sent Bob a follow up text, and then talked to him later that evening.

A few days later Chris got an email from Tammy Wise, Tama County Human Resources, which didn't make any sense to him. After talking to Shannon, Chris said he wanted to ask the Board when they thought it was appropriate that he talk to them about any studies he might have interest in.

As far as the study, since turbines cannot be installed within 1000 feet of any house, he had his doubts if any wells would qualify for this study. Since Chris did not advance beyond this part of the study he didn't feel he needed to take anything to the Board for approval. He didn't think he needed to ask the Board about gathering information for a potential study that wasn't even happening at that point. Groundwater is his department so he felt comfortable checking into the study to see if we would qualify.

At the end of the conversation with the Professor from University of Iowa, he said that he would be contacting Erik Day, I-DNR about the kind of things they wanted to test. Chris thinks that Tammy and Bob made several calls to the DNR to see if the study was legitimate or not. Since the DNR is a big agency he is not sure if they got to the correct person to ask their questions. He feels that there is suspicion and innuendo from Tammy in that email that he had made the whole study up.

As of right now there is no study. They would like to do a study but they need to find a county that is permitting wind turbines so they can test wells within 800 yards of a turbine.

Micki Ferris said she feels like this is not the normal path of escalation for an issue like this.

Chris said that he appreciates the Board coming to him and letting him explain.

Casey said the problem was that there was a lot of information and emails going back and forth to them about this situation and that is why they wanted to have a conversation to see exactly what was going on. He doesn't think it is inappropriate at all for someone to conduct a study that is within their job description. He just feels there should be more communication as to what was going on so people were not confused.

Shannon said she had no idea of any of this when she received that email from Tammy. Chris was also CC'ed on this email and Shannon did not receive any information from Chris regarding this issue. She contacted Erik Day at the DNR and was told there was no study. Tammy also included an email to Shannon, her email contacting the University of Iowa and them saying there was no study. That is why Shannon was confused on this whole issue.

Micki Ferris said there should be better communication between Shannon and Chris. She also doesn't understand why Tammy took it upon herself, to investigate this issue as that should have been Shannon and the Board of Health to pursue.

Chris explained that the information that he requested from Bob Vokoun was published in the newspaper 2 weeks ago. He didn't need to ask Bob for it, but felt that was the appropriate way to request it, through an email to the Zoning Administrator. There was no attempt to do anything behind anyone's back.

Curt Hilmer said the situation is understandable and he agrees that a person doesn't need to tell every step they take. He doesn't feel Chris stepped over any boundaries, and wasn't trying to hide anything from anyone.

Shannon asked if there was any study as she has not seen any paperwork about it. Chris said they would like to do a study but until they have a county in Iowa that is going to be putting in turbines they can't. Which is why nothing had moved forward and why Chris had not mentioned it.

Sherry Parks thinks that is why the Board was notified as there was concern that there wasn't any study and why Chris was inquiring about that information that he requested from Bob Vokoun.

Casey Schmidt said that communication between Shannon and Chris should be better, and in this situation outside players got involved in this situation and caused frustration.

Shannon said it would be nice if she was aware of stuff going on in her department, so that if she is questioned by Tammy she can answer her questions. Chris said that he would make sure he has better communication with Shannon about things that are going on with this kind of situation.

Shannon asked if Chris has to contact Bob Vokoun for anything outside his normal duties, to please let her know. That way if she is questioned, she has an answer that she can give.

The Board members thanked Chris for coming in and answering their questions.

Public Comment: None

Future Meeting Dates: The next Board of Health meeting will be held on Monday, November 25, 2024 at Noon.

The meeting adjourned at 12:32 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,
Jolynn Harger, Executive/Financial Assistant