



First District Health Unit
Board of Health Meeting
June 26, 2025 4:30 pm

Board members present: Dr. Dawn Mattern, Dawn Ystaas, Penny Hamilton, Nikki Medalen, Ron Krebsbach, Walter Lipp, Ron Merritt, David Stark

Via Video: Jeanine Jensen

Absent: Heather Thompson, Ex-officio member Health Officer Dr. Casmiar Nwaigwe,

Also present: Executive Director Holly Brekhus and FDHU staff members Amy Heer, Becky Fred, Dawn Benzmilller, Haley Hanna, Hallie Weddell, Jen Clark, Karla Fannik, Lisa Otto-Westman, Lois Mackey, Lori Brierley, Melissa Burud, Mikayla Eklund, Nancy Bryn, Natalie Davy, Rebecca Coffin, Vicky Jones, Yvonne Drader

1. The meeting was **called to order** at 4:30 by Dr. Dawn Mattern.
2. Dr. Mattern led the Pledge of Allegiance.
3. Holly Brekhus **called the roll**.
4. **Consideration and Approval of the February 20, 2025 Board of Health minutes:** A motion was made by Ron Krebsbach, second by Nikki Medalen, to approve the minutes as corrected. Motion carried.
5. **Employee Satisfaction Survey:** Holly reviewed the results of the 2025 Employee Satisfaction Survey. For the first time ever, 100% of employees agreed that their work environment is comfortable. This is significant in light of the substantial investment in HVAC in recent years. Nikki Medalen noted that there were several references to being satisfied 'until recently' and wondered what may have happened recently to get this result. The Management Team reviewed the results recently and couldn't pinpoint a reason for this. Nikki also asked Holly if she was concerned about 20% of staff reporting they were considering seeking other employment. Holly agreed it was very concerning, but not surprising, knowing the pay is less than some staff could make elsewhere. Penny Hamilton asked if the comment regarding poor staff morale is being addressed. Holly reported that the management team had an initial conversation around ideas for improving morale and recognizing employees. Nikki explained that there is a "just culture" system that can help address some of the concerns in the report. Holly asked Nikki to send her more information. Nikki also suggested mapping the survey results from year to year to identify trends.

6. Workforce Assessment Report: Amy Silverwood-Miranda from the Health Promotion division presented a report she prepared in the course of working to attain her Master's in Public Health. The report analyzed the First District workforce and compared the areas and capabilities against the Public Health Accreditation Board's recommendations. The analysis was done using an assessment tool developed by the deBeaumont Foundation. Amy reviewed the report highlights and recommendations. (See attached report)

7. June 10, 2025, Finance Committee Update

The minutes of the Finance Committee meeting were reviewed, including the proposed 2026 budget. The proposed budget is based on the best available information, but the numbers could change substantially in view of potential grants awarded and possible federal budget cuts. Ron Merritt reported that Ward County has just started their budget process. There are some questions on the new guidelines approved this year by the legislature that limits tax/mill levy increases to 3%. Holly will be meeting with the State's Attorney for clarification about how that impacts the First District mill levy. There was some discussion about the approval process for health district budgets. It was not immediately clear how or if the process is laid out in Century Code.

8. 2026 Mill Levy Approval:

A motion was made by the Finance Committee, second by David Stark, to approve the proposed mill levy of 2.30 mills equalized across the counties. Ron Merritt pointed out that even though the mill levy is less than last year, it would result in an increase of more than 3% for Ward County. This is because Ward County's valuation has increased more than the valuation in the other counties. He explained that he would vote 'No' on the motion simply because he wasn't sure of the legality of that increase. The motion passed, with Dawn Mattern, Dawn Ystaas, Penny Hamilton, Nikki Medalen, Ron Krebsbach, Walter Lipp, Jeanine Jensen and David Stark voting in favor and Ron Merritt opposed.

9. Approval of the 2026 Budget

The 2026 budget was received from the Finance Committee with a recommendation to pass. Health Promotion expenses showed a significant increase, which Holly explained was due primarily to the alcohol prevention grant. The salary/pay grade assessment project is underway. Salaries have been decreased somewhat by not filling some positions. Nikki questioned the decrease in professional development in light of the fact that the staff survey found this to be an area of concern. She asked how professional development dollars are distributed between staff. Holly explained that often the funds are tied to specific grants, and some are paid directly by the grantor. First District does pay for staff CEUs. Due to the present uncertainty and the possibility of having better information later in the summer, the decision was made to table the budget and send it back to the Finance Committee.

10. Inspiritus Grant Letters of Support

In the past, Letters of Support for the Inspiritus grants have been approved via an email process instead of at a Board meeting, due to the timing of the due date. Holly offered the option of continuing that process or approving support for these grants in concept and having the Board President Dr. Mattern give final approval when the guidance is available. Ron Merritt moved to approve the letter of support in concept and authorizing Dr. Mattern to give final approval. Dawn Ystaas seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

11. Federal Funding Updates

a. Immunizations

The immunization program is First District's largest program. The ACIP, which sets recommendations for immunizations, is in a state of flux. The decisions made by the ACIP moving forward could impact whether insurances continue to pay for some vaccinations.

b. PHEP Grant (Emergency Preparedness and Response)

This grant has typically been 100% available for reimbursement as soon as the fiscal year starts. It's now being allocated in chunks instead. This shouldn't affect income unless some other changes take place.

c. Family Planning Grant

The family planning grant doesn't cover all the costs associated with the family planning program. The final numbers for the new grant year have not been released yet.

d. Shriners screening clinic

For the past few years, First District has partnered with the Shriners to use FDHU space to conduct orthopedic screenings. The Shriners have now lost their office space in Bismarck and have approached First District about renting space for their staff to offer telehealth. They would potentially be looking for 2 rooms. One would be for telehealth visits and one for language development. Minot State provides language development services for children on Medicaid, and the Shriners program would fill a gap by serving non-Medicaid kids. Dawn Ystaas offered to help assess the cost of housing the program to set a rental price. Ystaas moved and Penny Hamilton seconded to enter into further discussion with Shriners to explore renting space to them. The motion passed unanimously.

e. Milk depot

First District has been approached to be a collection point for a breast milk depot that collects and distributes surplus breast milk. More details will be forthcoming.

12. NORC Pilot Project

The NORC Walsh Center for Rural Health Analysis selected FDHU for a pilot evaluation project and is well into the process of evaluating the cost and outputs of the TB Program. Once done, First District can apply the experience and process to other programs to determine how funding compares to expenses and see where improvements in efficiency and outcomes can be improved.

13. Adjournment

The **meeting adjourned** at 5:30 pm.