ST. LAWRENCE COUNTY BOARD OF HEALTH
October 20th, 2026

The St. Lawrence County Board of Health (hereafter known as SLCBOH) met on Tuesday, October 20th in the Large Conference Room, Human Services Center, Canton, New York 13617.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Rita Curran, NP, Dr. Gregory Healey, Nancy Potter, Dr. Kathleen Terrence, Dr. Jessica Scillieri Smith; DVM

MEMBERS EXCUSED: Dr. Andrew Williams,, Mark Deavers, Carly Zimmermann; Deputy Director.

OTHERS PRESENT: Erin Streiff; Public Health Director, Dayton King, Gavin Conners

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:03pm

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Upon motion by Nancy Potter and seconded by Rita Curran, the minutes from the September 15th, 2026 meeting were approved.

PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment.

SANITARIAN REPORT

The Department reported that no formal nuisance complaints were filed during September. A total of 26 inquiries were received, of which 20 were determined to be outside the Department's jurisdiction.

Inquiries falling within the Department's jurisdiction most commonly involved water quality. The Department also responds to Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) requests and provides guidance regarding garbage disposal, sewage, and septic concerns. Matters outside the Department's jurisdiction are referred to the appropriate code enforcement officer or regulatory agency.

MEASLES UPDATE

The Department reported one laboratory-confirmed measles case in St. Lawrence County, along with five additional epidemiologically linked cases involving symptomatic close contacts who were not laboratory tested.

The Department outlined several response activities, including distributing informational flyers throughout the community, preparing social media messaging, and coordinating with Jefferson and Lewis counties. Jefferson County reported a separate case on the same day, and the counties have been working to coordinate their respective responses.

Dr. Williams has also been communicating with community contacts to support public awareness efforts. The Department discussed the importance of educating residents about the potential severity of measles and the benefits of vaccination.

The Board discussed vaccine access and the possibility of increased demand for measles vaccinations. Children between six and twelve months of age may receive an early dose when appropriate, although this dose does not count toward the routine vaccination series. An early second dose may also be administered when the appropriate interval of at least 28 days has elapsed.

The Department reported that its standing orders had been updated to allow vaccination of children six to twelve months of age. Questions were raised regarding whether the current standing orders authorize second doses for adults outside designated high-risk groups. The Department is discussing this issue with other counties to clarify appropriate practices.

The Board also discussed the availability of Vaccines for Children (VFC) doses. The State has offered assistance with expedited vaccine orders if additional doses are needed. The Department will coordinate with the State to determine whether expedited shipments can be delivered directly to providers to minimize delays and avoid unnecessary barriers to vaccination.

Private vaccine stock was not reported to be experiencing the same ordering delays. The Board emphasized the importance of maintaining access for both routine vaccination and individuals who may require vaccination following an exposure.

The availability of COVID-19 vaccinations through the Department was also discussed. The Department reported that it did not yet have standing orders in place for COVID-19 vaccination and was awaiting updated guidance and templates.

RABIES UPDATE

The Department provided an update on rabies activity and its response to previously reported increases in positive cases. GIS mapping identified a concentration of cases in the Heuvelton area. In response, the Department conducted targeted, door-to-door public education efforts emphasizing avoidance of wild animals and the importance of keeping pets vaccinated.

The Department reported community interest in additional rabies vaccination clinics. The Town of Heuvelton expressed interest in working with the Department to provide clinics in the coming year. The Department is also following up with a veterinarian who expressed interest in assisting with future clinics.

The Board discussed a recent positive rabies case involving a cow in Franklin County. Challenges involving communication with members of the Amish community were discussed, including difficulties encouraging vaccination of livestock and acceptance of post-exposure prophylaxis following potential

human exposure. The importance of trusted community relationships and collaboration between counties was emphasized.

AMISH BUGGY AND MOTOR VEHICLE ACCIDENTS

The Board discussed another serious buggy-related accident reported since the previous meeting and the need to explore potential prevention measures.

Dr. Williams had requested that a task force be convened to address the issue. The Board expressed support for further collaborative work to identify practical solutions.

Emergency Services personnel obtained records of 911 calls categorized as Amish-related accidents. These records were provided to the Planning Department, which used GIS mapping to identify geographic patterns. The Heuvelton area was noted as a location of concern.

Potential safety measures discussed included:

- Improving roadside shoulders and available roadway space.
- Increasing the visibility of horse-drawn buggies through reflective materials and lighting.
- Evaluating roadway locations with limited sightlines.
- Reviewing accident data to identify locations requiring targeted interventions.
- Exploring improved methods of identifying and tracking buggy-related accidents in state reporting systems.

The Board acknowledged that collecting reliable data is challenging because buggy-related accidents are not consistently categorized in existing reporting systems. Further discussion and collaboration will be necessary to evaluate potential interventions and determine appropriate next steps.

MATERNAL CHILD HEALTH

A. Maternal and Child Health Task Force

The Department provided an update on the maternal and child health task force operating under the Bridge to Wellness Coalition. Maternal and child health was identified as a priority area in the most recent Community Health Assessment and Community Health Improvement Plan.

The group is exploring collaborative approaches to improve access to prenatal care and related services. One proposal discussed was the development of prenatal care kits that could allow patients to monitor certain health indicators at home, potentially including urine testing and blood pressure monitoring. The Board discussed whether partnerships with healthcare providers and organizations such as the American Heart Association could support a pilot program.

The Board emphasized the importance of maintaining access to prenatal care even when local delivery services are unavailable.

B. Obstetric Services and Access to Women's Healthcare

The Board held an extensive discussion regarding the planned closure of labor and delivery services at Claxton-Hepburn Medical Center, anticipated for November 30, and the anticipated closure of Planned Parenthood services in Ogdensburg and Lewis County during the same period.

Concerns were raised regarding the potential effects on access to prenatal care, gynecological services, labor and delivery, and other reproductive healthcare services, particularly for residents who face transportation or financial barriers.

Discussion included the following issues:

- **Patient access and service availability:** Board members discussed reports of patients having difficulty obtaining appointments for obstetric care and concerns regarding the number of providers available to serve the region.
- **Financial viability and hospital operations:** Questions were raised regarding the financial performance of labor and delivery services, including whether all services were being appropriately billed and whether changes in patient volume, staffing, and hospital operations could affect the financial outlook.
- **Staffing and emergency preparedness:** The Board discussed the challenges of maintaining adequate obstetric, pediatric, anesthesia, surgical, and nursing coverage around the clock. Members expressed differing views regarding the feasibility and safety of maintaining a low-volume labor and delivery unit.
- **Vaginal birth after cesarean (VBAC):** The potential benefits of providing VBAC services were discussed alongside concerns regarding the clinical risks, staffing requirements, and need for immediate emergency surgical capabilities.
- **Transportation and regional access:** Members discussed the distances residents may need to travel for obstetric care and whether improvements to emergency medical services and patient transportation could help address gaps in access.
- **Prenatal and gynecological care:** Members emphasized that the need for prenatal care and gynecological services will remain even if labor and delivery services cease. The anticipated reduction in Planned Parenthood services may further increase demand on remaining providers.
- **Hospital oversight and alternatives:** The Board discussed whether the New York State Department of Health should further evaluate the hospital's financial information, operational decisions, and potential alternatives before services are discontinued.

Board members expressed differing perspectives on whether maintaining local labor and delivery services would be feasible and safe. Some emphasized the consequences of longer travel distances and the importance of preserving local services, while others raised concerns regarding staffing, clinical experience, emergency response capabilities, and the risks associated with operating a low-volume unit.

The Board agreed that additional information and discussion involving relevant healthcare stakeholders would be valuable. It was reported that the Department of Health, Claxton-Hepburn Medical Center, and representatives from Canton-Potsdam Hospital were being invited to participate in a discussion before the Board of Legislators.

A potential November meeting was discussed, although a confirmed date was not available at the time of the Board of Health meeting. Members indicated that they would be notified when the date was established.

The Board also discussed the potential value of reviewing geographic and demographic data to better understand where county residents receive obstetric services and how local birth patterns may affect service demand.

No final determination regarding the future of labor and delivery services was documented in the discussion.

2027 BUDGET

The Department provided a preliminary overview of its 2027 budget. The proposed budget represents an approximately one-percent increase over the prior year's budget, with total expenditures of approximately $5 million.

The Department reported that budget development was constrained by the County's efforts to limit increases while accounting for personnel costs and other operating expenses.

As part of the budget process, a vacant Senior Account Clerk position that had remained unfilled for an extended period will be eliminated rather than backfilled. The Department reported that this would leave the Department fully staffed for the first time in several years.

Preschool services and preschool transportation were identified as significant portions of the Department's budget. The Board discussed whether responsibility for these services would be more appropriately placed elsewhere within the educational system.

The Department reported that it continues to advocate through the New York State Association of Counties (NYSAC) for changes to the State's allocation of responsibility for preschool services.

PUBLIC HEALTH INFRASTRUCTURE GRANT FUNDING

The Department reported that its current Public Health Infrastructure Grant funding is scheduled to conclude in November 2027. A potential second phase of funding, referred to during the meeting as "PHIG 2.0," is anticipated; however, the parameters and allowable expenditures remain uncertain.

The Department explained that the existing grant had provided flexibility to establish and evaluate positions that would otherwise have been difficult to create through the County's civil service structure.

An epidemiologist position was previously evaluated but was determined not to have sufficient workload at the local level to sustain the role. In contrast, the grant-funded Communications Specialist position has provided valuable support to Department initiatives and public education efforts.

The Department expressed concern that the Communications Specialist position may be lost if the current grant ends and future funding does not permit personnel expenditures.

The Department expects further information regarding the next phase of funding in early 2027.

ACCREDITATION

The Department reported that additional documentation requested by the Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB) had been revised and resubmitted.

The next step is for PHAB to review the submitted materials and schedule an accreditation site visit. Although the Department had hoped the visit would occur before the end of 2026, its contact indicated that the visit would more likely take place in spring 2027.

The Department has requested that the visit be scheduled at the earliest possible opportunity. Once a general timeframe is established, the Department will be able to provide input regarding suitable dates.

Following the site visit, the findings will be submitted to the accreditation decision-making body. Because that body meets quarterly, the final determination may occur in a subsequent quarter, depending on the timing of the visit.

DIABETES PREVENTION, SCREENING AND GLP-1 MEDICATIONS

The Department reported that the diabetes-related resolution had been presented to the Board of Legislators. Questions were raised regarding whether the Board of Health had recommendations concerning GLP-1 medications and access to diabetes screening.

The Board discussed several potential areas for consideration:

- **Screening and early identification:** Members emphasized the importance of identifying individuals at risk for diabetes and improving access to appropriate screening, including A1C testing when indicated.
- **Weight management and prevention:** The Board discussed the relationship between obesity, metabolic health, and the development of type 2 diabetes, including the potential value of preventive education and early intervention.
- **GLP-1 medications:** Members discussed the potential role of GLP-1 medications in managing obesity and metabolic disease, as well as barriers related to insurance coverage, affordability, and eligibility requirements.
- **Childhood nutrition and obesity:** Members raised concerns regarding the nutritional quality of school meals and breakfasts, including the availability of foods high in added sugar and refined carbohydrates. The importance of providing nutritious meals that support children's health and learning was emphasized.
- **Community partnerships:** The Board discussed whether screening initiatives could be coordinated with hospitals, community organizations, food pantries, and other partners. Previous point-of-care blood glucose screening activities conducted by the Department were mentioned, although the details of those efforts were not established.
- **School nutrition practices:** Members discussed the possibility of reviewing successful nutrition programs in other school districts and identifying approaches that could be adapted locally.

The Board discussed the need for evidence-based recommendations that address both screening and prevention, alongside consideration of the potential benefits and accessibility of GLP-1 medications.

Members agreed to consider possible recommendations and submit their thoughts for further discussion at a future meeting. No formal recommendations were adopted during this discussion.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

The board entered an executive session

ADJOURNMENT/NEXT MEETING

The meeting adjourned at 7:32pm

The next meeting will be held November 17th, 2026 at 6:00pm