

Guthrie County Board of Health

January, 2016

By Iowa law, each County must have a Board of Health. Law also allows cities of greater than 25,000 population to have a City Board of Health if it wishes. The Board of Supervisors appoints county boards for three-year terms. Although the Board of Health may operate under numerous State laws, the primary Iowa Code responsibility is Chapter 137 (Local Boards of Health). This chapter sets out the duties and responsibilities of the Board of Health.

The Board is normally responsible for two main areas of county government: environmental health and public health nursing. Staff for each division is then responsible for the day-to-day operation of its respective areas of expertise. In Guthrie County the environmental health section is headed by Stephen Patterson and the public health nursing section is headed by Jotham Arber, Public Health Nurse Administrator.

The Board is composed of five members appointed on staggered terms. Currently, the five Board members are: Dr. Steven Bascom (Chair), Teresa Mowrer, Mike Dickson, Christine Sand, and Bill McDermott. The Board normally meets the third Wednesday of each month in the public meeting room of the Courthouse. The meeting time is normally 7:00 p.m.

These meetings are open to the public. About a week prior to the meeting an agenda is posted outside the Board of Supervisors office. Also, an agenda for the environmental health portion can be obtained by contacting this office. Anyone wishing to present an idea or problem before the Board should contact the respective section at least a week, and preferably longer, prior to the meeting so it can be researched and placed on the agenda. There are meeting cancellations and time/date changes occasionally. Anyone wishing to attend should check a day or two prior to the meeting to verify the meeting has not been rescheduled or cancelled.

The Board is present to respond to the needs and reports of the environmental health section. It serves as a means to further reinforce the position of the staff. However, the Board is also to serve in an over-sight role. Should a citizen feel this Dept. has made an error, not acted appropriately, or not acted in a manner that the citizen felt was proper then the Board is there to respond to this citizen. It is within the Board's power to modify or overrule any action of the staff.

The Board, in December/January, reviews the proposed budget, salary increases, etc. that are presented to it. The Board of Supervisors has the final decision on what is actually allocated. Also, such things as fees for permits, percolation tests, water tests, etc. are actually set by the Board after reviewing the recommendations of the staff. All policies, rules, and regulations of the Dept. are reviewed and often modified prior to being passed by the Board.

Most Board members are appreciative of input from citizens. Anyone should feel at liberty to visit with any Board of Health member with comments regarding issues the Board of Health is responsible for.

The Board of Supervisors then reviews the budget and sets an allocation of funds, which may be what the Board of Health requests but could be less. Then the Board of Health has to operate within that allotment the Supervisors approved. All regulations passed by the Board of Health must be affirmed by the Board of Supervisors to become actual regulations.