

**Madison County Board of Health Meeting**

**Thursday, July 24, 2025, 6:00 pm**

**Members**

Dr. Robert Adams DDS, Chair  
Dr. Suzanne Sheldon, DVM  
Cynthia Niles, Pharmacist  
Robin Smith, Public  
Larry Peek, Engineer  
Melissa Sluder, RN

Dr. Shannon Dowler, Public  
Jeremy Hensley, Commissioner  
Cheryl Conway, PhD, RN  
Dyatt Smathers, Public  
Dr. Melissa Robinson MD. Ex Officio

Regular Meeting       Special Meeting

**Members Present:**

Dr. Robert Adams DDS, Chair  
Dr. Suzanne Sheldon, DVM  
Cynthia Niles, Pharmacist  
Robin Smith, Public  
Larry Peek, Engineer  
Melissa Sluder, RN

Dr. Shannon Dowler, Public  
Jeremy Hensley, Commissioner  
Cheryl Conway, PhD, RN  
Dyatt Smathers, Public  
Dr. Melissa Robinson MD. Ex Officio

**Staff in Attendance:**

Tammy Cody, Health Director  
Bradley Hodges, Preparedness Coordinator/HR Director

Johnnie Sommerville, Finance Director  
Deb Norton Administrative and Notary

**AGENDA**

- I. Call Meeting to Order, Introductions**      Chair Adams  
At 6 pm, Dr. Adams called the meeting to order. Dr. Adams asked BOH members and staff to introduce themselves. Deb Norton and Dr. Adams swore in new BOH members Dr. Shannon Dowler, Dyatt Smathers, Robin Smith, Melissa Sluder, and Cynthia Niles. 2025 BOH Member Packets/USB Drives were handed out to new members.
- II. Approval of**      Chair Adams
- a. Agenda  
Dr. Adams reviewed agenda and asked for a motion to approve. Dyatt Smathers moved to approve the agenda. Melissa Sluder seconded the motion. There was no discussion. The agenda was approved unanimously.
  - b. Board of Health May 22, 2025, Minutes  
Dr. Adams asked if there were changes to the May 22, 2025 BOH meeting minutes, hearing none he asked for a motion to approve. Jeremy Hensley moved to approve the minutes. Larry Peek seconded the motion. There was no discussion. The minutes were approved unanimously.
- III. Welcome, Duties, Responsibilities & Structure of BOH**      Commissioner Hensley  
Jeremy Hensley welcomed the new BOH members on behalf of the County Commissioners. He shared appreciation for the veteran members. He shared that it is important for the BOH to get along as a team and respect each other. Jeremy advised that the BOH is the governing board of the Health Department and that the BOH makes rules and policies. He advised that the BOH is over the Health Director. He advised that the BOH does not hire nor fire employees except for the Health Director. He advised that if the BOH gets phone calls about concerns, they need to go to Tammy, as she is the head of the Health Department and that she answers exclusively to the BOH.
- IV. Public Input Session**      Community  
One resident spoke at public comment
- V. Announcements**      All  
There were no announcements.
- VI. New Business**
- a. BOH Information Session      Dr. Robinson  
Dr. Robinson brought up discussion on the topic of pre-meeting training opportunities. She provided a history on public health earlier. Discussion was held to gauge interest in pre-meeting optional presentations. Dr. Dowler requested that presentations and discussions not only be medical but also include other public health topics such as Environmental Health. Members supported the idea.
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- b. BOH Email Tammy  
 Tammy talked with IT and we have the ability to create a single email address. An individual could send an email to this email address, and it would go to each BOH member's personal email addresses. Dr. Robinson asked about how replies from the single email address would work. She asked who would give a coordinated reply on behalf of the BOH. Jeremy Hensley advised that the County Commissioners leave replies from their single email address up to the Chairman. Dr. Adams advised that he would be okay to be the person responsible for sending replies. Dyatt Smathers made a motion to create a single email address. Larry Peek seconded the motion. Jeremy Hensley said communication is important and that BOH members need to talk concerns out. There was no further discussion. The motion was approved unanimously by the board.
- c. BOH Operating Procedure Updates Tammy  
 Tammy asked that all BOH members familiarize themselves with the BOH Operating Procedures. Tammy wants to understand how she can best meet the BOH's needs.
- d. Communicable Disease Report Dr. Robinson  
 Dr. Robinson presented the annual report of communicable diseases in Madison County through the end of 2024. There is a large increase in Lyme Disease which is now endemic in Madison County. She pointed out that while Strep Group A Invasive Infection is up, looking into individual cases, this is not an actual trend. Dr. Robinson shared that the 22 cases in 2024 are vastly underreported because not everyone reports it. It can just be treated, and that is what usually happens, without it being reported. Prescribing prophylactic dose of doxycycline will cut the number down further. Case report definitions are extremely strict, due to many false positives. Dr. Dowler asked about the current status of Pertussis in Madison County and if there is a need for community outreach. Dr. Robinson advised that it is controlled at the moment. Dr. Sheldon shared that half of the results she sees in animals for Lyme Disease are in the form of anaplasia. She believes that many of the dogs she sees have subjective tickborne disease probably also have Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever. Dyatt asked if Lyme Disease is more prevalent in warm weather. Dr. Robinson confirmed that is the case. Dr. Adams asked if there are more tick variants in the area that carry Lyme Disease. Dr. Robinson confirmed that it is accurate. Also, she advised that due to climate change, more ticks are surviving longer.
- e. Environmental Health Staff and Recruitment Tammy & Chair Adams  
 Tammy advised that Madison County has been short staffed on EH Specialist for longer than she has been the Health Director. The state has attempted to increase training opportunities as one solution to produce environmental health specialists. They have looked at offering the requirements to become an authorized EH Specialist at Western Carolina University. With the shortage across the state, unless a county is paying highly, or someone is looking to move to an area, it is challenging to recruit. Tammy is contracting with a Buncombe County EH Specialist to work on weekends on wells and septic. Tammy has reached out on distribution list servs, contacted the state for help and is looking to contract with experienced REHS.

Dr. Robinson asked if there were issues or complaints for reasons other than money. Tammy said while money is an issue, there has been frustration with a lack of support regarding environmental health issues. Discussion was held. Dr. Dowler asked what the current salary range is for the position, and has there been a market analysis completed comparing other NC rural counties? Tammy advised that the salary offered is in line with other rural NC counties.

Discussion was held on offering sign-on bonuses, with a requirement for an ongoing work commitment.

Tammy explained the state and county pay grade system. Larry Peek asked about setting fees to offset the cost of hiring and paying more for EH Specialists. Tammy explained that in 2023 EH Fees were changed twice to remain competitive. Tammy described the process to ensure EH Fees are competitive with neighboring counties.

Discussion was held regarding the wait times for well and septic work as well as concerns about foodborne illness. Dr. Dowler made a motion to work with the County Commissioners on a competitive compensation package that includes a sign on and retention bonus. Dr. Robinson suggested a large sign on bonus up front with a contract requiring the employee to stay with MCHD for a specific amount of time. Dr. Robinson seconded Dr. Dowler's motion. Dyatt Smathers said Tammy should be able to adjust within the budget, to increase pay for new EH Specialists. Tammy stated she can do this. To increase any salary, it needs to be within the county salary plan as there are restrictions. Tammy will work with Madison County Human Resources to ensure proposals line up. Dr. Dowler's motion was not upheld. No further motion was made.

## VII. Administrative Reports

- a. Medical Director's Report Dr. Robinson

Dr. Robinson noted that the Addiction Medicine Program is stable, serving 75 patients. There is a severe need for sober living housing in the county. The Lyme Disease and Measles updates have been provided to county providers. Ballard Health's Erwin Hospital will not be rebuilt. Maternal and Women's Health numbers are slightly down.

b. Health Director's Report

Tammy

Tammy reported that MCHD is recruiting for an RN and LPN in the clinic. All School Nurse positions are filled. EH Vacancies include the EH Director, and three Full Time EH Specialists- Well and Septic and One – Food/Lodging. There have been discussions at the state level over concerns about individuals who may lose Medicaid. Also, concerns about EBT access for some of our most vulnerable residents. Residents are more productive and healthier when they have access to medical care and healthy food. Evaluations are being made about program funds that could be reduced or cut. MCHD hosted a Madison County Baby Shower introducing residents to resources. MCHD hosted a Chemical Incident Exercise coordinating with state and Madison County Emergency Management. Our CLIA Audit was completed and went extremely well. Great progress has been made with getting NC Telehealth in Madison County Libraries to provide chronic physical and mental health support.

c. Financial Reports

Tammy

Tammy explained how to read the finance reports and where the data comes from (Madison County Finance Department and MCHD Finance Director Johnnie Somerville). Budget runs from July 1- End of June. Revenues were down last year, bringing in 83% of projected revenue. Expenses were only at 78%. Financially MCHD came in under the allocated funding. Tammy went through the lines on the Financial Report with the BOH.

VIII. Other Business

Chair Adams

Dr. Adams mentioned that there was 100% attendance and appreciated it. Bradley explained the BOH USB Drive Packets to new members.

IX. Adjournment

Chair Adams

Dyatt Smathers moved to adjourn the meeting. Melissa Sluder seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Next Meeting: September 25, 2025 at 6pm



Chair, Board of Health



Health Director

11-20-2025

Date

11-20-2025

Date