



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**

August 6, 2026 at 6:00 PM

1. Roll Call/Opening/Pledge of Allegiance

Commissioner Zeller called the meeting to order at 06:00 PM.

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Commissioner Zeller.

Present: Kerry Ange, Joi Torello, Paul Zeller, Dave Rushing, Dave Vandenbossche and Steve Simasko

Absent: Lisa Beedon

2. Additions/Deletions/Changes to the Agenda

Moved by Commissioner Simasko, supported by Commissioner Rushing, to add the Michigan Conservation District Presentation to the agenda. Carried - Voice Vote 6-0. Aye: Commissioner Simasko, Commissioner Torello, Commissioner Rushing, Commissioner Vandenbossche, Commissioner Ange, Commissioner Zeller Nay: None

Moved by Commissioner Simasko, supported by Commissioner Rushing, to remove the final action from the Deputy Medical Director manning table change. Carried - Voice Vote 6-0. Aye: Commissioner Simasko, Commissioner Torello, Commissioner Rushing, Commissioner Vandenbossche, Commissioner Ange, Commissioner Zeller Nay: None

Moved by Commissioner Rushing, supported by Commissioner Simasko, to approve the agenda as revised. Carried - Voice Vote 6-0. Aye: Commissioner Simasko, Commissioner Torello, Commissioner Rushing, Commissioner Vandenbossche, Commissioner Ange, Commissioner Zeller Nay: None

3. Citizens to be Heard

Libby Prill, China Twp - re: Health Department

Dorothy Yope, St. Clair - re: Dr. Nevin

Rachele Bonelli, St. Clair - re: Medical Director contract

Jim Frank, Lakeport - re: Medical Director contract

Katie Pringle, Port Huron - re: Medical Director contract

Jessica Baker, Marysville - re: Medical Director contract

Kristin Hayes, St. Clair - re: Medical Director contract

Angie Defrain, Fort Gratiot - re: Accusations re: Medical Director contract

Mary Lou Creamer, Port Huron re: Health Department issues

Carol Miller re: Dr. Nevin and Publication advertising

Patti Samar, Port Huron re: Medical Director contract

Kevin Watkins, Wales Township re: Health Department contracts

Elizabeth Ely, Port Huron re: Duties of Board re: Dr. Nevin

A. Citizen Written Comments

4. Updates

None

5. Conceptual Initiatives

None

6. Old Business

None

7. New Business

A. Health Officer Contract - FINAL ACTION

Moved by Commissioner Rushing, supported by Commissioner Torello, to move as a Committee of the Whole, for final action, to approve the Employment Agreement for Elizabeth King, Health Officer, for a term of three years. Carried - Roll Call Vote 5-1. Aye: Commissioner Simasko, Commissioner Torello, Commissioner Rushing, Commissioner Ange, Commissioner Zeller Nay: Commissioner Vandenbossche

B. Medical Director Contract — FINAL ACTION

Moved by Commissioner Rushing, supported by Commissioner Torello, to move as a Committee of the Whole, for final action, to approve the Employment

Agreement for Elizabeth King, Health Officer, for a term of three years. Carried - Roll Call Vote 5-1. Aye: Commissioner Simasko, Commissioner Torello, Commissioner Rushing, Commissioner Ange, Commissioner Zeller Nay: Commissioner Vandenbossche

C. Manning Table Change — Deputy Medical Director - FINAL ACTION

Moved by Commissioner Simasko, supported by Commissioner Rushing, to forward to the Regular Board meeting the recommendation approve the manning table change to remove a vacant nurse practitioner position and replace it with a Deputy Medical Director.

Moved by Commissioner Ange to table the manning table change. Motion died for lack of a second.

Original motion carried - Roll Call Vote 4-2. Aye: Commissioner Simasko, Commissioner Torello, Commissioner Rushing, Commissioner Zeller Nay: Commissioner Vandenbossche, Commissioner Ange

D. Library Board — Reappointment

Moved by Commissioner Rushing, supported by Commissioner Ange, to forward to the Regular Board meeting the recommendation to reappoint Elizabeth Buckly to the Library Board as District 2 Representative, for a five-year term expiring 08/26/2031. Carried - Voice Vote 6-0. Aye: Commissioner Simasko, Commissioner Torello, Commissioner Rushing, Commissioner Vandenbossche, Commissioner Ange, Commissioner Zeller Nay: None

E. Spicer Group Contract Renewal - Health Department

Moved by Commissioner Simasko, supported by Commissioner Torello, to forward to the Regular Board meeting the recommendation to approve a two-year contract renewal with Spicer Group in the total amount of \$94,280. Carried - Voice Vote 6-0. Aye: Commissioner Simasko, Commissioner Torello, Commissioner Rushing, Commissioner Vandenbossche, Commissioner Ange, Commissioner Zeller Nay: None

F. Health Department 2026 Plan of Organization

Moved by Commissioner Rushing, supported by Commissioner Simasko, to forward to the Regular Board meeting the recommendation to approve the Health Department 2026 Plan of Organization. Carried - Voice Vote 6-0. Aye: Commissioner Simasko, Commissioner Torello, Commissioner Rushing, Commissioner Vandenbossche, Commissioner Ange, Commissioner Zeller Nay: None

G. Michigan Conservation Districts — Presentation

The Blue Water Conservation District gave a brief presentation regarding the services and programs they have provided over the past year.

8. Other Human Services Matters

None

9. Information Only

None

10. Receive and File Packets

Moved by Commissioner Rushing, supported by Commissioner Torello, to receive and file packets and all information presented. Carried - Voice Vote 6-0. Aye: Commissioner Simasko, Commissioner Torello, Commissioner Rushing, Commissioner Vandebossche, Commissioner Ange, Commissioner Zeller Nay: None

11. Adjournment

Moved by Commissioner Vandebossche, supported by Commissioner Rushing, to adjourn at 07:10 PM. Carried - Voice Vote 6-0. Aye: Commissioner Simasko, Commissioner Torello, Commissioner Rushing, Commissioner Vandebossche, Commissioner Ange, Commissioner Zeller Nay: None

Good Afternoon BOC Members,

My name is Jennifer Michaluk, I am a lifelong St. Clair County resident and I live in Port Huron.

Please include my letter in tonight's Human Services Committee meeting minutes dated, 8/6/26.

First off, I wanted to thank Commissioner Beedon. Thank you for being the lone Commissioner who verbally acknowledged that there is a need to listen to the staff at the health department and make an attempt to try and get to a resolution on the issues. Thank you for making the motion to discuss this as an agenda item at the September meeting. I appreciate you showing concern for the employees that as a county commissioner you also represent.

As you are all aware, different staff have come forward saying that there are past and current workplace concerns at the health department. There is a common denominator and they circle around the actions of the Medical Director, Dr. Nevin. The nurses union asked for an independent, third party investigation to be conducted. This is not an unreasonable ask in my opinion. I, as a tax paying, registered voting, county resident would support this. I watch or attend your meetings. I see you approve county expenditures each month. I've seen you support things that you know could have the potential to bring a lawsuit against the county (i.e., solar issues). So the thought of spending county dollars to do an independent, third party investigation in a county department where staff, YOUR county staff, are struggling and saying help us there IS a problem, is justifiable to me. A yes vote from all of you to approve this would make total sense. I do not agree however when I hear a few people saying investigate the whole department, Liz King, the finances, the etc.. That feels like a deflection from the issues brought forward. The concerns presented by the staff were/are about the Medical Director and his actions. If other complaints, etc., came in from staff about her and those things, then I could see otherwise.

I attended the last meeting. When Commissioner Simasko spoke about the investigation "he did on his own" surrounding the past complaints it came off to me like he was negating the anonymous complaints/issues. That the errors of the past HR Director and what was mentioned in her "report" or her "notes" weren't justified. Her errors are not the employees fault! Yet his tone came off dismissive. The feeling I had was that If it wasn't for Commissioner Beedon speaking up again after he spoke, I think they would still be ignored. However, it doesn't look like issues can remain that way. I read some other complaints pertaining to Dr. Nevin that I saw online from a FOIA request somebody requested and shared. Yikes, those were very concerning to read. I say this with a heavy heart, wow, what

a stand up guy you have representing our county health department. What an embarrassment his actions are to the department and this county. If the complaints and/or concerns from the nurses, clients, state and community partners weren't enough, these latest staff complaints indicate that there really is a problem and it's pointing to him.

Also on the agenda tonight pertaining to Dr. Nevin's contract. I am aware that Liz King and his contract auto renewed. However, with everything going on surrounding Dr. Nevin and a new investigation pending, not to mention waiting for the outcome of the other workplace litigation hearing at the state level, I have a difficulty with the thought of you approving his "additional asks or special accommodations". I'll summarize why because in my last letter to you, I succinctly stated what and where they were listed and reasons why.

I am asking you to again pause on (or not approve at all) the items listed such as: Not adding more hours to his contract which equates to more pay; Not removing oversight of him by Liz King, Health Officer as she is plenty qualified to do so; In area 6.D, the Health Officer is and should remain the lead in all of those matters and the one who should be giving the guidance and direction, with input from the MD, not the other way around; In the section where it states "When professional or philosophical differences or other disagreements develop, etc.," aren't these changes in conflict with the Health Officer's job description and the Michigan Public Health Code?; Furthermore I am still unclear on this sentence pertaining to the contract terms, "would be terminable without cause only by mutual agreement or by a unanimous vote of all seven County Commissioners." This all seven verbiage still doesn't make sense to me.

Lastly in the matter of considering a new Deputy Medical Director position for Dr. Nevin. A part-time Medical Director needs a Deputy Director? He has already managed to cut numerous services and wants to get rid of more. If Dr. Nevin was able to perform regular medical duties, I may think differently. However with no experience seeing patients or providing clinical care, it does not seem appropriate. Please ask yourselves, what has he really done to benefit the department as a whole? There is really nothing positive I can list. I am skeptical a Deputy would change his ways. In my opinion it would be more economical for the county to hire a new Medical Director. Someone who is qualified to work in local public health, more clinically experienced, has the skillset to work well with others, and is better suited for the overall role.

Thank you.

Jennifer Michaluk
Port Huron, MI

*I request that this be made part of the record for the 8/6/26 meeting, as I will not arrive in time to read it at public comment. I appreciate all of your time, and tried to be as brief as possible given the myriad of issues at hand.

Commissioners,

On Thursday, July 23, 2026, health department nursing staff stood before you with the full support of the MNA and respectfully requested an investigation into complaints made to the anonymous hotline the county instituted. Chair Simasko seems very focused on the fact that the complaints to the anonymous hotline were, in fact, anonymous; but there appears to be a pattern in many reports of the fear of, or reported threat of retaliation for speaking out, including an unfair labor practice charge for retaliation.

Nurses stood before you, gave their names, and told you there is a harassment and retaliation problem at the health department. The staff, which likely included some of those previous anonymous reporters, are asking for a full, impartial investigation regarding the medical director's conduct. The accused, and those that cannot even feign impartiality on this issue, would rather not.

Make no mistake, this county is "the accused" as much as Dr Nevin is, due to your lack of action. Interesting optics, right? The board and Dr Nevin, the accused, are not interested in an investigation of Dr. Nevin's conduct. "It's expensive!" With all due respect none of you should be talking about lost funds after what you've presided over for the last year. Dr. Nevin has cost this county's residents many hundreds of thousands of dollars. Lawsuits. Grants returned, lost to this county. A health department that no longer easily supports itself because of lost billing revenue from closed school clinics. School districts begging for the health department to help with sports physicals, and being told no, parents should find somewhere else. This is what you've created, not to mention, the potential liability to the county, if any of the alleged conduct with staff rises to the level of an actionable lawsuit.

In response to the nurses, Chair Simasko stated the policy and procedure for reporting harassment at the last meeting, repeatedly. He failed to include the sentences below that which state:

*"Human Resources, Department Head and/or Supervisor must be proactive in responding to any act of discrimination or harassment as defined in this Policy **even absent an employee complaint**. In other words, it is the responsibility of the Department Head and/or Supervisor to take whatever action necessary to maintain a work environment free of hostility as defined by this policy."*

I appreciate that Chair Simasko believes he's a crackshot investigator. What matters here is whether you think he is an impartial investigator, and whether you think his speaking to everyone EXCEPT any nurses, or supervisors of nurses, constituted a full investigation of the complaints. Not even a quick sit down with a nursing supervisor to ask how she feels her employees see their working environment. The HR Investigation was conducted by your HR, with anonymity granted, but it was NOT an investigation of anonymous complaints. Employees came forward, they provided supporting documentation, they gave their names to HR. The report was written from those interviews and documentation. Dr. Nevin's supervisor reported concerns, with dates and times and places. Patient complaints were fully documented with dates and times and places. MDHHS complaints were addressed and anonymous hotline complaints backed up MDHHS complaints and concerns over Dr. Nevin's lack of care and understanding of policy and accreditation issues. Somewhere along the way it was "decided" that since Chairman Simasko did not see all of that himself, it didn't warrant a thorough investigation. Should we all be asking why the board couldn't be trusted with identifying information either?

You are included in the county policy, can you defend yourself as not knowing there are any issues with employees at the HD? Have you done "whatever is necessary to maintain a work environment free of hostility..."? Is the statement that the grievance that Chairman Simasko has linked to the previous complaints was dropped, he "assumes for lack of merit" a fact? I, Sherry Mercurio, assume it was dropped because the complainants were fearful they would be retaliated against if they came forward in a hearing. One or neither of us is right, would you like to make a decision based on that?

I am urging you to do the right thing for the employees of this county. Chair Simasko, lawyer that he is, has no business deciding he is better at investigating employee complaints than the HR professionals and the county administrator. Just as we would not call HR to defend us in court, we don't need to call chairman Simasko to investigate employee complaints. This board was asked repeatedly, to act upon seeing that a full investigation was done - the chairman decided he should do it himself, in the way he wanted to do it.

The optics of approving a new contract which favors what Dr Nevin has requested, and giving him a deputy he does not in any way need results in terrible optics for each of you while you know serious allegations are now pending. Hire a NP or a PA to fill the spot, but there is NO justification for Dr Nevin needing a deputy medical director given all the services he has cut from residents. Maybe if he stops insisting on attending community meetings that are more suited for delegation? He is a part time employee there to provide medical direction when it's needed. If he can't do that in that time frame then we should find someone who can. We're not his experiment or his bank, and we're not yours either.

You have a responsibility to the employees of this county and your constituents expect you to uphold that. For the protection of all directly involved parties, order an outside, third party investigation of health department complaints since 2024, regarding Dr. Nevin's alleged conduct. Get an independent opinion on the toxic culture issues that appear to be ongoing. Fulfill your duty to provide a work environment free from hostility.

Thank you,

Sherry Mercurio

Clyde Township