



MINUTES
St. Clair County Board of Commissioners
Human Services Committee

Board of Commissioners' Room
County Administrative Office Building, 2nd Floor
200 Grand River Avenue
Port Huron, MI 48060

March 5, 2026 at 6:00 PM

1. Roll Call/Opening/Pledge of Allegiance

Commissioner Beedon called the meeting to order at 06:03 PM.

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Commissioner Beedon.

Present: Kerry Ange, Lisa Beedon, Joi Torello, Paul Zeller, Dave Rushing, Dave Vandebossche and Steve Simasko

Absent: None

2. Additions/Deletions/Changes to the Agenda

3. Citizens to be Heard

Steve Fair, Port Huron - re: Community Mental Health Board application

Jeff Pemberton, Port Huron - re: Support for Steve Fair for appointment to Community Mental Health Board

Tracie Eschenburg, Marysville - re: Support for Steve Fair for appointment to Community Mental Health Board

Mindy Fair, Port Huron - re: Support for Steve Fair for appointment to Community Mental Health Board

Tara Russel, Lakeport - re: Community Mental Board application

Nancy Thomson - re: Community Mental Health Board application

Steven Lucas, St. Clair Twp. - re: Support for Steve Fair for appointment to

Community Mental Health Board

Vicki Blackburn, Port Huron - re: NAACP Cease and Desist notice

Bill Ford, Wales - re: Veterans Affairs Board application

Patrick Thompson, Columbus - re: Veterans Affairs Board application

Dan Crocker, Port Huron - re: Veterans Affairs Board application

Will Kriewall, Port Huron - re: Health Department

Kathy Swantek, St. Clair - re: Combining Health Department positions

Dave Allison - re: Medical Director and combining Health Department positions

Emric LaTulip, Port Huron - re: Teen Health Center discontinuation

Libby Prill, China Twp - re: Combining Health Department positions

Rebecca Campau, Fort Gratiot - re: Health Department

Kristen Hays, St. Clair Township - re: Health Department

Joanna Jones, Port Huron - re: Health Department

Kim Scheible, Fort Gratiot - re: Combining Health Department positions

David Nowicki - re: Dr. Nevin and combining Health Department positions

Fred Fuller, Yale - re: Combining Health Department positions

Kerry Darden, Marysville - re: Health Department issues

Angela Defrain, Fort Gratiot - re: Solar Regulations and Health Department issues

Tracy Birgy, Marysville - re: Health Department issues

A. Written Comments

4. Updates

None

5. Conceptual Initiatives

None

6. Old Business

None

7. New Business

A. Library Board — Appointment

Moved by Commissioner Vandenbossche, supported by Commissioner Torello, to nominate all candidates for the Library Board and forward the applications to the Regular Board meeting for appointment. Carried - Voice Vote 7-0. Aye:

Commissioner Beedon, Commissioner Simasko, Commissioner Torello, Commissioner Rushing, Commissioner Vandenbossche, Commissioner Ange, Commissioner Zeller Nay: None

B. Veterans Affairs Board — Appointment

Moved by Commissioner Rushing, supported by Commissioner Vandenbossche, to forward all applications received for the Veterans Affairs Board to the Regular Full Board meeting for consideration for appointment for the remainder of a four-year term expiring 12/31/2029. Carried - Voice Vote 7-0. Aye: Commissioner Beedon, Commissioner Simasko, Commissioner Torello, Commissioner Rushing, Commissioner Vandenbossche, Commissioner Ange, Commissioner Zeller Nay: None

C. Library Website Redesign Proposal - Hadrout

Moved by Commissioner Vandenbossche, supported by Commissioner Ange, to forward to the Regular Board meeting the recommendation to approve the Hadrout Website Development Proposal for the Library in the amount of \$14,500 and yearly hosting and maintenance costs in the amount of \$1,340. Carried - Voice Vote 7-0. Aye: Commissioner Beedon, Commissioner Simasko, Commissioner Torello, Commissioner Rushing, Commissioner Vandenbossche, Commissioner Ange, Commissioner Zeller Nay: None

D. Community Mental Health Board — Appointments

Moved by Commissioner Torello, supported by Commissioner Rushing, to nominate all candidates for appointment to the Community Mental Health Board, each for three-year terms expiring 03/31/2029 and forward the applications to the Regular Board meeting for appointment. Carried - Voice Vote 7-0. Aye: Commissioner Beedon, Commissioner Simasko, Commissioner Torello, Commissioner Rushing, Commissioner Vandenbossche, Commissioner Ange, Commissioner Zeller Nay: None

E. Health Officer/Medical Director Position Structure

Moved by Commissioner Rushing, supported by Commissioner Torello, to approve the recommendation of the Health Advisory Board to combine the Medical and Health Officer positions and forward to the Regular Board meeting for implementation discussion. After much discussion, Commissioner Rushing withdrew his motion and Commissioner Torello withdrew her support.

8. Other Human Services Matters

None

9. Information Only

None

10. Receive and File Packets

Moved by Commissioner Rushing, supported by Commissioner Zeller, to receive and file packets and all information presented. Carried - Voice Vote 7-0. Aye: Commissioner Beedon, Commissioner Simasko, Commissioner Torello, Commissioner Rushing, Commissioner Vandenbossche, Commissioner Ange, Commissioner Zeller Nay: None

11. Adjournment

Moved by Commissioner Ange, supported by Commissioner Vandenbossche, to adjourn at 07:45 PM. Carried - Voice Vote 7-0. Aye: Commissioner Beedon, Commissioner Simasko, Commissioner Torello, Commissioner Rushing, Commissioner Vandenbossche, Commissioner Ange, Commissioner Zeller Nay; None

County Commissioners,

I am a life long St. Clair County resident and someone who also worked 30 years at the Health Department until my retirement in 2025.

Even though I'm retired, I stay interested in health department matters. I continue to do so as a community member and because I care about public health issues.

I am appalled at the scrutiny the health department is receiving by many of you, the newly appointed Board of Health members and many of yours/theirs constituents. Some people are painting Liz King as this lying corrupt leader and portraying Dr. Nevin as some kind of savior. Liz has served the county for over 20+ years. She is also a lifelong county resident. She has always represented the health department in the utmost professional, level headed and conscientious way. Not to mention how fiscally responsible the health department has been each budget year, says alot. In my years of working with Liz NEVER did I witness anything alarming, disturbing, malicious or in poor taste. She has always been a respected medical professional, a dedicated educated public health nurse, health advocate, leader and someone who has always worked hard and conscientiously for the betterment of health for all of our residents.

Dr. Nevin appears to only represent a certain group of individuals, not the "whole" population. The group of people with whom he appears to feel comfortable with are those who listen to his rhetoric (out of the playbook of RFK) and those who stand along side his views and opinions. He claims he speaks for the majority of the population. This is false. He does not speak for me and everyone else in this county who are watching this craziness happen before our eyes. He has been working to dismantle the programs and services at the health department piece by piece. He will continue to do so until its bare bones and to his own satisfaction and comfort level. Do you want a bare bones health department? I don't. The leadership staff has worked hard to do more for the betterment of our residents. He acts like he discounts those things. He's more of a politician than a public health leader and advocate. He's not from this area, has no roots here, has no children in our schools or any children of his own, and was moving to another state after he initially resigned. Then he rescinded his resignation because some of you asked him to stay. That seems wrong that this happened. In one video he was in, he mentions "complaints" and "grievances" that have been brought up about him. The public doesn't hear about these. That's unsettling to hear that a man in his position has complaints or grievances about him. That doesn't seem right, Does it?

Now the BOH made the recommendation to recombine the Health Officer and Medical Director position. Then Commissioner Rushing moves this to the BOC agenda for March. Wait! What? Dave Rushing, a few years ago said the Medical Health Officer position “was too much power for one individual to have” and “that very few health departments had this position.” We shouldn’t do this. Now it’s being reconsidered? If you vote to recombine the positions after the BOC purposely separated them years ago, to eliminate “such power” etc., you will be publicly admitting you were wrong and that you never should have done that to Dr. Mercatante. (And please don’t say she could have reapplied like you did back then- that is so degrading). Again this looks staged. It appears shady and wrong that the thought is even being entertained. It looks as if the BOH and some BOC are trying to open the door for Dr. Nevin to take over. Why? Is this because he is a man? Because he is a doctor? He is not qualified to represent the county in this leadership role nor is the right person for this job. I strongly disagree and ask you NOT to vote to recombine the position. Leave the positions separate as they are now. Trust in Liz King. She is doing her job and doing it exceptionally well. She is the right person leading the health department and should stay on in her current role as such.

I also wanted to mention how disappointing it has been to watch Commissioner Kerry Ange’s actions. Specifically her behavior in handling her Teen Health Center situation. I agree with censuring her that was presented at the last BOC meeting. Not following the policies and procedures on how items are supposed to be submitted for BOC meetings is wrong. This whole situation is fishy. As if this was staged for her and Dr. Nevin to get personal agenda(s) passed. She should have followed the rules. Then months passed before she did anything appears calculated. Why didn’t she address it right away with the Nursing Supervisor or other leadership staff as that would have been the appropriate approach. They would have addressed any issues right away. I also watched the SCC Republican Committee meeting where she spoke at about this issue and Dr. Nevin was there commenting too. I was alarmed at hers and his lack of professionalism. They painted the Teen Health Center as if it was some dirty sexual predator place exploiting young children because of the “evil state.” Such “BS” for anyone who knows that for the past 40 years this center has been run with the utmost professionalism, integrity, and with highly trained qualified compassionate medical staff who truly care about all adolescents. That “certain pamphlets” out of lots of other ones in the clinic made headlines seemed premeditated. A way to make the Clinic look bad so Dr. Nevin could set up his next move. Don’t get me wrong, I am all for expanding healthcare access in this county (its needed) but unfortunately feel very unsettled with how this went down. I don’t have a lot of faith that an FQHC will be willing to jump right in and take over in October. I don’t think they will have the commitment and compassion that the health department staff had. We shall see.

Hey how about Dr. Nevin work with the medical community here to help recruit more medical professionals to come to St. Clair County??!!

Furthermore Dr. Nevin appears to lack experience and a comfort level in working with ALL population types. If you work in public health, you really should be able to work with all population types. If he can't or won't, it's not in the best interest of this county to keep someone so rigid and limited in his position. I can't imagine what it would be like for someone who looked different, who had a different sexual orientation, who held a different belief system than he has or who has ever seen his interview's or interactions to feel like they can relate or feel they could talk to him. He comes across that he is not an ally or welcoming to all; only to "certain" people who think like him.

By the way, I know you already know this. Sexual exploitation of our children is not happening because of pamphlets or questions on an assessment in a medical clinic setting. It's happening because it's in our children's faces every day. Turn on the news, watch a television show, see a movie, look at advertisements, listen to music, follow things on social media or enter a search in Google and your child will see and learn more than anywhere else. Please stop blaming the state or your local health department.

In closing, I ask you again, to please not vote to recombine the position again. Please do not allow our county's public health system to keep moving backwards. Please stay mindful and keep watching closely as Dr. Nevin works to discredit and dismantle more health department programs and services. It's not right. The BOC who acts as his "boss" shouldn't let that happen. If it does continue or it appears as if you don't care what's happening, it's a very poor reflection on you as well.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Michaluk

Hello Commissioners,

I am writing in regards to the consideration to recombine the positions of Medical Director and Health Officer.

The “covid pandemic” was an eye opening era for myself, for my family, and certainly, for our community. We realized that it wasn’t about Public Health, it was about control of the masses.

I was one of the first citizens to demand that the positions be separated, when Dr. Mercantante held both positions during Covid. At that time, Dr. Mercantante was the single individual that held both positions, and she did this without the oversight of the Health Advisory Board. I was able to prove this when I had FOIA’d all of the meeting minutes from the Health Advisory Board Meetings from 1/1/2020-2/2022. I received 2 meeting minutes, one from December 2020 and one from December 2021. Neither one of those meetings were attended by Dr. Mercantante, and there was no discussion or oversight on Dr. Mercantante's tyrannical quarantines, masking and closing of schools. In fact, when I was appointed to the Health Advisory Board and attended my first meeting, one of the long standing members, Marie Muller even stated “before Dr. Nevin, we never even met the medical director/health officer”. That tells me that she did not get the approval of the Health Advisory Board, or the Board of Commissioners to do what she was doing in our community. I also had FOIA’d her annual performance evaluations, however, the response I received was “no document exists”.

In the Fall of 2021, Dr. Mercantante was using threats and coercion for the quarantine letters to students and families, yet did not allow Due Process. Even after a resolution by the Board of Commissioners and a letter to the doctor requesting her to rescind the orders, she still did not rescind until her funding was threatened by the state.

So Dr. Mercantante had no advisory board oversight, held both positions, had no performance evaluation ever completed, and was defiant to the Board of Commissioners. At that time, combining the positions was the only thing that we as citizens could demand, in order to have some sort of checks and balance with the tyranny that was going on.

I understand the hesitancy of recombining these two positions. I was hesitant myself initially. However, I am confident that the community, the current Health Advisory Board Members, and the Current Board of Commissioners, has learned from past mistakes. The Health Advisory Board certainly functions very different now, vs. how it functioned 5 years ago. Since my term began on the Health Advisory Board, Dr. Nevin has brought every one of his memorandums to the board for our review and approval. He even requests approval to send out notifications to community providers with information, even though the board

chair had told him that he doesn't really need board permission to do so. I am confident in Dr. Nevin's ability, knowledge, professional and medical judgement over the county public health and believe that he will collaborate and request approval for decisions with the Health Advisory Board, as well as act within the oversight of the Board of Commissioners.

I hope this gives some reassurance and background on past experiences.

Sincerely,

Carolyn Richards

District 1