

**NORTHEAST TEXAS PUBLIC HEALTH DISTRICT
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES
July 31, 2025**

A regular meeting of the Northeast Texas Public Health District Board of Directors was held on July 31, 2025, at 5:00 p.m., 315 North Broadway, Genecov Room, Tyler, Texas with the following present:

Board Members:	Laura Newsome, Chair	
	Jessica Bowen, MSN, R.N.	absent
	Kent Boozer, D.D.S., Sec.	
	Jeremy Butler	absent
	Cynthia Ball, D.O.	
	Scott Williams	
	Nancy Rangel	absent
	Pam Cunningham	
	Mike McCrady	

Chief Executive Officer:	George T. Roberts, Jr.	
Smith County Health Authority:	Valerie Smith, M.D.	absent
Chief Financial Officer:	Lawanda Owens	
Public Health Emergency Preparedness Director:	Russell Hopkins	
Immunizations/TB Program Director:	Sylvia Warren, R.N.	
Environmental Health Director:	Ginger Points, R.S.	
Community Outreach Director:	Terrence Ates	
Vital Statistics Director:	Rosie Meza	absent
Human Resources Director:	Dawn Strickland	
Interim Laboratory Director:	Amanda Catlin	
WIC Director:	Tecora Smith	
Legal:	Sharon Roberts	
Recorder:	Janie Jolly	
Guests:	Dr. Liz Villalobos	
	Dr. Srishti Goel	
	Dr. Fariba Yazdanpanah	
	Thomas Alford	
	Alex de Ravel	
	Jason Phung, MD	
	Gold Uzochukwu, MD	
	Kharl Wright, MD	
	Rachel Fox, BSN, RN	
	James Fox	
	Clint Davis	
	Gary & Karen Fox	
	The Doc Ballard Family	
	Jennifer Hines, TISD	

Sherry Wright, Region 7
Dr. Jeff Levin
Dr. Jose Serpa

The meeting was called to order by Laura Newsome, Chair, at 5:03 p.m.

INVOCATION- PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited, and the invocation was given by George Roberts.

DOC BALLARD AWARD CEREMONY

George Roberts, CEO, began the presentation by stating that the W.T. “Doc” Ballard Award for Excellence in Public Health is an annual award given by the Northeast Texas Public Health District to an individual or organization for outstanding service contributing significantly to the enhancement of public health. Doc Ballard was a Registered Professional Engineer for the Texas Department of State Health Services, and he was a Leader in protecting the health of the public. Mr. Ballard was a Charter Member of the NET Health Board and served as a key figure in the formation and establishment of the Health District. Mr. Roberts reviewed the history of the “Doc” Ballard Award and the previous recipients of the award. He then recognized the members of Doc Ballard’s family who were in the audience and thanked them for attending.

Mr. Roberts announced that the 2025 W.T. “Doc” Ballard Award was being presented to Rachel Fox, BSN, RN. Rachel exemplifies the heart of public health through her unwavering commitment to the well-being of the 18,700 students and 2,700 staff across Tyler ISD. As the TISD Director of Health Services since 2017, Rachel has led her department through significant public health challenges, including COVID-19, while expanding critical services that impact thousands of lives every day.

Rachel’s leadership has brought meaningful programs to life, such as the development of “Care Closets” at secondary campuses to provide students with essential hygiene products and clothing items, restoring dignity and meeting basic needs that directly impact student health and success. Her work in promoting staff wellness to TISD employees, including partnerships with NET Health, wellness apps, and on-site fitness initiatives, demonstrates her comprehensive approach to community health.

Rachel’s passion for education and safety is equally evident. She has implemented Stop the Bleed and CPR training for staff, empowering schools to respond confidently in emergencies. Under her guidance, Tyler ISD nurses have become a frontline resource for both preventive care and crisis response. Rachel Fox is truly a worthy recipient of the 2025 Doc Ballard Award!

Rachel accepted the award and thanked NET Health and the NET Health Board, TISD, friends, the family of Doc Ballard, and family.

HEALTH AUTHORITY REPORT

Dr. Srishti Goel gave the Health Authority report to the Board in Dr. Smith's absence. Dr. Goel began by reporting the Measles Update as of 7/29/2025. She stated that most cases have been in West Texas and that the closest county to East Texas is Upshur County with 5 reported cases. Dr. Goel then gave an update on the current situation with H5 Bird Flu. H5 bird flu is widespread in wild birds worldwide and is causing outbreaks in poultry and U.S. dairy cows with several recent human cases in U.S. dairy and poultry workers. Dr. Goel stated that while the current public health risk is low, CDC is watching the situation closely and working with states to monitor people with animal exposures. CDC is using its flu surveillance systems to monitor H5 bird flu activity in people. Data on the number of people monitored and tested for bird flu is reported monthly.

Dr. Goel updated the Board on Respiratory diseases stating that this year, 2025, has been better than last year, 2024 as far as COVID-19, RSV, and Influenza. It has been reported that COVID-19 typically had a bump in the summer months, however, this has not been the case so far this Summer. Emergency Room visits are significantly lower year over year for these illnesses as well as hospitalizations for COVID-19, RSV, and Influenza.

Dr. Goel then cited the CDC and its Outbreak Lists which include Salmonella and Listeria in certain foods: frozen sprouted beans, chicken fettuccine alfredo meals, and pistachio cream. She then reported hot car deaths which have been 4 in 2 weeks as of July 14th. U.S. deaths due to hot car as of 7/9/2025 is 15. She stated to avoid leaving children in cars, even if the air conditioner is on or window is cracked. She then reminded everyone to call 911 if you see a child alone in a car.

Dr. Goel stated that CDC confirmed the first Texas case of West Nile virus of 2025 on June 24th in Texas, Brazos County. In 2024 in Texas there were 455 West Nile cases with 56 deaths. From 2020-2024 there were 929 West Nile cases, with 122 deaths.

Dr. Goel reported on the Public Health Topic, HPV Vaccination. Human Papillomavirus, (HPV) is a sexually transmitted infection that is very common and is known to cause several different cancers. She stated that cancer rates are higher in NE Texas than the rest of the U.S. Dr. Goel reported that the vaccine works very well when given prior to exposure to the virus, with over 98% effectiveness at preventing pre-cancer of the cervix. HPV vaccine is recommended routinely for everyone up to age 26, and in 2018, the FDA expanded that approval up to age 45. She encouraged everyone to talk to your doctor and share any concerns and or questions. Cancers associated with HPV include cervical, anal, stomach, vaginal, cerebral, and penile cancers. Dr. Goel informed the Board about the Health People 2030 Initiative which is a goal to increase vaccination rates to 80% by 2030. The National average is at 53.73%. In 2018, the National average was 48%.

Dr. Goel stated that the side effects from the HPV vaccine have been mild. Some of the reported side effects are nausea, headaches, fevers, muscle or joint pains, redness or swelling of the injection site, or dizziness.

The Board thanked Dr. Goel for the report.

MINUTES

Motion made by Scott Williams to approve the minutes of the June 26, 2025, regular meeting; seconded by Pam Cunningham motion carried; approved as presented.

MONTHLY FINANCIAL REPORT

For the month of June 2025, we had revenues of \$1,208,560 which was \$61,246 over budget. Expenses were \$1,142,586 which was \$75,888 over budget. Our net income for the month of June 2025 was \$65,974, which was \$14,642 under budget.

For FY 2025, we have revenues of \$10,538,253 which was \$163,156 over budget. Expenses were \$10,202,894 which was \$190,606 over budget. Our net income for the first 9 months of FY2025 was \$335,359, which was \$27,450 under budget.

Motion by Scott Williams to approve the June 2025 financial report; seconded by Kent Boozer motion carried; approved as presented.

NET HEALTH PUBLIC INFORMATION REQUEST (PIR) POLICY

Terrence Ates, Public Information Director for NET Health reported to the Board regarding the proposed NET Health Public Information Request (PIR) Policy. He stated that Chapter 552 of the Texas Government Code, also known as the Public Information Act (PIA), requires NET Health to develop a Public Information Request (P.I.R.) Policy that aligns with governing state law that ensures any person can request copies of public information from NET Health in a streamlined and efficient matter, that public information shall be provided per law, and that confidential information shall be protected from disclosure.

Mr. Ates stated that NET Health is working to comply with the Public Information Act (PIA) so that the public can request access to open records. A user-friendly option will be added to the NET Health website where citizens can file a public information request. The form used is from the Attorney General's office and if the cost is over \$40, the person will be informed before copies are made. Options for requesting information include online form, postal mail, or in person. A request for information is responded to within 10 business days. The Texas Legislature has allowed for streamlined acceptance of requests. Examples of information requested include recordings of public meetings, restaurant inspection reports, information for developers, and public pool inspections.

Motion made by Kent Boozer to approve the NET Health Public Information Request (P.I.R.) Policy; seconded by Scott Williams motion carried; approved as presented.

NET HEALTH CONFLICT OF INTEREST POLICY

Dawn Strickland, Director of Human Resources for NET Health reported to the Board regarding the NET Health Conflict of Interest Policy. She stated that Pursuant to Section 171.002 of the Texas Local Government Code, Board members have a duty to Review board agendas prior to board meetings to identify any potential conflict of interests. For NET Health Board members, the following criteria should be used to determine whether substantial interests exist for any matter to be considered;

- a. Real Property interests.
- b. Personal financial interests.
- c. Business entity - relationships.
- d. Family member interest - If an action taken can be reasonably foreseen to have a special economic benefit, the NET Health Board Member should properly disclose this interest, utilizing the "NET Health Affidavit of Disclosure of Substantial Interest" document.

Ms. Strickland stated if there is a conflict of interest, the person cannot be involved in the discussion or vote.

Motion made Scott Williams to approve the NET Health Conflict of Interest Policy, seconded by Pam Cunningham; motion carried as presented.

NET HEALTH TEMPORARY CUSTODIAN OF PUBLIC INFORMATION POLICY

Terrence Ates, Public Information Director for NET Health reported to the Board regarding the NET Health Temporary Custodian of Public Information Policy. He stated that temporary custodians of public information play vital roles to ensure compliance with Texas' legal standards for local government entities as to the management, preservation, and accessibility of public records defined as "public information" as set forth by Chapter 552 of the Texas Government Code, known as the Texas Public Information Act.

Any public business conducted on a state-issued or personal mobile device, laptop, computer, or external storage device may be considered an official record.

Mr. Ates stated that the PIR Policy is open to the general public, however, this policy is more internal. This policy applies to any employee, volunteer, intern, board member, contractor, or vendor business on behalf of NET Health who creates or receives public information. These individuals are considered temporary custodians of public information. He further stated that the easiest course of action is to provide any potentially protected information, including personal health information to the PIO's, (Public Information Officers). The goal is that this public information be sent to the PIO and in turn be placed in the record retention schedule or maintenance schedule to be archived and in the hands of the PIO. Mr. Ates stated that the best way to manage digital information on a phone is to remove it from the main mailbox and archive it into its own folder. At the end of service with the district, all information should be turned over to the PIO and the office will notify individuals if information has not been received.

Training on the policy and procedures will be provided, and we must assume everything received is potentially a public document. The training will include ways to organize material so it can be returned easily when requested.

The NET Public Information Office, by its Public Information Officer (PIO) or authorized designee, shall oversee the release of PI and PHI. Each department leader is an agent of the Public Information Officer for purposes of compliance.

Motion made by Pam Cunningham to approve the NET Health Temporary Custodian of Public Information Policy, seconded by Scott Williams motion carried; approved as presented.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER REPORT

Mr. Roberts gave his report to the Board. Mr. Roberts introduced Dr. Jeff Levin and Dr. Jose Serpa and our new Preventive Medicine Residents, Jason Phung, Kharl Wright, and Gold Uzochukwu. The returning Residents are Srishti Goel, Fariba Yazdanpanah, and Liz Villalobos. The Residents will be spending time at NET Health in September and October.

Mr. Roberts informed the Board that PHEP has been funded at 72% for FY 26 and Immunizations at 100% for FY 26. Mr. Roberts stated that he gave a presentation on 7/8/2025 to the Smith County Commissioner's Court regarding the FY 2026 funding. Mr. Roberts thanked Laura Newsome and Scott Williams for attending Smith County Commissioner's Court meeting.

Mr. Roberts informed the Board of the next board meeting which will focus on Strategic Planning. It will be held on August 28th from 5pm to 8pm with dinner provided. He stated that Dawn Franks, a community member with experience in philanthropic issues and strategic planning, has been engaged to help with the process. Ms. Franks is currently meeting with a number of community leaders to gain their feedback on NET Health.

Mr. Roberts concluded his report to the Board by stating he will be attending his final meeting of the American Board of Preventive Medicine next week. He stated that he has served as the first Public member of the Board since 2020. Dr. Levin thanked him for his service and contributions on a national scale. Mr. Roberts thanked Dr. Levin for putting his name forward to serve on this Board and that it has been an outstanding experience.


ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 6:21 p.m.

THE NEXT NET HEALTH BOARD MEETING IS TUESDAY, AUGUST 28, 2025.



Janie Jolly, Recorder



Kent Boozer, Secretary
NET Health Board of Directors