



January 23, 2025
Board of Health Meeting
Open Session Minutes

A meeting of the Board of Health for Oxford Elgin St. Thomas Health Unit was held on Thursday, January 23, 2025 commencing at 1:04 p.m.

**Represents virtual participation*

PRESENT:

Mr. J. Couckuyt	Board Member
Mr. G. Jones	Board Member
Mr. J. Herbert	Board Member
Ms. B. Martin	Board Member (Vice Chair)
Mr. S. Molnar*	Board Member
Mr. M. Peterson	Board Member
Mr. L. Rowden	Board Member
Mr. M. Ryan	Board Member
Mr. D. Warden	Board Member
Ms. C. St. John	Chief Executive Officer
Dr. N. Tran	Medical Officer of Health
Dr. J. Lock	Acting Medical Officer of Health
Ms. W. Lee	Executive Assistant

GUESTS:

Ms. J. Austin	Health Promoter
Ms. B. Boersen	Health Promoter
Ms. J. Gordon	Administrative Assistant
Mr. P. Heywood*	Program Director
Mr. D. McDonald	Director, Corporate Services and Human Resources
Ms. M. Nusink*	Director, Finance
Ms. N. Rowe*	Manager, Communications
Mr. I. Santos	Manager, Information Technology
Ms. M. Van Wylie	Program Manager, Healthy Communities

MEDIA:

Mr. J. Konecny*	Aylmer Express
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REGRETS:

Ms. C. Agar	Board Member
Mr. D. Mayberry	Board Member
Mr. J. Preston	Board Member

Mr. D. Shinedling
Ms. S. MacIsaac
Mr. D. Smith

Board Member
Program Director
Program Director

REMINDER OF DISCLOSURE OF PECUNIARY INTEREST AND THE GENERAL NATURE THEREOF WHEN ITEM ARISES

1.1 CALL TO ORDER, RECOGNITION OF QUORUM

The meeting was called to order at 1:02pm.

1.2 AGENDA

Resolution # (2025-BOH-0123-1.2)

Moved by M. Ryan

Seconded by D. Warden

That the agenda for the Southwestern Public Health Board of Health meeting for January 23, 2025 be approved.

Carried.

1.3 Reminder to disclose Pecuniary Interest and the General Nature Thereof when Item Arises.

1.4 Reminder that meetings are recorded for minute-taking purposes.

1.5 Election of Officers:

M. Peterson asked G. Jones if he was interested in the position of Chair for 2025, given his role as Vice Chair in 2024. G. Jones respectfully declined the nomination, citing his busy schedule.

G. Jones nominated B. Martin for the position of Chair for 2025. J. Herbert seconded the nomination. B. Martin allowed her name to stand for nomination.

Resolution # (2025-BOH-0123-1.5A)

Moved by G. Jones

Seconded by J. Herbert

That Bernia Martin be Chair of the Board of Health for Southwestern Public Health for the year of 2025.

Carried.

L. Rowden nominated M. Ryan for the position of Vice-Chair for 2025. M. Ryan respectfully declined the nomination.

D. Warden nominated G. Jones for the position of Vice-Chair for 2025. M. Peterson seconded the nomination. G. Jones allowed his name to stand for nomination.

Resolution # (2025-BOH-0123-1.5B)

Moved by D. Warden

Seconded by M. Peterson

That Grant Jones be Vice-Chair of the Board of Health for Southwestern Public Health for the year of 2025.

Carried.

Resolution # (2025-BOH-0123-1.5C)

Moved by G. Jones

Seconded by M. Peterson

That the Board of Health Chair for Southwestern Public Health delegate the Chief Executive Office as acting “Head” for the purpose of ensuring day-to-day fulfilment of Southwestern Public Health’s compliance obligations under the Municipal Freedom and Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA) for the year 2025.

Carried.

D. Warden noted that previous practice had Board Chairs sitting for only one year, apart from the repeated appointment of the same Chair during the Covid pandemic and would now like clarification. C. St. John confirmed that Board policy indicates that the Chair serves for a one (1) year term. The policy does allow for the extension of the Chair role for an additional year provided that the Board votes to do so.

D. Warden asked for confirmation that Southwestern Public Health (SWPH) is a full board. C. St. John clarified that a full Board of Health (BOH) includes eight municipal appointees and up to seven provincial appointees, of which five provincial appointments have been assigned. Of the municipal appointments, the City of St. Thomas and the County of Oxford confirm their Board appointments for the duration of their councillor’s term, and the County of Elgin assigns Board appointments on a yearly basis.

2.0 APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Resolution # (2025-BOH-0123-2.1)

Moved by M. Peterson

Seconded by J. Herbert

That the minutes for the Southwestern Public Health Board of Health meeting for November 28, 2024 be approved.

Carried.

3.0 CONSENT AGENDA

No Items.

4.0 CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED REQUIRING ACTION

No items.

S. Molnar joined via MS Teams at 1:22pm.

5.0 AGENDA ITEMS FOR INFORMATION.DISCUSSION.DECISION

5.1 SWPH Report on Planet Youth: Implementing the Icelandic Prevention Model, a Community-Based Approach to Reducing Youth Substance Use

Jessica Austin and Brooke Boersen presented the report.

G. Jones asked what percentage of federal funding is available. J. Austin noted the federal government is providing over \$20 million in funding at the national level through a competitive application process. Communities can apply based on their specific needs, wherein the exact percentage or dollar amount received depends on the details outlined in the application.

J. Herbert praised the report and inquired about quarterly progress updates. C. St. John replied that the Board will receive regular updates on various program areas, including Planet Youth.

L. Rowden asked what the commitment would be from other organizations regarding the project. J. Austin responded that community partners would contribute their existing resources and expertise to the model. For example, the Community Foundation would manage a flow-through fund and facilitate donor engagement, while Family and Children Services would use data to inform their work and help engage hard-to-reach families. Partners would thus collaborate on knowledge exchange, data collection, and future implementation strategies. This approach is also present in our school system regarding the implementation of programs and opportunities. .

B. Boersen added there would be also different levels of partnership and support as well of different kinds of in-kind contributions at this stage in the project, where the data gathered via these partnerships will be used to identify and refine community priorities and develop evidence-based solutions and programs.

J. Couckuyt praised the report and program, noting there are only 20 in the country, and asked when the survey is happening. J. Austin indicated that, in collaboration with the coalition, region, and all three school boards, it would be a late fall rollout for the survey.

J. Couckuyt noted that SWPH has provided \$30,000 for the initial cost of the program so far and asked if there would be any continued cost for the health unit. J. Austin noted that funds have been allocated to support the work.

J. Couckuyt inquired whether the funding for Planet Youth would be ongoing or included as part of the annual budget. C. St. John confirmed that the annual budget requires approval from the Board and noted that there is an allocation for Planet Youth in 2025. Further funding will be evaluated and considered during the budget process annually that comes to the Board.

J. Couckuyt asked if the presenters could provide a concrete example of what data implementation would look like. B. Boersen noted that some communities in Ontario have already begun this process, and they have received data from Planet Youth, which has been fully analyzed. Population Statistics Planet Youth provide a service that includes action planning for each group to determine targeted areas at reducing risk factors or improving protective population factors. For example, Lanark County identified sleep as an issue within their community and are now focusing on policies and programs to improve youth sleep.

M. Ryan asked if there were any opportunities for SWPH to leverage the funding for municipalities' Community Safe and Well-Being plans and if there were ways to expedite the programs more quickly and effectively. J. Austin noted they do aim to collaborate with existing groups that share similar values and strategies focused on advancing youth well-being and would consider Community Safe and Well-Being plans as foundational to their goals and objectives within the community. Regarding the Board's leverage within these networks and discussions, J. Austin indicated that SWPH recently distributed a document containing frequently asked questions about Planet Youth, noting that they are employing a top-down, bottom-up approach when working with local community partners as well as provincial and federal partners.

M. Peterson added his praise for the report, particularly its potential in addressing and preventing issues at formative stages for youth. B. Boersen noted that a cost analysis has indicated a one dollar in prevention will save about \$5 - \$18 downstream in programs and services, so there is evidence of its economic impact on the community.

M. Ryan asked if SWPH needed support in strengthening their relationship with school boards to enhance their participation. B. Boersen noted they have established a strong working relationship with the research and ethics teams at London District Catholic School Board as well as Thames Valley District School Board. There are also beginning initial discussions with the French school board. Additionally, they have conducted a risk assessment to evaluate the survey's psychometric validity, ensuring there is nothing alarming that could negatively impact youth. The team is also currently developing research and ethics applications with the school boards.

C. St. John added SWPH would be happy to support any opportunity that Board members have regarding schools and entities to talk about substance prevention and the Planet Youth model.

M. Ryan asked for key talking points to reference when speaking with other municipal council members and elected schoolboard representatives. M. Ryan also asked if there was anything that the Board could formally do to engage and unify area councils and school boards. C. St. John agreed there is value in providing key messages that recognize the specific values and priorities of the audience such as an area council and will confer with the team on providing tangible speaking points.

S. Molnar supported demonstrable, operational, and organizational data that would relay realistic savings that could further elicit support. J. Austin noted their access to the expanded

federal knowledge hub will include evaluating potential cost savings. While public health has access to the "Cost of Substance Use in Canada" report, this analysis will focus on local community savings which includes areas such as policing and social services. S. Molnar looks forward to a regional review of financial pressures and benefits.

M. Peterson noted that Oxford County Council would welcome such a report. M. Peterson appreciated the projected cost savings along with its potential benefit for local youth. C. St. John noted that SWPH would be happy to bring this report forward as a delegation to municipal leaders.

G. Jones requested a link to the website to view the slide deck presentation and suggested sharing it on the website. C. St. John made note of this request and will instruct the team to do so.

S. Molnar asked for confirmation that the incoming federal numbers would also provide local data. J. Austin confirmed that they will obtain the report from the contracted knowledge hub experts at the University of Waterloo which will then be provided to the board for review.

S. Molnar referenced the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) as a future audience for Planet Youth. B. Martin added that Planet Youth has been mentioned to and noted by Minister Tibollo at the recent Rural Ontario Municipal Association (ROMA) conference and could present a path for future advocacy work. J. Austin noted that Planet Youth communities have initiated an endorsement scan noting opportunities at all levels of community partners and government that can be provided to the Board for information when it is complete.

M. Ryan asked if the Board should consider authorizing Planet Youth as part of SWPH's ongoing funding where it would be presented to the funding municipalities as part of its obligated levy. C. St. John indicated she would discuss with staff and provide an update to the Board.

Resolution # (2025-BOH-0123-5.1)

Moved by M. Peterson

Seconded by D. Warden

That Board of Health for Southwestern Public Health receive and file the SWPH Report on Planet Youth: Implementing the Icelandic Prevention Model, a Community-Based Approach to Reducing Youth Substance Use for January 23, 2025.

Carried.

J. Austin, BB, and M. Van Wylie left the meeting at 1:55pm.

B. Martin welcomed Dr. N. Tran upon his return from his parental leave in advance of the next agenda item.

5.2 Acting Medical Officer of Health's Report

Dr. J. Lock reviewed her report.

M. Peterson asked about the incubation period for measles. Dr. Lock noted that from point of contact, you are at risk for 21 days, and there is likely more activity in the community than meets the eye as SWPH can only track cases reported at healthcare facilities.

M. Ryan asked for clarification, noting that SWPH has high rate of measles vaccination and that it seems incongruous that we have so many cases. Dr. J. Lock noted that measles is highly infectious and to avoid an outbreak scenario, the immunization rate for the population would, need to be at 98% to prevent or minimize the number of cases and infection spread.

S. Molnar expressed his appreciation of Dr. J. Lock for her work and report. He commended the recent dissemination of information to both the Board of Health and the general public regarding the measles news releases.

B. Martin extended the Board's thanks to Dr. Lock for her work as the Acting Medical Officer of Health during Dr. Tran's leave.

Resolution # (2025-BOH-0123-5.2)

Moved by G. Jones

Seconded by M. Peterson

That Board of Health for Southwestern Public Health accept the Acting Medical Officer of Health's report for January 25, 2025.

Carried.

D. Warden left the meeting at 2:31pm.

5.3 Chief Executive Officer's Report

C. St. John reviewed her report.

In addition to highlighting program and service work from her report, C. St. John provided verbal updates regarding recent activities. First that SWPH received an invitation to provide a 3-minute delegation presentation to the Minister of Finance at St. Thomas on January 28, 2025.

C. St. John and Dr. N. Tran will attend and speak on the value of public health, its return on investment, and the need for adequate provincial funding to lessen the burden that our local municipalities have been faced with related to supporting public health work.

C. St. John also noted that the Association of Local Public Health Agencies (alPHA) released a letter (after the Board package was sent out), that was submitted to the Minister of Finance regarding their pre budget submission, noting that public health has acknowledged the government's investments in strengthening public health, including voluntary mergers and the

commitment to a funding review. However, there is still a need for increased, sustainable funding from the Ministry of Health to address budget pressures, inflation, and the significant return on investment public health provides. C. St. John called for Board direction to support the alpha letter in which SWPH would also add local context such as the rising prevalence of mental health and substance use disorders, household food insecurity, climate change impacts, and the importance of surveillance, research, and data analysis to address root causes.

M. Ryan suggested compiling a report on various advocacy positions for the Board to review and approve in advance. This would allow for quicker responses to advocacy opportunities without timing constraints. The Chair and leadership could then act on these positions as needed. C. St. John agreed to take the suggestion back for consideration.

S. Molnar raised a question about whether third-party testing services, such as LifeLabs, would incur costs for the public. Jaime Fletcher, SWPH's Chief Nursing Officer, noted that fees are typically applied when a requisition is provided without a valid health card.

S. Molnar further asked whether individuals seeking testing at SWPH locations would face any charges. Dr. Tran clarified that most testing would not incur fees, as the sexual health program does not require OHIP cards and has an arrangement with Public Health Ontario labs. The exception is Pap tests, which must be sent to external labs like LifeLabs. In those cases, individuals without OHIP may face charges. He noted the "GetaKit" initiative as a way to further reduce barriers by offering mail-in testing options.

S. Molnar asked for clarification regarding the rationale for excluding industry involvement in discussions on alcohol-related harms, suggesting that reasonable industry representatives might provide valuable insights. P. Heywood noted that past experiences with the tobacco and alcohol industries show patterns of manipulation and influence, making it difficult to engage without concerns of interference. P. Heywood cited an example from the Yukon, where industry opposition prevented alcohol labeling policies from advancing.

S. Molnar asked whether transportation costs were factored into food affordability calculations. Peter Heywood noted he would take the question back to his manager's team for confirmation.

Resolution # (2025-BOH-0123-5.3-3.1)

Moved by M. Peterson

Seconded by J. Herbert

That the Board of Health ratify the signing of the IPAC Hub Transfer Payment Agreement for Southwestern Public Health as noted in the CEO report.

Carried.

Resolution # (2025-BOH-0123-5.3-4.1)

Moved by M. Ryan

Seconded by M. Peterson

The Board of Health for Southwestern Public Health support the January 20th, 2025 letter to the Minister of Finance from the Association of Local Public Health Agencies concerning its budget consultation and further in the letter of support it include additional information about Southwestern Public Health's local context to further strengthen its response.

Carried.

Resolution # (2025-BOH-0123-5.3)

Moved by M. Peterson

Seconded by G. Jones

That the Board of Health for Southwestern Public Health accept the Chief Executive Officer's report for January 23, 2025 as amended.

Carried.

6.0 NEW BUSINESS

M. Peterson proposed the introduction of new business related to the duration of the Board chair term, and suggesting the consideration of a two-year Board term. M. Peterson requested that this be taken as direction only, for the Governance Standing Committee's consideration, without the need for a formal resolution.

7.0 TO CLOSED SESSION

No closed session.

8.0 FUTURE MEETING & EVENTS

9.0 ADJOURNMENT

That the meeting adjourns at 3:46 pm to meet again on Thursday, February 27, 2025 at 1:00 pm.

Resolution # (2025-BOH-0123-9.0)

Moved by J. Herbert

Seconded by M. Peterson

That the meeting adjourns at 2:58 p.m.

Carried.

Confirmed: _____

