

**Catawba County Board of Health
Minutes
June 8, 2026**

The Catawba County Board of Health met on Monday, June 8, 2026, at 7:00 pm at Catawba County Public Health, 3070 11th Ave Dr. SE, Hickory, NC 28602.

Members Present: Ms. Rebecca McLeod, Vice-Chair
Mr. Austin Allran, County Commissioner
Ms. Susan Knowles
Dr. Eugene Modlin
Ms. Gina Powers
Dr. Steven Sanderson
Mr. Vidal Sipe
Ms. Janice Tice

Members Absent: Dr. Bruce Carlton, Chair
Dr. Hannah Glenn
Mr. Shad Walters

Staff present: Ms. Jennifer McCracken, Health Director
Ms. Julie Byrd, Assistant Health Director
Ms. Tammy Fickling, Case Manager – CMHRP/CMARC
Ms. Emily Killian, Community Engagement Specialist/PIO
Mr. Jeremy Stockton, WIC Director
Ms. Megen Thomas, Environmental Health Administrator *
Ms. Marianne Vogel, School Health Nursing Supervisor
Ms. Elaine Yancey, Clinical Services Nurse Manager
Ms. Debra A. Young, Administrative Assistant II

Guests: Ms. Jodi Stewart, County Attorney
Ms. Jennifer Tuttle, School Health Charge Nurse (PH Emp of the Year)
Ms. Jami Bentley, Billing and Systems Administrator

*Attended via Zoom meeting

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

Ms. Rebecca McLeod, Vice-Chair, called the Catawba County Public Health Board meeting to order at 7:03 p.m. She welcomed Board members, Public Health managers, staff, and guests.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA AND MINUTES

Ms. Rebecca McLeod, Vice-Chair, stated that Board members received the meeting agenda and the Board minutes for April 13, 2026, in the Board packet that the Board members received via email. Ms. McLeod asked if there were any changes to the agenda or corrections to the prior meeting Minutes. There being none, Ms. McLeod motioned to accept the agenda and previous meeting minutes as presented, and Dr. Steven Sanderson seconded the motion. The agenda and minutes were unanimously approved.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Ms. McLeod asked if anyone had presented to speak before the Board. Ms. Debra Young, Administrative Assistant II, stated that no one had presented to speak to the board this evening.

COUNTY COMMISSIONER'S COMMENTS

Mr. Austin Allran, County Commissioner, stated that the Board of Commissioners recently met and approved two reappointments and one new appointment for the Board of Health in the Registered Nurse member position. Commissioner Allran also stated that the Board of Commissioners will approve the 2026-2027 Budget at their next meeting.

ANNUAL LEGAL UPDATE

Ms. Jodi Stewart, County Attorney, provided the 2026 Annual Legal Update to the Board of Health members and Catawba County Public Health managers. Ms. Stewart opened the presentation with a brief update and explanation relating to the short session that is held in even numbered years.

Hot topics in Public Health

Criminal history record check requirements (SL 2025-16). This impacts the local government hiring process. Backlog impacts timing for hiring new staff. Requires state and national criminal history checks by the SBI on all applicants for positions that require working with children in any way.

First Amendment Auditors – enter public facilities with cameras and phones to film employees.

ICE – Legal Considerations for Public Health Search warrants and/or subpoenas

Artificial Intelligence (AI) – Top issues are confidentiality. For Public Health purposes, no identifiable information should ever be entered into the platform – whether platform is open or closed. Another issue is that if information is searched on the web via AI, it can be considered public information. How does that affect a ‘public records request’? When information is searched out via AI, it must be verified.

The presentation included legislative updates that were prominent in 2025, including DHHS Agency Bill, relating to Child Fatality Review Team, Public Safety Act, Epinephrine/School Nurses and State License. In addition, Ms. Stewart stated there are some current proposed Bills to watch, including Parent’s Medical Bills of Rights and Vaping and Nicotine.

After the annual legal update presentation, there were no further questions or discussions. Attorney Stewart closed her presentation by reiterating that the Catawba County Legal Department staff are available to the Board of Health and Public Health staff for questions related to any legal matter that may arise in the scope of their Public Health duties.

The Annual Legal Update slides are attached to the minutes.

PUBLIC HEALTH EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR

Ms. Jennifer McCracken, Health Director, introduced Ms. Jennifer Tuttle, School Health Charge Nurse, and Catawba County Public Health Employee of the Year. Ms. McCracken summarized the Public Health Employee of the Year Nomination submissions for the Board of Health.

The Board congratulated Ms. Tuttle on her Public Health Employee of the Year award.

CHILD FATALITY PREVENTION TEAM (CFPT) ANNUAL REPORT

Ms. Marianne Vogel, School Health Supervisor, gave the annual Child Fatality Prevention Team (CFPT) update.

Ms. Vogel shared an Infographic covering the Child Fatality Prevention Team (CFPT) annual report, including what the CFPT is responsible for and its status as a State-mandated team. The CFPT is a multidisciplinary team from all around the county, and this team works with the State Child Fatality Task Force to help improve system issues.

Ms. Vogel noted that Catawba County had 27 deaths reported in 2024. This was an increase from the cases reported in 2023, and it was noted that ten of the reported cases were due to perinatal conditions.

Of the cases reported, 16 of the deaths reviewed involved children under the age of one, while 11 of the deaths were between the ages of one and seventeen. Safe sleep continues to be one of the team's primary focuses. Ms. Vogel stated that it can be challenging to ensure that infants have a safe sleep environment and an appropriate sleeping arrangement. The CFPT continues to find that some infants sleep in an adult's bed, on a couch, or in a crib or bassinet, but with multiple blankets and other items that may cause suffocation or entanglement. Unfortunately, it remains a challenge to adequately categorize these cases by the State Medical Examiner's Office.

As a multidisciplinary team, the CFPT will continue to support the education of parents and pediatric offices regarding safe sleep and expand efforts to address infant deaths impacted by substance use. The Child Fatality Prevention Team will also continue to promote and support early prenatal care, continue to look at infant and teen deaths related to illegal substances and gun storage strategies related to teen suicide.

The CFPT infographic is attached to these minutes, and additional information on the NC Child Fatality Prevention Team is available at <https://www.dph.ncdhhs.gov/programs/office-child-fatality-prevention>.

COMMUNICABLE DISEASE (CD) ANNUAL UPDATE

Ms. Elaine Yancey, Clinical Services Supervisor, presented the Communicable Disease (CD) annual update. She began by providing an overview of the Communicable Disease Team's role in Public Health and the sources of the data.

Ms. Yancey stated that the overall communicable disease investigations rose slightly in 2025, to 1,727 but that this reflects a more typical annual case volume after pandemic-related surges.

Ms. Yancey continued with an overview of the other reportable diseases that were investigated in Catawba County, which included sexually transmitted infections (STIs), latent tuberculosis, Campylobacter and Salmonella, and animal bites/rabies.

She ended the presentation with an overview of some trends and observations in Communicable Disease.

The Communicable Disease presentation and data sheet are attached to the Minutes.

ELIGIBILITY, FEE & BILLING POLICY ANNUAL REVIEW

Ms. Jami Bentley, Billing and Systems Administrator, brought forth the annual review for Eligibility, Fee & Billing Policy stating that there were no changes recommended.

Ms. Bentley gave a brief overview of the Policy and the reasoning behind the annual review and the required Board of Health approval.

There being no further discussions, Ms. Rebecca McLeod made a motion to accept the Fee Schedule Policy update as presented, and Dr. Modlin seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

The slide is attached to the Minutes.

HEALTH DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Ms. Jennifer McCracken, Health Director, stated she had several updates to report for the Health Director's report.

- The Farmers' Market held at Public Health kicked off last Thursday for its 14th year
- Communicable Disease:
 - Measles outbreak in the Carolinas has officially ended
 - Hantavirus outbreak on a cruise ship
 - Ebola outbreak in Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Uganda
- Local and Statewide Legionnaire's disease cases increasing
- School Nurse, Holly Bennett, was recognized for the 'Making a Difference' Award
- Catawba County Public Health will present two sessions at the NACCHO360 conference in Louisville KY, in July
- Film crew was at Public Health to make a PSA video about the REACH Team
- WIC partnered with the Catawba County Library System to distribute Born to Read bags to parents of infants who participate in WIC
- Board member, Dr. Hannah Glenn, announced the birth of her daughter Rylie Jade on May 28th

OTHER BUSINESS

- **2026-27 Officer Nominations**

Ms. McLeod, Vice-Chair, reminded the Board members of the open Officer positions of Chair and Vice-Chair. Ms. McLeod noted that she is willing to serve as Vice-Chair, and Dr. Carlton is willing to serve as Chair again for the upcoming year should the Board so desire. The Officers for the fiscal year 2026-2027 will be voted on at the August 10th meeting. Please email or call Dr. Sanderson, Subcommittee Chair, or Debra Young, Administrative Assistant, with any nominations or questions.

- **Special Presentation**

Ms. McCracken announced that this is the last Board of Health meeting for Ms. Susan Knowles, as she has served three full terms (nine years total). Ms. McCracken and the other Board members expressed their sincere gratitude to Ms. Knowles and wished her the best in her future endeavors.

Ms. Knowles was presented with a custom-made piece of pottery from Connections Pottery in Newton.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Ms. Rebecca McLeod, Vice-Chair, motioned to adjourn the meeting, and Mr. Vidal Sipe seconded the motion. Ms. McLeod adjourned the meeting at 8:05 p.m.

The next Board of Health meeting will be on August 10, 2026, at 7:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Jennifer F. McCracken
Secretary to the Board of Health
Health Director

JFM: day

Approved by the Board of Health: August 10, 2026