



Western Plains Public Health  
BOARD OF HEALTH MEETING  
Budget Meeting 2025 – June 25, 2024

The budget meeting for Western Plains Public Health (WPPH) Board of Health meeting was called to order by Dr. John Grunseth at 10:03 am CST in the conference room at WPPH. The 2025 budget was emailed to members prior to the meeting. Notices were sent to all County Auditors to post meeting time and date and posted on WPPH website and Facebook page.

**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Dr. John Grunseth, President, Morton Co  
Charles Steinkuehler, Vice President, Grant Co.  
Marvin Schwehr, Board Member, Mercer Co.  
Barb Hettich, Board Member, Sioux Co  
Jackie Buckley, Board Member, Morton Co. (virtual)

**STAFF PRESENT:**

Erin Ourada, Administrator  
Vonda Bechtel, Office Manager  
Adrianna Tincher, RN

**ABSENT:**

Dan Ulmer, Treasurer, Morton Co.  
Dr. Tom Kaspari, Board Member, Oliver Co.

**Review 2025 Budget:** Erin Ourada presented a budget which includes a 3% hourly rate increase for employees and a 3.68 equalized levy to the Counties. This would be a levy increase from 3.34 in 2024. She informed the board the budget they received prior to the meeting was incorrect. The July 2025 health insurance increase was not included. Erin provided and displayed a revised 2025 budget. Erin explained the difference on the 2025 budget: Committed Funds account began in 2024; State Aid increased \$114,000; Medicaid projected increase of \$100,000 to start billing for the Nurse Family Partnership Program that will decrease \$76,000; Opioid Settlement funds will vary each year for the next 20 years; COVID and PHEP Prevention funding from the state will be eliminated in 2025; Women's Way funding was decreased because WPPH declined the media contract which will remove PEAC campaign from income and expenses; a new line item (Employee Training) will be added to track employee training expenses; and wage increased \$139,00 due to new hires. Erin asked the Board Members for any changes and/or questions before presenting the budget to the County Commissioners.

Marvin Schwehr motioned to discuss changing the employee wage increase to 2% versus 3%. Erin displayed the budget with a 2% increase for the board. Marvin informed the board after comparing total compensation from the 2021 budget it will increase 72.5% with a 3% raise and 71.2% with a 2% raise. He felt the employees are being compensated well with a 52% benefit package and would opt to support a 2% increase versus the 3%. He will be sending a letter to the Mercer County Commission with his recommendation. Charlie Steinkuehler seconded motion. Further discussion was had. Jackie Buckley's concern was that the cost-of-living percent (3.2%) is higher than the proposed increase. Dr. Grunseth and Barb Hettich discussed that wage increase should at least keep up with the cost-of-living percent. Discussion was also had on retaining nursing staff and employee benefits.

Jackie Buckley offered an amendment: if the health insurance comes in lower than the 13% increase budgeted, consider giving a July 1, 2025, wage increase to employees. Marvin Schwehr seconded the amendment. Jackie Buckley had discussion on the amendment. She asked what the difference would be if the health insurance increase would be 10% vs 13%. Erin estimated around \$50 per employee per month which would be around \$9,300 for six-months. Roll-call vote on the amendment: Marvin Schwehr-aye, Barb Hettich-no, Charlie Steinkuehler-aye, Dr. John Grunseth-aye; Jackie Buckley-aye; amendment passed.

Roll-call vote on the motion for a 2% wage with a proposed mid-year raise if health insurance increase is lower than 13% on July 1, 2025: Marvin Schwehr-aye, Barb Hettich-no, Charlie Steinkuehler-aye, Dr. John Grunseth-aye; Jackie Buckley-aye; motion carried.

Erin updated the county equalized levy to 3.61 with the 2% wage increase which is about a \$60,000 increase from last year's budget.

Barb Hettich motioned to present the 2025 budget as presented to the counties with an equalized levy of 3.61; seconded by Charlie Steinkuehler; Marv asked for discussion. He asked if the incentive day off is approved in the handbook if that would change the budget. Erin informed him it would not change the budget. Roll-call vote: Marvin Schwehr-aye, Barb Hettich-aye, Charlie Steinkuehler-aye, Dr. John Grunseth-aye; Jackie Buckley-aye; motion carried. Erin Ourada will present the budget to the counties.

**Review Handbook Changes:**

3-3 Paid Holidays (Incentive Day Section): Marvin Schwehr opposes the incentive day that was proposed in section 3-3. He feels employees should always perform 90% or above. Erin explained this was proposed because merit raises would be a strain on the budget and wanted to offer something in place of compensation.

7-2 Continuing Formal Education: Erin consulted with a Human Resources Professional regarding tuition reimbursement. They suggested consulting an attorney; however, if there is a section in the policy regarding leaving employment, the employee could be asked to refund the money. Wage deduction cannot be used.

Marvin Schwehr motioned for discussion to create a budget line item on the 2025 budget for tuition reimbursement in the amount of \$12,000. Seconded by Charlie Steinkuehler. Discussion was had on whether to change the current policy, let the employee choose to use working hours or get tuition reimbursement, and how to designate tuition reimbursement on the budget and how much to allocate.

Roll-call vote to create a budget line item on the 2025 budget for tuition reimbursement in the amount of \$12,000: Marvin Schwehr-aye, Barb Hettich-aye, Charlie Steinkuehler-aye, Dr. John Grunseth-aye; Jacke Buckley-aye; motion carried.

Barb Hettich moved to make the corrections to the Employee Handbook but delete the incentive day section under Paid Holidays (section 3-3 page 22); seconded by Charlie Steinkuehler; roll-call vote: Marvin Schwehr-aye, Barb Hettich-aye, Charlie Steinkuehler-aye, Dr. John Grunseth-aye; Jackie Buckley-aye; motion carried.

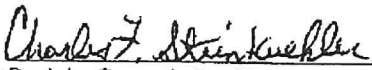
Expiring CD (9/2/2024): Erin presented the current CD Rates for Dakota Community Bank & Trust. She informed the board the rates presented could change before the renewal of the CD. Marvin Schwehr motioned to leave the \$101,750.00 CD at Dakota Community Bank and increase the term to 39 months; seconded by Barb Hettich; roll-call vote: Marvin Schwehr-aye, Barb Hettich-aye, Charlie Steinkuehler-aye, Dr. John Grunseth-aye; Jackie Buckley-aye; motion carried.

**Upcoming Meeting Dates:**

The Joint Board of County Commissioners meeting is scheduled for August 20, 2024, at 10:00 a.m. CT.  
The 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter Board of Health meeting is scheduled for September 12, 2023, at 2:00 p.m. CT.

The board requested an update of the garage spaces at the next meeting.

**ADJOURNMENT:** Meeting adjourned by Dr. Grunseth, President, at 11:15 a.m. CT



~~Dr. John Grunseth, President~~  
Charles Steinkuehler, vice president  
Submitted by Vonda Bechtel



Dr. Tom Kaspari, Secretary