

Porter County Board of Health Meeting

Tuesday, December 02, 2025
155 Indiana Avenue, Commissioner's Chambers
Valparaiso, Indiana
Abbreviated Minutes

In Attendance: Dr. Rodney Guimont Jr, Dr. Linda Boxum, Attorney Colby Barkes, Robyn Lane, Sylvia Graham, Michelle Cherry, Dr. Kimberly Brunt, Terry Wuletich, Dr. Chris Osan

Absent: Attorney Dave Hollenbeck

The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of Minutes

Dr. Linda Boxum requested a motion to approve the October regular meeting minutes. Robyn Lane made the motion to approve, and Sylvia Graham seconded. The motion passed 6-0. Michelle Cherry was not present for this vote, but did attend later in the meeting.

Announcements

The next Porter County Board of Health meeting is scheduled for **January 06, 2026**, in the Commissioners' Chambers of the Porter County Administration Building in Valparaiso.

New Business

Dr. Boxum and the Board of Health acknowledged that state funding for the 2026 cycle has been reduced by 73 percent. Despite this significant decrease, the county will continue prioritizing obesity and physical activity as its key performance indicators. The board reviewed program proposals totaling just under \$23,000, which remains below the original budget allocation of approximately \$30,000 for this funding line. Members also agreed on the meeting procedure, deciding to hear all three proposals individually, then hold a collective discussion and vote afterward, rather than voting after each presentation.

PCACS Program Proposal- Valerie Martinez addressed the board to propose a senior fitness program. Valerie explained that the program offers Chair Yoga and Strength & Balancing classes led by a physical therapist, and also provides transportation for participants along with access to hygiene and food items. Since starting in August, the program has recorded 99 participants, with classes averaging around 10 people, though attendance can drop during snow or rain. Participants have reported benefits such as increased socialization, improved balance, and better fall prevention. Valerie noted that the budget request covers a full year of programming, totaling 156 classes, with amounts discussed at \$5,200 and \$2,600. She added that equipment costs are estimated at \$250 and that the cost per person averages about \$10.

Dr. Boxum called for a motion to approve the request for six months for \$4,150. Terry Wuletich made the motion, and Michelle Cherry seconded. The vote passed 6-0, with Dr. Osan abstaining from this vote.

Valparaiso Family YMCA- Alyse Kominakis and Wende Burbridge proposed funding for their South Porter County Wellness initiative. They outlined the program's cost structure and instructor

logistics, explaining that each class includes mileage reimbursements that typically range between \$14 and \$16 per person, instructor wages at around \$17 per class, and an additional \$16 cost associated with the Cornerstone class. Altogether, the total cost per class, including travel, remains under \$40. They noted that the program relies on a rotating pool of six to seven instructors, which allows them to offer a wider range of classes based on availability.

They also addressed concerns about mileage reimbursement. Approximately \$5,000 of their request, nearly half of the total budget, is attributed to travel costs. Some members of the board expressed discomfort with the high cost of travel relative to the number of attendees, noting examples such as spending thousands to reach only a handful of people. Alyse and Wende clarified that instructors are reimbursed for travel from their homes to off-site locations, with their standard YMCA commute subtracted. The reimbursement rate follows government guidelines, estimated at around 48 cents per mile. They emphasized that this cost is essential for serving South County, an area with limited facilities where residents face significant mobility and transportation barriers.

In discussing budget contingencies, Wende explained that a \$1,200 line item had been requested as a safeguard in case the current space becomes unavailable. Because of the 73 percent reduction in the funding body's resources, the board declined the contingency and agreed that the program should return for additional funds only if the need arises. Marketing expenses were also reviewed, and instead of allocating cash for printed materials, the funding body offered in-kind support by using its social media platforms and existing distribution lists to help promote the program.

Wende and Alyse also provided operational updates, including the addition of a second staff member at the Cornerstone location to provide childcare. Parents must register 24 hours ahead of time, and if no one signs up, the childcare staff member is notified not to report. The childcare schedule is timed to align with school drop-off routines and the period before children's naps, making it more convenient for parents. They concluded by reminding the board that participants at these off-site locations do not need a YMCA membership to attend classes, which helps remove a significant financial barrier for many residents.

The board decided not to approve the funding request of \$11,550 at this time but encouraged the Valpo YMCA to return with a revised proposal at a future meeting. The YMCA representatives agreed to refine the plan and come back once adjustments are made, acknowledging the board's need for the program to align with current budget limitations.

Strength and Stillness Program- Samantha Aguilar and Sam Burgett provided an update on the Strength and Stillness program, highlighting concerns regarding both costs and attendance. The program reported a total attendance of 108 people over the first six months, including both returning participants and new attendees. Feedback has been positive, with one officer noting significant reductions in blood pressure and cortisol levels after attending just two sessions. Participants now earn 10 POCO wellness points for each session attended. To help boost attendance, the program will now allow participation by spouses of first responders. While attendance dipped in September, it recovered in October; however, the program continues to face challenges in engaging first responders from agencies outside the Sheriff's office. The board noted that the cost per class has increased from \$44 to \$100, while attendance remains low, with only three participants in one November session and five in another, totaling eight. Board members expressed that despite the program's high quality, the inconsistent participation and small class sizes make it difficult to

justify the current expense. Suggestions were made to redirect outreach efforts toward churches, apartment complexes, and other community locations.

The board decided not to approve the funding request at this time but encouraged them to return with a revised proposal at a future meeting.

Legal Service Agreement- The board discussed the fact that the contract remains unchanged from the previous year in terms of dates, pricing, and invoicing. It was noted that fees have stabilized at a lower rate compared to two years ago, when substantial work was required to establish HFI contracts and MOUs.

Dr. Boxum called for a motion to approve the 2026 legal services agreement with Blachly, Tabor, Bozik & Hartman, LLC. Sylvia Graham made the motion and Michelle Cherry seconded. It passed 6-0.

Emergency Preparedness Grant Update- The board discussed the fact that the emergency preparedness grant funding has been received, enabling the creation of the corresponding contract. The current funding is set to expire on December 31.

Dr. Boxum called for a motion to approve the grant funding and create a contract for emergency preparedness. Michelle Cherry made the motion to approve, and Sylvia Graham seconded. It passed 6-0.

Old Business

Community Change Center Update- Sam Burgett provided a year-end update on the Community Change Center, highlighting significant growth in its reentry and workforce development programs. Referrals from community corrections and courts have increased, and the "Fresh Start" food truck initiative has successfully employed high-risk individuals, including those with felony records who had previously declined services. Employment through the program has also led to secondary benefits, such as participants engaging in therapy and enrolling in Medicaid. The program has secured emergency funds to operate through the first several months of next year, with a long-term goal of establishing a centralized headquarters in 2026. Funding through "320 Recovery" will support the launch of a new site in Lake County.

Burgett also noted that a community partner will host its first major fundraising gala in April to celebrate the organization's successes, with Journeyman donating the venue. The organization has been building toward this level of capacity since 2018, and a year-end report detailing the year's achievements will be released soon.

Reports of Board Attorney

None.

Claims & Receipts

Dr. Boxum called for a motion to approve the claims and receipts. Dr. Osan made the motion, and Terry Wuletich seconded. The motion passed 6-0. Robyn Lane left the meeting early.

Reports of Committees, Staff, and Health Officer

Porter County Health Officer, Dr. Rodney Guimont, reported that staff are actively engaging with the School Safety Commission regarding Project Adam and HeartSafe designations. Currently, Portage and Chesterton schools are participating, and most of the involved schools are approximately 90 percent of the way toward completing the required steps for designation.

Matthew Paul, administrator with the Porter County Health Department, reported that the department clarified through social media that restaurant inspection reports are available to the public for free, addressing a third-party site that was charging for access. The post generated substantial engagement, with more than 21,000 interactions, representing around 10 percent of the population. He noted that the first informational post on this topic was published on November 18.

Mathew reported that the department is clearing out a storage unit to eliminate an annual expense of approximately \$2,500. Regarding grant funding, the department has secured \$10,000 to provide elopement kits and sleep sacks, with notification expected on December 15 for a grant supporting a second kit. In terms of staff development, Antonio Turner, a food service employee, has obtained certification to assist with mental health topics, and the department is applying for a grant to support his work in this area.

Miscellaneous

None.

Public Comment

None.

Meeting Adjourned