

SPECIAL BOARD OF HEALTH MINUTES TAMA COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH & HOME CARE

Thursday, April 9th – 12:00 P.M.
Meeting held at Tama County Annex Building and via Zoom

Members Present:	Micki Ferris	Sherry Parks	Curt Hilmer – via Zoom
	Lori Johnson	Jolynn Harger	Richard Arp
	Sally Custer	Stacy Koeppen	Missy Massengale
	Sherri Vesely	Beth Eberle	Kelly Purk
	Melanie Blocker	LeeAnna Kriegel	

Members Absent: Chris Behrens

The meeting was called to order by Sherry Parks, Chairman at 12:01 p.m.

Open Table Discussion with Tama County Public Health & Home Care Staff

Sherry Parks explained that the Board of Health held a meeting this past Monday morning and developed a separate budget due to dissatisfaction with what was presented last Thursday regarding decertification. The Board felt the proposal did not reflect what they had requested when asking for a revised budget. Their intent was to maintain the status quo and avoid decertification.

Stacy was asked to review the figures and attempt to create a budget aligned with the Board’s request. However, when this was presented, if the Board of Supervisors did not approve that approach, decertification would be the secondary option.

Sherry also noted that, based on their research, salaries within our office appeared higher than those in other rural Iowa areas. Despite this, the Board expressed that they do not want to see employees lose their jobs.

Micki Ferris shared that she left the meeting feeling that decertification was being treated as necessary to make the numbers work. She expressed a desire to review detailed figures from Stacy and emphasized the importance of making decisions in the best interest of the clients.

Richard Arp stated that he believes Stacy is doing a good job and supports giving her another year to improve the financial situation. He suggested that with additional funding from the Board of Supervisors, it may be possible to make the numbers work with the possible Medicare revenue. He expressed hope that the Board of Supervisors and Stacy could collaborate toward a solution. He also emphasized that he does not want to see employee pay reduced and cares deeply about staff.

Richard added that he was very surprised the Board of Supervisors ultimately voted to keep the office open with a \$1.2 million budget.

Stacy shared that, as of Monday, she has decided to accept another job offer due to the ongoing uncertainty and challenges within the organization. She noted that this decision was based on the actions and handling of matters by the Board of Supervisors, which she felt were unprofessional, and not due to the actions of the Board of Health. Stacy indicated she has unlimited PTO in her new role and is willing to remain available on a consulting basis to provide guidance as needed.

She also reported several recent staffing changes within the agency. The Public Health Nurse has submitted a resignation effective June 30. Beth will be resigning at the beginning of May. The PRN Home Care Aide position has been terminated as part of budget reductions for this fiscal year. Additionally, Claire had previously resigned and is now gone from our employment.

Kelly Purk submitted a written summary outlining her concerns regarding the agency remaining certified rather than proceeding with decertification. She explained that referrals have been placed on hold and formal notices

have already been issued to patients in preparation for a planned closure date of June 30. Referral sources were also notified, which has resulted in a halt in new referrals.

Kelly emphasized that the agency has experienced significant staffing losses following the announcement of the anticipated closure. She noted that maintaining a CMS-certified home health agency presents ongoing challenges, including managing on-call responsibilities while also supporting public health services. With current staffing levels, on-call coverage would primarily fall to her and Leanna as the remaining nurses, totaling approximately 62.75 hours per week, including every other weekend.

She further explained that hiring and onboarding registered nurses is a lengthy process, requiring significant time for training before they are able to work independently or take on-call responsibilities. Under the current certified structure, she expressed concern that two nurses cannot realistically sustain both home health and public health service demands.

LeeAnna Kriegel reinforced these concerns, highlighting the time required for a new RN to become fully trained and capable of independently managing patient care and on-call duties. Both Kelly and LeeAnna expressed concern following Monday's meeting regarding projected revenue figures, noting that the projections may not be realistic given the current staffing level of only two nurses.

They also discussed the physical and emotional strain associated with managing extensive on-call hours until additional staff can be hired and fully trained.

LeeAnna added that the VA has expressed interest in continuing services for veterans in Tama County. She noted that because referrals were stopped last month, no new referrals have been received this month. She also explained that decertifying would remove the CMS component but would still allow the agency to receive revenue through VA services, which could help offset costs associated with sliding-fee and no-fee patients.

Finally, it was noted that patients have begun contacting the agency seeking clarification and updates regarding the current situation, and wondering what steps they should take with regards to choosing a new agency for home care.

Both Kelly and LeeAnna emphasized that choosing not to decertify could ultimately result in the agency closing within a year, regardless of current efforts. Despite this concern, they expressed a strong desire to ensure that services continue for individuals who rely on the agency.

Lori presented a spreadsheet outlining revenue and expenses over the past several years, along with a new decertification verification spreadsheet. This analysis indicated that the potential county tax asking would be \$13,134.47 under the decertified model.

Staff expressed concern that significant damage has already been done due to prior decisions and communications, and questioned what options remain moving forward under the proposed plan.

Under the new staffing proposal, Melanie would be offered only three hours per week to assist the nurses. She indicated that this level of hours is not sustainable and would not allow her to continue in a PRN capacity.

Jolynn Harger shared that, based on the Board of Supervisors' discussions, she believes their preference is for the agency not to compete with private providers, but instead to focus on serving individuals who would otherwise go without care.

She stated that the decertified plan presented aligns with that direction, as it prioritizes services for underserved populations while also continuing to provide care for veterans, which could help generate revenue for the agency.

Sherry stated that she would like to further review the decertification plan, specifically to better understand the financial projections and how staff are allocated within the budget. She indicated that the Board will continue discussions on this matter at a future meeting.

Correspondence: Stacy presented the Board of Health with the Health Department of the Year award. The Tama County Board of Health was nominated by Chris Behrens and was selected as the recipient of this honor.

The meeting adjourned at 1:15 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,
Jolynn Harger, Executive/Financial Assistant