

HUMAN SERVICES/PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE  
MONDAY, MARCH 16, 2026  
BENTON COUNTY HUMAN SERVICES 3<sup>RD</sup> FLOOR CONFERENCE ROOM, FOLEY, MN

Present: Commissioners Scott Johnson, Steve Heinen, Pam Benoit, Jared Gapinski and Ed Popp. Also present: Adam Maertens, Deb Rieland, Ashley Moscho, Rachel Klemz, Lindsey Knosalla, Will Chew, Courtney Ferreira, Sarah Rauchbauer, Sandi Shoberg, Ken Pawlenty, Nikki Knowles, Jaclyn Litfin, and Beth Stay. Present from other organizations: Amanda Othoudt, Executive Director of BEP; Nikki Sand, President of Sand Companies, Inc.; Megan Carr, Senior Business Development Manager of Sand Companies (virtual); and Brandon Higgins (virtual) of Unified Social Services. Public Health Staff Kayla Roelofs, Tessa Wilhelm, Mariah Klein, and Emma Hanson arrived later in the meeting at 9:40 AM.

Chair Heinen called the meeting to order at 8:30 AM.

Housing Supports in Community Sites:

Eligibility Specialist Lead Sarah Rauchbauer presented to the County Board on housing support, outlining program requirements, provider responsibilities, and the County's oversight role, including contract management, eligibility, and ongoing case administration. Discussion included potential impacts such as increased staff workload, program oversight, and risks related to provider stability and client housing continuity. BEP Executive Director Amanda Othoudt, and project partners Nikki Sand of Sand Companies, Megan Carr (virtual) of Sand Companies, and Brandon Higgins (virtual) of Unified Social Services presented a proposed mixed-income housing development that would include units for individuals experiencing homelessness and those with disabilities, contingent on securing Housing Support agreements and allocation of approximately \$120,000 in SAHA funds. The project timeline targets application submission in July with potential construction beginning in 2028. The County Board discussed the need for additional housing, financial and administrative considerations, and the possibility of implementing the project as a pilot program. A consensus was not reached. The County Board requested additional information, including project details, service models and site visits, with the intent to re-evaluate the topic in April.

Burial Policy:

Human Services Deputy Director Will Chew and Fiscal Services Supervisor Janel Sczublewski provided an overview of burial and cremation practices, noting that while the County historically paid higher burial costs (over \$2000 in 2016), most recent cases have involved cremation, with approximately 25 burials completed. The current \$2000 burial contribution has not generated complaints, and families may choose traditional burial with an additional \$500 contribution from the County. Sczublewski also reviewed cemetery plot availability costs, identifying Langola as the most cost-effective option, with the potential to purchase plots accommodating both burials and multiple cremations. Discussion included funding practices and the preference to issue payments directly to vendors rather than through funeral homes. The County Board provided direction to develop a formal policy and bring it forward for future County Board consideration and adoption.

Human Services Employee Survey:

Chew presented results from the 2025 Employee Strategies Survey, noting that while direction was clearer following the 2023 survey, the 2025 results required further breakdown. Key themes included the need for increased employee education on benefits, interest in improved health care options such as lower deductibles and tiered plans, and a desire for greater employee recognition and involvement. Additional feedback highlighted the importance of consistent supervisory practices, flexible work

schedules, and enhanced collaboration and communication across departments. Discussion emphasized generally positive feedback overall, with opportunities to improve communication about benefits, County Board functions, and interdepartmental coordination. Training needs were also identified as an area for further discussion at an upcoming Management Team Meeting.

Statewide Health Improvement Partnership Update:

Public Health Director Jaclyn Litfin, along with Community Health Specialists Kayla Roelofs, Mariah Klein, Tessa Wilhelm and Emma Hanson provided updates on the State Health Improvement Partnership (SHIP) to the County Board. Updates included an overview of their respective program areas, including tobacco-free living, Tri-Wellness, Safe Routes to School, and food access initiatives. The presentation highlighted efforts to make healthy choices more accessible, with projects such as bike racks, hydration stations, lactation/wellbeing rooms, and outdoor learning spaces. Staff reported a total of 450 hours dedicated to these initiatives and reviewed specific local projects, including improvements at Foley Elementary, the Foley CROSS Center, and Pleasantview Elementary, as well as work with the Towards Zero Deaths (TZD) Coalition.

Dental & Oral Health Update:

This topic was canceled due to timing constraints and will be discussed at a future Committee of the Whole Meeting.

Public Health Applications to Funding:

Litfin, along with Public Health Nursing Supervisor Courtney Ferreira provided an update on Public Health funding, noting that an injunction has been granted allowing continued use of current funding sources through December 2027, with BCBS supply funding continuing through June. Ongoing litigation was also discussed, affecting multiple states and the need to identify backup funding sources and alternative grant opportunities. Discussion focused on improving efficiency in grant applications by potentially delegating authority to Public Health leadership to apply for funding opportunities without prior Board approval, provided there is no required local match or staffing increase. It was noted that any grants involving a local match or significant operational impact would still be brought to the County Board for approval. The County Board also expressed interest in a tiered approval system and reviewing practices from other counties to maintain oversight while improving responsiveness to funding opportunities.

Comp Time Discussion:

Shoberg and Litfin provided follow-up data on comp time and overtime usage across Human Services and Public Health, noting that the patterns appear consistent and generally operate on an hour-for-hour basis for most staff. Comp time has long been used as a standard practice (approximately 40 years) and serves as a low-cost employee benefit that is subject to supervisory approval. Discussion noted that while the reporting may appear complex, comp time and overtime are important operational tools that do not significantly increase costs when properly managed and approved.

The Committee of the Whole Meeting was adjourned at 10:17 AM.

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Steven J. Heinen, Board Chair  
Benton County Board of Commissioners

ATTEST:

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Montgomery Headley  
Benton County Administrator