



**Watertown Board of Health
Meeting Minutes
Watertown Dept of Public Health
515 S First Street/Zoom
September 23, 2025 – 3:30 PM**

Members Present: Dr. Donene Rowe, Ald. Fred Smith, Dr. Todd Huhn

Others in attendance: Carol Quest, Abbigail Kuehn, Kim Hiller, Tara Hoffman
Virtual: Ald. Dana Davis, Patty Gedemer

1. Call to Order

Dr. Rowe called the meeting to order at 3:30pm.

2. Citizens to be heard

None.

3. Review and take action: Board of Health Minutes July 15, 2025

Minutes from July 15, 2025, meeting was reviewed. Motion by Ald Smith to approve; second by Dr. Huhn

Motion carried by unanimous voice vote.

It was requested to use professional titles when referring by attendees in the minutes.

4. Review and take action: Finance Reports – Preliminary August 2025

Carol noted that the Emergency Preparedness budget, fund 15, is a non-tax levy budget. The overage in the supplies account is due to the purchase of vaccine storage units. The Department received additional grant money to cover this expense.

In response to Dr. Huhn's question regarding vehicle usage and staffing:

The department purchases new vehicles primarily to support Environmental Health staff in their fieldwork. Once these vehicles reach the end of their primary service life, they are reassigned for use by staff in other public health programs. Because a significant portion of public health work takes place in the community, reliable transportation is essential. This vehicle management approach has resulted in overall cost savings and increased efficiency across departmental operations.

Financial reports were reviewed. Motion by Ald. Smith to approve; second by Dr. Huhn.

Motion carried by unanimous voice vote.

5. Review and take action: 2026 Budget

Carol Quest shared the proposed budgets for 2026. She noted that leadership was instructed to have a 0% increase in non-personnel accounts.

The Health Department (01) budget reflects a 0% increase. The maintenance/contracts account has been increased due to increased costs. The increase has been accommodated by decreasing other accounts to cover the change.

The budgets submitted to the Mayor and Treasurer do not have personnel numbers. Carol is awaiting these numbers and hopes to present a completed budget for our next meeting.

The Environmental Health (14) budget includes a capital expense for new computers for the staff as well as water lab maintenance.

The Emergency Preparedness (15) budget includes a \$220,000 request for 2026 to fund the building project to be funded with Public Health ARPA funds and Environmental Health funding.

The Seal A Smile (18) budget is similar to previous year. The grant was reduced but is offset by higher revenue received from medical assistance billing.

Motion for approval was made by Ald. Smith and seconded by Patricia Gedemer.

Motion carried by unanimous voice vote.

6. Review and discuss: Foundational Public Health Services – Maternal, Child & Family Health

Assistant Director Abbey Kuehn provided program updates for the Maternal, Child, and Family Health:

Talk Read Play Program: Between January and June, 23 families participated in the program, with four new enrollments during that period.

Prenatal Care Coordination: Nursing staff completed four newborn visits. Three of the participating clients transitioned into the TalkReadPlay program following their newborn visits.

Food Access Partnership: The department continues to collaborate with The Bread Basket to provide food and essential items to families referred by the Health Department. Monthly private food pantry events are held on the first Friday of each month, offering food, baby formula, diapers, personal items, clothing, and housewares. From January to June, seven events were held, serving 140 families (totaling 558 individuals). Additionally, 72 food boxes were delivered to families experiencing food insecurity.

Community Engagement Events:

- o A Community Baby Shower was hosted in collaboration with Watertown Family Connections, Safe Babies/Healthy Families, and the Jefferson County Health Department. Twenty families were invited to access resources, socialize, and receive baby care items.
- o A bilingual (Spanish and English) event was also held in partnership with Watertown Family Connections to connect families to local programs and services such as their Playgroups in the Park. The Watertown Fire and Police Departments participated, engaging with families to foster positive community relationships.
- o Pre- and post-event surveys indicated that participants found these events beneficial to their mental health and expressed interest in attending future events.

Future Planning: Staff are planning to host five social connection events in 2025, including some scheduled after 4:30 p.m. and on weekends to better accommodate working families.

Car Seat Safety Program: From January to June, 24 car seat checks were completed. Ten car seats were provided through the department's free car seat program.

Safe Sleep Initiative: Nursing staff provided Pack & Plays to two families identified as lacking a safe sleep environment for their infants. These items were purchased through grant funding, and families received education on safe sleep practices.

7. Review and discussion: Public Health Emergency Preparedness Program updates

City Tabletop Exercise: Public Health Emergency Preparedness Coordinator Victoria Parker is working in collaboration with Emergency Manager/Fire Chief Tanya to develop a tabletop emergency response exercise for City leadership. This exercise will take place in the new Emergency Operations Center (EOC) located at the recently constructed fire station. It will be the first tabletop exercise for many City leaders and the first use of the new EOC. The exercise will serve as both a learning opportunity and an assessment of current resources and needs within the EOC.

Community Partner Engagement: A tabletop exercise was also conducted with CommonHart, a local home health and hospice agency. The discussion focused on their role in supporting patients during emergencies, clarifying responsibilities, and managing expectations for community support. Emphasis was placed on the importance of coordinated emergency planning and the understanding that 911 services and hospital emergency rooms are not sufficient as default emergency plans or evacuation locations.

Policy Updates – Chapter 6: Policies under Chapter 6 are expected to be submitted to the Public Safety & Welfare Committee for review in October. Additional internal review is being conducted by Carol and Tanya. Cooling and warming procedures have now been separated from the policies. These procedure documents are accessible to staff on the City server.

Mental Health Training: Two department staff members are certified Mental Health First Aid trainers. In September, they facilitated a mental health first aid training session for approximately 15 City staff members.

After-Action Review – Warming/Cooling Center: An after-action review was completed following the activation of the warming/cooling center earlier in 2025. Based on this review, procedural updates have been made to improve future shelter operations.

Upcoming Training: Victoria Parker will attend a Reception Center and Decontamination Workshop in November to further enhance emergency preparedness capabilities.

Funding Outlook: Emergency Preparedness funding may be reduced in the upcoming budget cycle. In anticipation of this, Victoria's time allocated to Emergency Preparedness activities in 2026 has been adjusted accordingly.

8. Review and discussion: Public Health Environmental Health Program updates

The new inspection year began on July 1.

The newly hired Environmental Health staff member is progressing well in training. She has begun conducting independent inspections of smaller facilities, such as tourist rooming houses, and is currently preparing for the Registered Sanitarian Exam.

The department is actively working with management of pool facilities to ensure compliance with safety and chemical standards. Environmental Health staff are coordinating with the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture to develop corrective action plans for pools not meeting pool code requirements.

Staff have completed state-required reporting for the inspection program and finalized the annual self-assessment.

9. Review and discussion: Public Health Community Health Program updates

The land purchase for the additional lot is expected to be finalized by the end of the month. The next steps will include zoning approval and determining building placement.

The Community Health Assessment (CHA) has been completed, and the final document is currently being compiled.

Wastewater testing, which began during the COVID-19 pandemic to monitor COVID-19 viral detection trends, has expanded to include measles detection. These reports are utilized by the medical community to track virus levels and prepare for potential increases in cases.

Local schools have issued their 15-day notification letters to families of students who are not up to date on required immunizations.

A pharmaceutical student intern assisted with reminder and recall efforts for children ages 4 to 6 who were missing the MMR (measles, mumps, and rubella) vaccine. Currently, 52% of children in this age group are meeting vaccine benchmarks.

A separate assessment of 24-month-old children showed 66% were meeting all vaccination benchmarks. Letters were sent to families whose children were behind on immunizations.

Public Health Nursing staff are actively supporting the Watertown Unified School District by assisting with care planning and providing training for school health aides.

The community garden located along the perimeter of the Health Department parking lot has yielded 229 pounds of produce this year. The harvested produce is shared with the senior meal program.

This year, seven students from Maranatha Baptist University and one student from UW Green Bay will be participating in various learning experiences with the Health Department as part of their academic training

10. Adjourn.

Motion made to adjourn by Ald Davis and carried by unanimous voice vote.

Next Board of Health meeting will be Tuesday, December 16, 2025, at 3:30 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,



Carol Quest
Director/Health Officer

Note: The minutes are uncorrected. Any correction made thereto will be noted in the minutes of the proceedings at which these minutes are approved.