

**St. Clair County Board of Commissioners
Blue Water Convention Center
800 Harker St.
Port Huron, MI 48060
February 17, 2022 at 2:00pm**

Agenda Item 1 – Pledge of Allegiance

Agenda Item 2- Roll Call

McConnell, Baldwin, Beedon, Rushing, Vandenbossche –Present, Dunn-Absent

Agenda Item 3 – Additions/Deletions/Changes to the Agenda

None

Agenda Item 4 – Approval of Agenda

Moved by Commissioner Baldwin, supported by Commissioner Beedon to approve the agenda. Passed by voice vote.

Agenda Item 5– Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting:

Moved by Commissioner Beedon, supported by Commissioner Baldwin, to approve and file the minutes of the 01/20/22 Commission Meeting and the 02/03/22 Standing Committee meetings. Passed by voice vote.

Agenda Item 6 – Proclamations

None

Agenda Item 7– Consent Agenda:

Moved by Commissioner McConnell, supported by Commissioner Baldwin, to approve items 7A through 7D on the Consent Agenda. Passed by voice vote.

Agenda Item 8 - Reports of Standing and Special Committees

Vandenboosche: There was a fire at the DTE new facility, perhaps from welding spark.

Baldwin: Metro Planning, March 12th is the Bird Blast

Bohm: Gypse Moths next step we will discuss.

Agenda Item 9 - Citizens Wishing to Address the Board

See Attached

Agenda Item 10 – Unfinished Business

None

Agenda Item 11A: Public Health Officer Position

Moved by Commissioner Rushing, supported by Commissioner Vandenboosche to divide the Public Health Officer position into two separate positions.

McConnell, Rushing, Vandenboosche, Bohm-Yes, Baldwin, Beedon-No. Passed 4-2

Agenda Item 11B: Communication Plan

Failed for lack of action

Agenda Item 11C: Approval of County Disbursements - January 2022

Moved by Commissioner Baldwin, supported by Commissioner Vandenboosche, to approve the January 2022 County Disbursements in the amount of \$20,336,465.95.

Passed 6-0.

Agenda Item 11D: Intergovernmental Service Agreement - United States

Department of Homeland Security Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)

Moved by Commissioner Vandenboosche, supported by Commissioner Rushing, to approve the intergovernmental agreement with the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement Office for a term of 60 months as presented. Passed 6-0.

Agenda Item 11E: Contract Approval Request - OverDrive, Inc.

Moved by Commissioner Rushing, supported by Commissioner McConnell, to approve the agreement with the OverDrive Inc. for e-book and audio distribution services for the Library System for a term of 03/01/22 – 02/28/25 in the amount of \$198,000. Passed 6-0.

Agenda Item 11F: Contract Approval Request - Community Educational Network (CEN) - Library Internet Service

Moved by Commissioner Beedon, supported by Commissioner Baldwin, to approve the agreement with Community Education Network for Internet Service for the Library System for a term of 07/01/22 – 06/30/25 in the amount of \$243,000. Passed 6-0.

Agenda Item 11G: Resolution 2022-03 Placing Proposed Renewal for St. Clair County Senior Millage on Ballot

Moved by Commissioner McConnell, supported by Commissioner Beedon, to adopt Resolution 22-03 placing the Senior Millage renewal on the ballot. Passed 6-0.

Agenda Item 11H: Circuit Court Family Division Wage Class Change

Moved by Commissioner Rushing, supported by Commissioner McConnell, to approve the wage class change of the Juvenile Attorney Referee position in the family court manning table to wage class III-K. Passed by voice vote.

Agenda Item 11I: Contract Approval Request - Justice Works, LLC

Moved by Commissioner Baldwin, supported by Commissioner McConnell, to approve the agreement with the Justice Works LLC to continue the subscription service for a term of 01/01/22 – 12/31/22 amounting to a total of \$17,250 (since 2020) for the Public Defender's Office. Passed 6-0.

Agenda Item 11J: Probate Court Manning Table Change

Moved by Commissioner Vandenboosche, supported by Commissioner Baldwin, to approve the proposed manning table change for Probate Court; converting a Court Clerk I position to Court Clerk III and converting a Part-time Court Clerk III position to full time, and eliminating 2 part-time At Risk Youth Workers and 50% of funding for a therapist. Passed by voice vote.

Agenda Item 11K: Friends of the St. Clair River Stewardship Agreement for 2022

Moved by Commissioner Baldwin, supported by Commissioner Beedon, to approve the agreement with the Friends of St. Clair River for stewardship and services for 2022 in the amount of \$30,850.00. Passed 6-0.

Agenda Item 11L: Landfill Survey Rover Purchase Request

Moved by Commissioner Vandenboosche, supported by Commissioner Rushing, to approve the purchase of a Survey Rover for the Landfill in the amount of \$25,100.97. Passed 6-0.

Agenda Item 11M: Parks and Recreation Commission - Appointment

Moved by Commissioner Beedon, supported by Commissioner Vandenboosche, to appoint Cindy Babisz to the Parks and Recreation Commission Board, representing Districts 6 & 7 for the remainder of a 3-year term expiring 12/31/24. Passed by voice vote.

Agenda Item 11N: Resolution 2022-02 Placing Proposed Renewal for St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Millage on Ballot

Moved by Commissioner McConnell, supported by Commissioner Baldwin, to adopt Resolution 22-02 placing the Parks and Recreation Commission millage renewal on the ballot. Passed 6-0.

Agenda Item 11O: ARPA Projects – Commissioner Districts

Moved by Commissioner Rushing, supported by Commissioner McConnell, to approve the Commissioner District American Rescue Plan Projects as presented. Passed 6-0.

Agenda Item 11P: FY2022 Marine Safety Program Grant Application

Moved by Commissioner McConnell, supported by Commissioner Baldwin, to approve the FY 2022 Marine Safety Program grant application in the amount of \$321,363. Passed by voice vote.

Agenda Item 11Q: Contract Extension Approval Request - Interwest Technology Group

Moved by Commissioner Beedon, supported by Commissioner Vandenboosche, to approve the contract extension with Interwest Technology Group for the Health Department expiring 05/31/22 in the total amount of \$15,920. Passed 6-0.

Agenda Item 11R: Tree Harvesting Agreement with Tri-County Logging, Inc. for Airport Properties

Moved by Commissioner Vandenboosche, supported by Commissioner Rushing, to approve the agreement for the sale and harvesting of hardwood trees with Tri-County Logging, Inc. for the Airport in the amount of \$21,500. Passed 6-0.

Agenda Item 11S: Moving of Parks and Recreation Offices

Moved by Commissioner Baldwin, supported by Commissioner Beedon, to approve the project to relocate the Parks and Recreation Administration Office in an amount not to exceed \$40,000. Passed 6-0.

Agenda Item 12 – Administrator’s Report

1. There is a meeting scheduled the first week of March with Senator Peters to discuss the cross winds runway funding for the airport.
2. EGLE Grant application for treatment of PFAS we are working on.
3. We are continuing discussions regarding the placement of a county wide proposal for ambulance service.
4. Bids for Gypsy Moth Spraying are due tomorrow.
5. Animal Control is utilizing Michigan Works Program for staffing assistance.

Moved by Commissioner Baldwin, Supported by Commissioner McConnell to accept the Administrator’s Report. Passed by voice vote.

Agenda Item 13 – Miscellaneous Business

Vandenboosche: The Algonac Lions will be distributing \$1600 per resident from the Rolling Brook fire.

Agenda Item 14 – Receive and File Packets:

Moved by Commissioner Rushing, supported by Commissioner Baldwin, to receive and file packets that were sent to Commissioners, packets at their places and any other information presented. Passed by voice vote.

Agenda Item 15 – Adjournment

Moved by Commissioner Vandenboosche, supported by Commissioner Baldwin to adjourn at 4:35pm. Passed by voice vote.

From: Anup Lal <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Thursday, February 03, 2022 11:31 PM
To: Hepting, Karry <KAHepting@stclaircounty.org>
Cc: Morris, Kristine <kmorris@stclaircounty.org>
Subject: Support for Dr Mercatante

Sent from [Mail](#) for Windows
To the St Clair County Board

My name is Anup Lal, MD, and I am a physician living and working in St Clair County since 2005. I am writing this to strongly support the excellent work done by Dr Mercatante, as the head of the Health Department, in helping us fight the ongoing pandemic. I am frankly appalled by the attacks launched at her, both professional and personal. Her hard work and conscientiousness has been exemplary and should be lauded. The steps taken by her are based on standard recommendations by National health organizations, such as the CDC, and based on good science and common sense. This is a person who is basically doing her job, in the best way possible, as a doctor, a health department official, and a responsible citizen.

To get some perspective, it would be instructive, for those who attack her, to know that stricter measures are routinely imposed in multiple other countries, in “surge” situations, with case percentage lower than our county

As a physician who has seen far too many suffer and die due to COVID, I wonder if those who stridently call for the choice to unmask their children, spare a thought about the workers in the school system- teachers, bus drivers, cafeteria staff et al, - older, with typically more health problems than young children, who are placed in harm’s way, or the exhaustion of the workers in the health system facing yet another surge. It does not seem like it, unfortunately.

I sincerely hope that this letter can be read in support of Dr Mercatante at the next Board Meeting. I also sincerely request that she receive strong support from all those who truly care about the health of the people of St Clair County, so that she can continue the great work that she is doing for us and our fellow residents of this county

Thank You

Sincerely

Anup Lal, MD



Ascension River District Hospital

4100 River Road
East China, MI 48054

Feb 2, 2022

Attention: St Clair County Board of Commissioners

Dear Commissioners;

I am providing this letter in support of Dr. Annette Mercatante and the staff at the St Clair County Community Health Department. As we all are well aware, the preceding two years have been very challenging for our community, State, Nation and the entire globe.

The Sars CoV 2 virus pandemic has presented great challenges and losses to our community, healthcare systems and public health systems. As the virus traversed throughout the world, and new variants emerged, treatments along with public health measures changed as our knowledge increased, (building the plane as we flew it).

The local health department under the guidance of Dr. Mercatante provided public health recommendations, coordinated treatment programs and maintained constant communication with healthcare providers and the greater community conveying updates on a regular basis.

It has been related that there are some members of the community that have made adverse remarks regarding Dr. Mercatante and her role. She has remained steadfast in her resolve to ensure that our community has current resources and information to guide us through this challenging time. In my opinion, Dr. Mercatante has been an informative and sound resource for our community and I wholeheartedly support and appreciate the time, effort and passion she has given to our county in fighting this pandemic.

Respectfully,

H. Lee Bacheldor, DO
Chief Medical Officer
Ascension River District Hospital



ST. CLAIR COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Our Community. Our Environment.

3415 28th Street Port Huron MI 48060

ANNETTE MERCATANTE MD MPH
MEDICAL HEALTH OFFICER

GREG BROWN
ADMINISTRATOR

ADVISORY BOARD OF HEALTH

MARIE J. MULLER
CHAIRPERSON

JOHN F. JONES
VICE CHAIRPERSON

ARNOLD KOONTZ

AMERICA STANDEL

LISA BEEDOR
COUNTY COMMISSIONER

SERVICES

ADMINISTRATION
P 810.987.1000
F 810.985.2150

DENTAL CLINIC
P 810.984.5297
F 810.984.0297

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS
P 810.987.5100
F 810.987.0030

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH
P 810.987.5305
F 810.985.5155

HEALTH EDUCATION
P 810.987.5100
F 810.984.2150

NURSING DIVISION
P 810.987.5300
F 810.985.4187

TEEN HEALTH
P 810.987.1311
F 810.966.2998

WIC PROGRAM
P 810.987.8022
F 810.966.2998



www.scchealth.co

[Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/acchdmi) | [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/acchdmi) | [TikTok](https://www.tiktok.com/@acchdmi) | [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/acchdmi)

February 16, 2022

FOR READING INTO THE RECORD
SCC Board of Commissioners
February 17, 2022 Meeting

Dear SCC Board of Commissioners:

We, as the Advisory Board of Health, strongly oppose the recommendation to separate the roles of the Medical Health Officer and post the new positions prior to the expiration of the current contract.

Dr. Mercatante is a dedicated employee and highly respected physician who has implemented and expanded numerous programs and services in our community. Highlights of this are outlined in Karry Hepting's memo you received on February 9, 2022. Dr. Mercatante's interaction with local physicians and hospitals has been of great value in improving the overall health of the community.

We believe the recommendation to separate the Medical Health Officer position sends the wrong message about the dedication and service of not only Dr. Mercatante and health department staff, but also that of other contracted employees and implies their service is not valued. Proceeding with this recommendation will have a negative effect and severely impact our ability for a quality health department.

Separating the Medical Health Officer position should not be taken lightly. We recommend the contract with Dr. Mercatante be renewed until the succession plan can be further developed and implemented. We welcome the opportunity to speak with you on this matter or any other topic.

Respectfully,

SCC ADVISORY BOARD OF HEALTH

Marie Muller

Marie Muller, Chair

cc. Karry Hepting
Dr. Annette Mercatante

From: [REDACTED] >
Sent: Wednesday, February 16, 2022 12:49 PM
To: Hepting, Karry <KAHepting@stclaircounty.org>
Subject: Fw: Medical Health Officer Position

EMAIL ORIGIN EXTERNAL: Use proper judgment and caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding to this email.

Would you please read this into the record for the minutes at the 2/17/2021 meeting. Thanks

----- Forwarded Message -----

From: [REDACTED] >
To: jbohm@stclaircounty.org, ddunn@stclaircounty.org, gmccconnell@stclaircounty.org
Subject: Medical Health Officer Position
Date: Wed, 16 Feb 2022 17:45:15 GMT

Good afternoon.

We are writing in support of maintaining the Medical Health Officer position as is and renewing the contract of the Dr. Annette Mercatante.

It is not a financially responsible decision to separate the position out of emotion. As a Board of Commissioner you have been trusted with the responsibility to make the best financial decisions for the citizens of this county. You should not be bullied by the emotions of a few constituents.

Dr. Mercatante has had an excellent employment history with the County and continues to serve the community well and we hope will continue to do so in the future.

Respectfully

Robert and Tammie Berger
St. Clair, MI

From: [REDACTED]

Date: February 16, 2022 at 9:49:38 PM EST

To: "Posey, Jennifer" <JPosey@stclaircounty.org>

Subject: Web Contact to Administrator/Controller

Hello, This letter is to discourage splitting Dr Annette Mercatante's position at St Clair County Health Department as Public Health director and public health physician. Please read my letter of support to renew her contract at the St. Clair County Board of commissioners meeting.

I have been a life long resident in St. Clair County. Besides being a retired special education teacher, I have worked as a public health nurse for St. Clair County. While I worked at the health department the position was filled by a full time public health director and part time physician which oversaw 3 counties. Prior to my career as a public health nurse, I was the Infection Control Practitioner at what was Port Huron Hospital. In that position, I worked closely with the health department during the HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis crisis. So I have a thorough understanding of how important public health policies are to keep our community safe.

I feel that we are very fortunate as a county to have a physician also fulfills the role as public health director to oversee see our county's public health policies regarding this pandemic. I could not imagine the disconnected that could have happened if our public health physician was only accessible to our county on a part time basis.

Dr Mercatante is highly qualified for this position. With the shortage of medical staff I can only imagine how difficult it would be for our county to replace a person of Dr Mercatante's caliber and dedication to our county. She and her staff worked 24/7 to ensure that lives were saved and public health policies were implemented. Dr Mercatante did an awesome job keeping our community informed during this pandemic with a novel virus. The pandemic is not done. We as citizens may want to be done with this virus but the virus will only be controlled with mitigation strategies based on science not political outcry . This is not the time to cut back on our resources available to us. Dr Mercatante is a valuable resource in which our county is one of two counties in our state that has expertise in public health along with being a highly qualified physician. Subcontracting a physician from a neighboring county would be a disservice to St Clair county because the other counties do not have the same demographics and needs. Plus, our board of commissioners and public health director would only have part time access to a physician during a global crisis such as the Covid 19 pandemic. It's important not to lose our resources during a pandemic in which this terrible virus which has caused so many unnecessary deaths just because we want to be done with this virus.

Dr Mercatante's primary responsibility is the administration of the health department with authority and responsibility to protect health, prevent disease and disability and further improve the public's health. Dr Mercatante fulfilled these responsibilities and I highly encourage the board of commissioners to vote to renew her contract. Splitting this position would cause an increased financial burden to the tax payers let alone the possibility of the vacancy resulting in a shutdown of the health department until the position is filled based on state approval. This is not the time to have a public health shutdown. I do not believe any of our board of commissioners have a medical degree and rely on the expertise of our public health department to establish policies to keep citizens safe.

Sincerely Laura Jean Troy , BSN MA

From: Kim <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Wednesday, February 16, 2022 10:01 PM
To: Dunn, Duke <ddunn@stclaircounty.org>; Vandenbossche, Dave <dvandenbossche@stclaircounty.org>; McConnell, Greg <gmccconnell@stclaircounty.org>; Bohm, Jeff <jbohm@stclaircounty.org>; Baldwin, Jorja <jbaldwin@stclaircounty.org>; Beedon, Lisa <lbeedon@stclaircounty.org>; Rushing, David <drushing@stclaircounty.org>
Cc: Hepting, Karry <KAHepting@stclaircounty.org>
Subject: Dr. Annette Mercatante

To: Majority of the St. Clair County Commissioners

I'm writing to 100% support our St. Clair County Health Department Director, Dr. Annette Mercatante. Dr. Mercatante's unwavering dedication to the public health of this county, during a once in a century global pandemic, has been above and beyond remarkable to witness. Her job is to protect the health of the public...it is unconscionable to think a termination or censure is even a topic of discussion! Support and respect of our dedicated healthcare workers should be unwavering. They are tired. They deserve our admiration vs admonishment.

Yes, it's been over two years we have been navigating COVID-19. Yes, we are ALL tired, frustrated and some days confused on proper protocols. We may be over and done with COVID-19, but I do not feel COVID-19 is done with us...wearing a mask for the safety and well being for myself and others is a very small price to pay.

Thank you, Dr. Mercatante and staff, for your exemplary dedication to the health and well being of our St. Clair County residents. You must be exhausted and I thank you for your service.

Sincerely,
Kim Judge
Port Huron resident

From: Patricia Jones <[REDACTED]>

Sent: Wednesday, February 16, 2022 12:48 PM

To: McConnell, Greg <gmccconnell@stclaircounty.org>; Baldwin, Jorja <jbaldwin@stclaircounty.org>; Beedon, Lisa <lbeedon@stclaircounty.org>; Dunn, Duke <ddunn@stclaircounty.org>; Bohm, Jeff <jbohm@stclaircounty.org>; Rushing, David <drushing@stclaircounty.org>; Vandenbossche, Dave <dvandenbossche@stclaircounty.org>; Morris, Kristine <kmorris@stclaircounty.org>; Hepting, Karry <KAHepting@stclaircounty.org>

Subject: Re: Public Comment re Dr. Mercatante

Commissioners,

I would like my comment to be read publicly!

Unfortunately, the early scheduling of this meeting does not accommodate those of us that work during the day, thus we cannot be present as we otherwise would be. I certainly hope this wasn't done intentionally to exclude us from this conversation.

While disappointed to see the Commissioner's not censure Dr. Mercatante, I understand why the majority of you voted against it. The censure was brought on a miscommunication between the Dr., Mr. Bohm, and the rest of the Board. A miscommunication is hardly reason for censure. However, the censure should have been brought on the complete overreach of authority and violation of ALL of your constituents' civil liberties and a violation of any Oath to uphold the Constitution and/or Hippocratic Oath to do no harm. And by allowing her to violate the civil liberties of The People, you all have also violated your Oaths of Office.

There must be better checks and balances to prevent public officials from exercising ARBITRARY power over public policy or decision-making whether in times of an actual or fabricated public health emergency. No person holding a public office or appointment has the right to violate the individual rights of any U.S. citizen under ANY circumstance.

By combining the two top Health Department positions of Director and Administrator that Dr. Mercatante currently holds, you have allowed her a position ripe for that of a superiority complex and the egoism that led to this exact abuse and ARBITRARY exercise of power or authority.

It is critical that you follow through on separating these positions and put the bids out as previously discussed. It is also critical that policy is developed and implemented to ensure that proper oversight exists so that no single individual is vested with absolute authority without accountability or liability.

By following through on this, it is an action of good faith towards ALL of your constituents. For the sake of redemption and recompense, I pray you ALL will do the right thing!

Thank you for your time!
Trisha Jones

From: Mary Powell <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Thursday, February 17, 2022 7:35 AM
To: Morris, Kristine <kmorris@stclaircounty.org>
Subject: SPAM: FOIAFOIA: Email to be read into record 2-17-2022

Good Afternoon,

While I was unable to attend the last meeting, I was watching live. I just have a few remarks. Words that I kept hearing were selfish, uneducated, loud, obnoxious, uninformed, bullies. These are words that the supporters of our fair doctor were saying about us Patriots. We have had supporters attack people in public for not wearing a mask, and I recall one "nurse" making threats toward our commissioners, while the only threat that we have stated is that your seat is not safe. But we are the problem? Because we do our research? Because we have read our Constitutions? And because we have made very educated decisions on our own for the health and well-being of ourselves and our families? You do not have to have a bunch of letters after your name to do research and make informed decisions on your own, people do this everyday in their lives. How else would the common person survive? Dr. Mercantant said that we need to move through this as a community. What does that mean? That everyone is supposed to agree with her and her supporters and sit down and shut up? No thank you. I still live in America, where it is still the Land of the Free. I am still legally able to make choices for my family and myself. While I take all recommendations at heart, I do not have to follow those recommendations.

While at the start of this endemic 2 years ago, there were a lot of questions and unknown, we did turn to doctors, scientists, and our elected officials to guide us. There is now a lot of science out there that allows people to make their own choices in their lives. It is no longer; I wear my mask for you. Why? Because Science is showing that the only person protected by wearing a mask is the mask wearer. So, if you want to wear one? Wear it, please. You are free to make your own choices. 2. Cloth masks do not work. #. Lockdowns did not work. 3. The MrNA shot is not as effective as we were led to believe. While it MAY protect those who receive it, it does not protect anyone else. Because a vaccinated person can still catch, carry, and transmit the virus. I know this personally. And finally, society is in trouble. If there are so many uneducated individuals out there, that they must rely on the government to mandate things, or only listen to one doctor's opinions, then we are in trouble. People are always going to disagree; you should not be verbally attacking those who do not agree with you. This is called being civil. The last two years have broken up families, friends, businesses and much more. We must stop the madness. I remember when you could smile at another person and not have to worry about being verbally attacked because I don't have a mask on. Science is forever changing, and people need to make their own health choices.

We are not anti-maskers, or anti-Vaccines. We are Pro- Choice. And as the recent week has shown, this was all not about a virus. It is about control. Suddenly blue states are pulling their mandates, why? The virus didn't go away. Oh that's right, it is election year.

Now, as for not censuring Dr. Mercantant is a large disappointment. She did state, not in exact words, that she would not follow a communication plan. Sadly, because of her title, it seems as if she feels rules do not apply to her. And by not receiving a censure because she had a well scripted speech, she is now free to do whatever she feels to the citizens of St. Clair County.

I am a mom of 4 kids. Meaning, I am the boss of my house. My rules. And thankfully my kids have been taught properly to know this. But lets say, I ask my 16 year old to clean his room. He doesn't. I tell him he is grounded. He then comes to me with a well scripted speech on why he feels he should not have to, or that communication was not clear, or that he told my husband instead of me, do I let him off? Or do I continue the punishment?

This is very clear, punishment. Because if I were to let him off once, he will continue to defy me in every way. Give an inch, they take a mile. I see that happening here. I pray that you continue to review her contract. I pray you make it two positions, held by 2 people, not one. I, as a tax payer, know that this will cost the county more in the long run, but no one person should have that much control in any county. If you feel that she is the appropriate candidate for the positions, then please be sure that her new contract states very specifically that she must communicate prior to issuing mandates. And that she needs to provide the science that proves the need for the decision. Through the last year, she is unable to provide the science that she claims that she has used. Only that the CDC recommends. And now we see that they will be making changes to their recommendations next week. Just in time for the state of the Union on March 1st. Yea, sure, the last two years have not had anything to do with politics. The public is now seeing something different. Finally,

As a reminder, Election Day is 263 days away. You are all up for re-election. Do you think January 1st you will be sitting in those seats? Some of you I hope you continue, but there are a few of you that need to get out of office. It is time for the good ole boys club of St. Clair County be broken up and replaced with individuals who are willing to follow the constitution that swear to uphold and to better our communities.

Thank you,

Mary Powell

From: [REDACTED]

Date: February 17, 2022 at 6:18:59 AM EST

To: "Posey, Jennifer" <JPosey@stclaircounty.org>

Subject: Web Contact to Administrator/Controller

Good afternoon, This letter is to discourage splitting Dr Annette Mercatante's position at St Clair County Health Department as Public Health director and public health physician. Please read my letter of support to renew her contract at the St. Clair County Board of commissioners' meeting.

I have been a life long resident in St. Clair County. Besides being a retired special education teacher, I have worked as a public health nurse for St. Clair County. While I worked at the health department this position was filled by a full time public health director and part time physician which oversaw 3 counties. Prior to my career as a public health nurse, I was the Infection Control Practitioner at what was called Port Huron Hospital. In that position, I worked closely with the health department during the HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis crisis. So I have a thorough understanding of how important public health policies are to keep our community safe.

I feel that we are very fortunate as a county to have a physician who also fulfills the role as public health director to oversee see our county's public health policies regarding this pandemic. I could not imagine the disconnection that could have happened if our public health physician was only accessible to our county on a part time basis.

With her education and experience, Dr Mercatante is highly qualified for this position. With the shortage of medical staff I can only imagine how difficult it would be for our county to replace a person of Dr Mercatante's caliber and dedication to our county. She and her staff worked 24/7 to ensure that lives were saved and public health policies were implemented. Dr Mercatante did an commendable job keeping our community informed during this pandemic with a novel virus. Even though we are exhausted and done with this virus, this virus is not done with us. The pandemic is not simply over because we make that decision. As citizens, we can learn to live with this virus using mitigation strategies based on science which are recommended by our public health department not political outcry. This is not the time to cut back on our resources available to us. Dr Mercatante is a valuable resource in which our county is one of two counties in our state that has expertise in public health along with being a highly qualified physician. Subcontracting a physician from a neighboring county would be a disservice to St Clair county because the other counties do not have the same demographics and needs. Plus, our board of commissioners and public health director would only have part time access to a physician during a global crisis such as the Covid 19 pandemic. It's important not to lose our resources during a pandemic in which this terrible virus which has caused so many unnecessary deaths just because we want to be done with this virus.

Dr Mercatante's primary responsibility is the administration of the health department with authority and responsibility to protect health, prevent disease and disability and further improve the public's health. Dr Mercatante fulfilled these responsibilities and I highly encourage the board of commissioners to vote to renew her contract. Splitting this position would cause an increased financial burden to the tax payers let alone the possibility of the vacancy resulting in a shutdown of the health department until the position is filled based on state approval. This is not the time to have a public health shutdown. I do not believe any of our board of commissioners have a medical degree and rely on the expertise of our public health department to establish policies to keep citizens safe.

Sincerely Laura Jean Troy , BSN MA

From: Carolyn Richards <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Wednesday, February 16, 2022 2:29 PM
To: Morris, Kristine <kmorris@stclaircounty.org>
Subject: SPAM: FOIAFOIA: Comment for BOC meeting 2/17/22
Importance: High

Dear Board of Commissioners,

Since we cannot be there in person due to the time change, we have written this email and request that it be read at the board of commissioners meeting to go on record. This includes 2 different speakers, each entitled to 3 minutes. Thank you for your time!

PART 1 FROM CAROLYN RICHARDS OF ST. CLAIR COUNTY!

I want to express my disappointment with how you have mishandled the actions of the health department director over the past several months.

Not once, but twice, she has put out a public health order with little communication to the board of commissioners, and with little to no direct data to justify a public health order that primarily targeted schools. First, was the quarantine and contact tracing order, which threatened families of the counties, with removal of their children, imprisonment and fines, which you stated was “never meant to be followed through”. Last Fall, you all agreed upon a resolution against mandates of masks and vaccines. You, as a board, also sent a letter to Dr. Mercatante requesting her to rescind the public health order of quarantines. She disregarded both of these and continued with her unilateral, tyrannical mandates, focused only on our least vulnerable population. The only time she rescinded her order is when her funding was threatened by the state. Both times her position was rumored to be questioned or threatened termination, Dr. Mercatante packed the house, so to speak. The first time was in person with several speaking on her behalf. One gentleman that spoke on her behalf, publicly threatened the community, if the board followed through with the rumored “motion to terminate” Dr. Mercatante. That same gentleman disrupted another recent meeting by demanding additional time, that he was not yielded. Yet we are called “the mob”. Then this last meeting, several letters were written and read on the doctor’s behalf, and I must point out that many of these letters included very similar wording, oddly enough, almost as if they were coached. But with that observation aside, there were numerous letters written, but where have these people been for the past 6 months? Do those people have children in school, children at home learning, struggling, children suffering from mental health issues, children having medical issues because of the constant facial masks? If they did, they would have been attending these meetings all along, standing beside us with the same concerns. We parents and citizens have been “packing the house”, speaking, presenting solid data, studies, information, some of it through FOIA requests from St. Clair County and the State itself, yet all of it has been disregarded, time after time. If the people who wrote those emails on behalf of Dr. Mercatante, and this goes for the board as well, had actually listened to all of the data that had been presented by us, took the time to check the sources, and look at the studies and data, you would see, that we are not gathering our research from “facebook” as one letter stated. We are not bullies, we are not a mob, as we were referred to, and we are far from UNEDUCATED. WE ARE PARENTS, WE ARE CITIZENS WITH UNALIENABLE RIGHTS, AND FOR MANY OF US, WE WILL SOON BE PUBLIC OFFICIALS, POSSIBLY REPLACING YOUR SEATS... AND THESE ARE OUR CHILDREN! Thank you!

PART 2 FROM STEVE RICHARDS OF ST. CLAIR COUNTY!

As a continuation from my wife’s comments above...

Per Dr. Mercatante’s contract, that I will remind you will be up for renewal or replacement June 30, 2022, it states that there will be an annual performance evaluation. However, when her annual performance evaluations from 2018-2021 were requested, through FOIA, there were no documents available. So no annual performance evaluations??

I have also discovered through my research, that there is a St. Clair County Health Advisory Board, that also “oversees”, or is supposed to oversee the Health Department. This board was created in 1942 and made up of 5 members, 6 members, including the health officer (which is also Dr. Mercatante, considering she holds this position as well). These members are to be appointed for a term of 2 years, made up of community members, and only one is a medical professional, and they are compensated. So with a little bit of digging, we were able to find the Health advisory board: Marie Muller has been a member since 1998, John Jones, member since 2010, Monica Standel, member since 2015, Arnold Koontz, member since 2016, Lisa Beedon, since 2021, and most recently, Dr. Sushma Reddy, appointed 1/2022. These terms seem to be longer than 2 years. This board is supposed to meet monthly and submit their minutes to the County Administrator. I have FOIA’d the minutes, so we will see what I receive. Dr. Mercatante is unilaterally running this county. As many stores, stadiums, buildings, venues, etc have been packed full, maskless, she pushed masks onto our children. Did any of you notice what data she presented to show “proof that the masks worked”? She used her own “predicted numbers of cases”. Really? That is the data she is going by? A number that she pulls out of God knows where, that happens to be higher than the “masks are optional” month? Yet we had a parent contact several school districts for actual case numbers, showing the cases were higher in the schools after masks were mandated, than before.

What we asked you as an elected board, is to hold her actions and insubordination accountable. You are the overseeing committee. What you just proved to us, is money and power from these local oligarchs, held more weight over your heads, than the public, who’s children who have been affected. I hope you separate the position of Health director and health officer, at the very least, but ultimately, post her position to obtain other candidates to fill her position once her contract is up on June 30,2022.

Sincerely,
Carolyn and Steve Richards

From: sushma reddy [REDACTED] >
Sent: Thursday, February 17, 2022 10:32 AM
To: Jeff Bohm <jeff.bohm@yahoo.com>
Cc: Hepting, Karry <KAHepting@stclaircounty.org>
Subject: Please share with the other Commissioners. Please read into the minutes of the meeting

Dear Jeff:

As a physician and a concerned citizen actively involved in our community, I strongly oppose the recommendation to separate the positions of Medical Health Officer and Medical Director and post new positions prior to the expiration of the current contract.

Dr Mercatante is an outstanding, dedicated and highly respected physician passionate about improving the health of our community. She is actively involved in our medical society both locally and at the state level and has built close relationships with local hospitals, physicians and community leaders. These relationships have been crucial in improving the health of our community.

I strongly feel that that this recommendation to separate the position of Medical Health Officer will also have a negative impact on our health department and other contracted county employees creating a feeling of mistrust and loss of value. This will severely affect our ability to have a quality health department and recruit qualified individuals.

I respectfully request that the contract with Dr Mercatante be renewed.

Regards
Sushma Reddy, MD

From: Julie Wessel <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Thursday, February 17, 2022 11:29 AM
To: Morris, Kristine <kmorris@stclaircounty.org>
Subject: Letter for public comment at 2/17/22 BOC meeting

I am unable to attend this afternoon's Board of Commissioners meeting due to the time change and would like to request the following letter to be read during the public comment portion of the meeting. Thank you.

St. Clair County Board of Commissioners:

Since I am unable to attend today's meeting in person due to the time change, I thank you for allowing me to share my concerns regarding the actions of the public health officer and medical director over the past 2 years in this manner.

I am disappointed and extremely frustrated at Mercatante's continuous refusal to provide any data to support the mandates she puts in place, or to give any consideration whatsoever to the vast amount of data that has been presented to her as well as the board by the concerned citizens of this county.

At the Feb. 3rd meeting, several of Mercatante's supporters repeatedly stated that wearing masks is a small convenience that we must endure in order to protect the world from Covid. If only that was true. Wearing a mask is NOT a small convenience, nor does it protect anyone from any virus, especially Covid. Thanks to all the doctors who spoke out to defend Mercatante's actions, I now have a very long list of doctors in this county who are either politically corrupt, willfully ignorant, or both. Whichever they are, I know who me and my family will NOT go to for medical care.

Mercatante has refused to look at any of the several peer-reviewed studies that prove that masks are dangerous to the wearer. At a previous meeting, a citizen demonstrated, in person, how quickly a person's CO2 levels rise when wearing a mask. The science has already established that breathing in high concentrations of CO2 is dangerous. Still, Mercatante has continued to push mask wearing by everyone, and forced it upon our children for an entire school year last year and then again for four weeks last month. Do you, the board, not see this as concerning in any way?

At a board meeting last fall, I suggested holding a public discussion with professionals who are credentialed to advise on protecting the public against all sorts of pathogens, including aerosolized viruses, such as Covid. If Mercatante and her team will not take it upon themselves to review the data presented to them, perhaps they could learn from a one-on-one discussion. The public could learn the facts as well. I didn't expect that this would happen, and, it didn't. That says a lot about how much the leaders of this county want to stop this stupidity. It shows a willingness to remain ignorant on the part of the board as well as Mercatante. Perhaps you don't see it this way, but the public does. Why would anyone, especially leadership, want to remain ignorant on something that has negatively affected every single person in this county on such a large scale, and sharply divided us as well? It's something to think about.

Mercatante's refusal to consider any data from nationally recognized virologists and epidemiologists to effectively fight Covid is why I disagree with Kerry Hepting's recommendation to automatically renew Mercatante's contract. We want whoever holds the public health officer and medical director positions to willingly consider ALL of the data that pertains to a public health situation, not just be a "yes" man to the dictates of the MDHHS. We want a doctor who will use their medical knowledge and experience to call out the truth, even if it contradicts the prevailing narrative.

Thank you for your time.

Respectfully,
Julie Wessel

From: John M Pelachyk MD <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Thursday, February 17, 2022 12:39 PM
To: Hepting, Karry <KAHepting@stclaircounty.org>
Subject: Public Health Officer Position

Please read this letter into the minutes of the meeting:

Dear Members of the St. Clair County Board of Commissioners,

As a physician, citizen of this community and President of the St. Clair County Medical Society, I feel that I must reach out to the Board of Commissioners regarding the question of separation of the positions of Public Health Officer and Medical Director for St. Clair County, as well as the renewal of Dr. Annette Mercatante's employment contract.

Karry Hepting succinctly documented a detailed chronology of Dr. Mercatante's accomplishments throughout her employment with St. Clair County in a Memo posted on the St. Clair County website. Prior to voting on these two vital decisions, I think that it would be very beneficial for each Commissioner to read this document.

To paraphrase Ms. Hepting, "Dr. Mercatante has been a loyal dedicated employee of St. Clair County since 2008. During her time at the county she has implemented and expanded numerous programs and services to meet the changing needs of our community. She has increased communication to the Board on Health Department Activities. She has significantly increased Public Health's community involvement with staff participating in more than 65 different community coalitions, task forces and committees. This type of community involvement and public outreach did not exist prior to her becoming the County's Medical Health Officer. In 2018, nearly 100 individuals representing various sectors in the community were invited to participate in the evaluation of the Community Health Needs Assessment results to formulate a Community Health Improvement Plan to help determine our greatest Public Healthcare needs.

It is important to look at all of the Health Department's accomplishments under her leadership over the last 14 years and not base a decision solely on the communication of two decisions made during a global pandemic where everyone is working toward the same goal of keeping the community safe and returning to normalcy."

Dr. Mercatante has been an exceptional and incredibly community-involved Medical Health Officer throughout her employment, and her leadership has been pivotal in reducing morbidity and mortality in our county throughout the pandemic. I thus fully agree with Ms. Hepting's eloquently stated recommendation and I strongly support Dr. Mercatante and the renewal of her current employment contract. I further urge Board members to vote against separating the roles of Public Health Officer and Medical Director.

Respectfully Submitted,

John M. Pelachyk, MD

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John M Pelachyk, MD, FAAD
President
St Clair County Medical Society