



## TIOGA COUNTY BOARD OF HEALTH

***PLEASE RSVP TO 607-687-8630***

***IF YOU WILL NOT BE ABLE TO ATTEND THIS MEETING***

TO: Members of the Board of Health

FROM: A. Reigelman, Secretary

DATE: October 10, 2024

RE: Board of Health Meeting - Thursday, October 17, 2024,  
7:30 a.m., **Conference Room B**, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor of Health and Human Services  
Building at 1062 St. Rt. 38, Owego, NY 13827.

### AGENDA

#### Introduction of Guests-

- Denis McCann, Director of Administrative Services

#### Presentation- Fiscal Update

#### Old Business

- Meeting Minutes (September)
- Enforcements

#### New Business

- Officer Nominations 2025-2026

#### Informational

- Agency Updates –September 2024

#### Additional Items

- None

#### Next Meeting Information

- Next Meeting is on November 21, 2024



# TIOGA COUNTY BOARD OF HEALTH

## MEETING MINUTES September 19, 2024

### **BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT (Attended In Person):**

T. Hills, DVM, President  
W. Simmons, Vice President  
J. Raftis, DO, FACEP (Departed at 8:12 a.m.)  
T. Nytech, DVM  
W. Standinger III, Legislator  
T. Leary, FNP  
R. Kapur-Pado, DO (Arrived at 7:36 a.m.)

### **ABSENT:**

None

### **OTHER(S) PRESENT:**

H. Vroman, Public Health Director  
A. Reigelman, Secretary  
S. Medina Deputy Public Health Director (Departed at 8:30)  
D. McCann, Director of Administrative Services (Departed at 8:52)  
D. Scherrer, Environmental Health Director (Departed at 8:52)  
P. DeWind Esq., County Attorney (Arrived at 7:37 a.m.)  
G. Howard, Tioga County Sheriff (Arrived at 7:36 a.m., Departed at 8:12 a.m.)

### **CALL TO ORDER:** at 7:30 a.m. by Dr. Hills.

Dr. Hills motioned to change the order of the agenda to discuss the Tioga Castings property first, then proceed with the rest of the agenda items in order as listed. No discussion; motion to approve the change to the Board of Health agenda of September 19, 2024, made by Mr. Simmons; seconded by Legislator Standinger, all were in favor, none opposed; motion approved.

### **OLD BUSINESS:**

- Tioga Casting Property- Ms. Vroman provided update. Have had additional meetings with stakeholders and have drafted a Public Health Order and Notice of Violation to the property owner on record. Per regulations, have to notify New York State Commissioner of Public Health if issuing a Public Health Order. New York State Association of County Health Officials (NYSACHO) also recommended notifying the associate commissioner of public health for our region (Deputy State Commissioner). Gave her a brief of the situation and upon her recommendation also drafted a written statement of the situation as well. Stated that she would escalate to the New York State Commissioner. She also inquired what Tioga County Public Health has asked of the State for this. Stated that this is just to inform New York State, possibly receive additional legal counsel in the matter. Received call back from the Regional Commissioner earlier this week who stated that New York State was in agreement with the current steps being taken but will not provide legal consultation.

Have been working closely with County Attorney DeWind on the Notice of Violation. Was served to the property owner on record this week. The property owner on record called immediately and claimed no ownership ties to the property. Notified Legislative Chair and County Attorney DeWind of the call. County Attorney DeWind can provide follow up after his conversation with the property owner on record. The Notice of Violation was distributed to the Board of Health for reference and provided summary of violations listed. Have to wait five days (after issuing the Notice of Violation) prior to issuing the Public Health Order. Order has been drafted (copy distributed to Board members). County Attorney DeWind and Dr. Hills have reviewed. Anticipation is to have both Dr.

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Hills and Ms. Vroman sign the document. It is tentatively planned to issue the order on Tuesday September 24<sup>th</sup>, bringing it as a group [all stakeholders], offer resources and a list of services. Per the Order, they will have 24 hours to leave the property. The property will then be placarded, and it will be a criminal offense to remove. Some of the individuals are anticipated to leave willingly, others will refuse. 24 hours after issuing the order Tioga County Sheriff's and Owego Police Department will assist in enforcing the Order; first-time violations of fines then could lead to misdemeanors if two or more violations. Second step is to keep individuals off of the property.

- Mr. Simmons expressed concern for appropriate entities leading enforcement efforts. Ms. Vroman/ County Attorney DeWind/ Sheriff Howard all expressed that this would be a collaborative effort and have been working together in this entire process so far.
- Dr. Nytych inquired of the status of the Village of Owego taking ownership of the property. County Attorney DeWind stated that he had a great conversation with the property owner on record. The property owner would like to see something happen, but does not feel entitled. They believe they have no legal ownership of the property, as they stated their name does not show up on any State documentation. However, County Attorney DeWind informed them otherwise. Has questionable relationship with the corporation currently. Village of Owego does have hesitations on taking ownership.
- Sheriff Howard stated that he had deputies do a walk-through of the encampment and also talked with Village Code Enforcement to discuss clean up. Saw 12 to 14 active sites, about as many inactive sites. Willing to do what we can following the lead of County Attorney DeWind. Ms. Vroman noted that after seeing the video of the walk-through, the property has gotten significantly worse in this five-month period.
  - Inquiry of history of violence in the encampment. No real complaints of violence occurring.
  - County Attorney DeWind stated that enforcement could be problematic as it is a good opportunity for it to get litigious.
- Housing is being offered through Department of Social Services. A resource guide will also be distributed along with Mental Health and substance use resources.
- Upon issuance of the order will work with media to message to come from perspective of a health concern.
- Will be offering an Administrative Hearing-felt it would be appropriate to offer due process, for owner of record and any occupants of the property to voice their opinions and be heard. It is scheduled for October 8, 2024. Board of Health is welcome to attend. We have a contracted hearing officer, waiting to hear back if he can attend.
- Ms. Vroman stated that Owego Police Department has indicated that they may have specific names of some individuals occupying the property, once received will include these names on the Public Health Order as well as "all other occupants."
- Dr. Hills entertained motion to accept the Public Health Order as written and to include stated additional names; no discussion; motion to approve the Public Health Order made by Mr. Simmons; seconded by Dr. Kapur-Pado, all were in favor, none opposed; motion approved.
  - Ms. Vroman stated that a final copy of the signed order will be sent to the Board of Health for reference. She appreciates everyone's support (Board of Health, County Attorney DeWind, Sheriff Howard, and staff).
  - Additional discussion of safety while at the property as well as current messaging occurring about property on social media.
- Meeting Minutes (July and August): No discussion; motion to approve prior minutes made by Mr. Simmons; seconded by Dr. Nytych, all were in favor, none opposed, motion approved.
- Enforcements: Discussion of River Rock Diner violations.

### **NEW BUSINESS:**

- Tioga County Public Health Audit Summary, Quarter 2 of 2024 shared by Ms. Medina. 127 records were audited this quarter, including clinic records and other programs. Preschool was a new addition this quarter. We are streamlining processes and revising forms. Overall, audits were very good/complete. A change of process for food program was noted during the audit, to make

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sure to inspect establishments later in the day, to inspect more realistically when they are open/working. 23 satisfaction surveys were received, all good feedback (use of both paper and electronic surveys). No patient complaints or sharps injuries this quarter. Quality Improvement Projects include Animal Bite Investigations (monitoring updates that have been made to the program) and Environmental Health permits (making forms electronic with the option for electronic payment for convenience).

- Discussion of electronic payment system (Municipay) and fees of use.
- Ms. Leary additionally thanked Mr. Scherrer for his assistance with a recent bat found in their home.
- Board members thanked Ms. Medina for sharing.
- Environmental Health Fee Schedule- Ms. Vroman noted that the fee schedule was previously in the Sanitary Code but was removed in the recent amendment. Briefly discussed how revisions were developed by formula. Mr. McCann stated that the department had to have a cost basis in order to revise fee amounts. A few fees are set by New York State (tanning/Weights & Measures). Reviewed surrounding/comparable County fee schedules while revising. The last time the fee schedule was updated was in 2002. Because of efficiencies now, fees are very close to what was previously listed. Also, removed fee for Food Course to eliminate any barrier for people to take it. A full record of how changes were determined is kept within the department. Ms. Vroman stated that once Board of Health approves the fee schedule, it will have to be written into local law which requires scheduling a public hearing.
  - Discussed requirements of mass gatherings (5,000 or more people gathered for more than 24 hours); differences between locally held festivals and mass gatherings.
  - Dr. Hills entertained motion to approve the fee schedule as written; no further discussion, motion to approve the Tioga County Environmental Health Fee Schedule made by Dr. Nytch; seconded by Mr. Simmons, all were in favor, none opposed, motion approved.
  - Ms. Vroman stated that she will work with County Attorney DeWind and Legislative Office to have this approved/established in local law by the beginning of 2025. Will inform the Board of Health of the public hearing when it is scheduled.
- Slate of Officers 2025-2026- Recommendations/nominations were made by members for a slate of officers to serve for a two-year term. Dr. Hills and Mr. Simmons noted that they were still interested in serving as officers. Dr. Hills nominated Dr. Nytch for either officer position and Ms. Leary nominated Dr. Raftis for either officer position. Official vote to occur at the October Meeting.
- Membership Reappointment Recommendation (Legislator Standing and Dr. Raftis)- All members present were in agreement to recommend Legislator Standing and Dr. Raftis for another Board of Health term. No discussion; motion to approve this recommendation made by Mr. Simmons; seconded by Dr. Nytch, all were in favor, none opposed, motion approved.

### **INFORMATIONAL:**

- Board of Health Credentialing Committee approved the recredentialing application for Dr. Sarnicola for another two-year period.
- October 23, 2024, the County will be having a Working on Wellness (WOW) Day. Public Health has taken over the event. It will be 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Will have some outside vendors coming in to boost employee morale (flavored water flights, companion animals). Will be offering flu shots also (by appointment). Board members are welcome to attend.
- Staffing Update:
  - Hired new Public Health Technician, starting September 23<sup>rd</sup>.
  - Posting for a Public Health Sanitarian. Will be responsible for lead and rabies program.
  - Posted this week for a Public Health Emergency Preparedness Coordinator- realized this needs to be a full-time role. Will be Management Confidential.
    - Positions have been budgeted for and approved.
- All Public Health staff have been FIT Tested with N95 masks in case of an emergency.
- The department did tabling at Sundaes at the Farm, Catholic Charities Backpack Giveaway and Tioga County Fair.

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- Dental Van is in transition to a new software program (Cradlepoint); relying on Tioga County IT department in installation.
  - Members inquired if the dental unit's time spent in Richford was successful. Ms. Vroman stated that a lot of extra outreach was done in northern part of the County, but did not have a huge turnout. Members discussed the northern Tioga County community and feelings on healthcare; also discussed the Dental Van sliding fee schedule.
- Ms. Vroman gave appreciation for Ms. Reigelman's work in several policy manual updates. Board members commended her work.

Meeting adjourned at 9:10 a.m.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Abigail Reigelman.

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Terry Hills, DVM, President

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Abigail Reigelman; Secretary

Minutes approved October 17, 2024



**Public Health**  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

**Tioga County**

### October 2024 Enforcements

<u>Business</u>	<u>Type of Violation</u>	<u>Fine Paid/Date</u>	<u>Repeat Violation(s) within 12 Month Period</u>
Johnathan Bump Links At Hiawatha Landing 2350 Marshland Rd Apalachin, NY	Water	\$100.00 9/30/2024	No

**Tioga County Board of Health**  
**Officer Nominations**  
**(January 1, 2025-December 31, 2026)**

**October 17, 2024**

**President Nominations:**

**Terry Hills, DVM**

**Thomas Nych, DVM**

**James Raftis, DO FACEP**

**Vice President Nominations:**

**Jim Simmons**

**Thomas Nych, DVM**

**James Raftis, DO FACEP**



## Tioga County Public Health Department

Health & Human Services Building | 1062 State Route 38, Owego, NY 13827

Phone: 607-687-8600 | Fax: 607-223-7030 | [ph.tiogacountyny.gov](http://ph.tiogacountyny.gov)

Heather Vroman, MEd., Public Health Director



# AGENCY REPORT

## August 22- September 25, 2024

### Highlights

- We welcomed our new Public Health Technician, Alexander Knapp!
- During this year's Pin Ceremony six of our employee's were recognized for their service (5 years +) with the County. Todd Kopalek was honorably mentioned with having 30 years of service.
- In collaboration with the Board of Health, other County departments and community agencies; issued a Public Health Order for the occupants/property owner of the Tioga Castings Property in the Village of Owego due to the site being unfit for human habitation. (See full summary account on page 4)
- Canvassing for a Public Health Sanitarian and Public Health Emergency Preparedness Coordinator.
- Various staff tabled at Spencer-Van Etten Middle School, Candor Elementary School's and Owego Middle School open houses. Our giveaways were a hit!
- We are hosting two interns from Ithaca College for the fall and spring semesters.

### Health Education

- Met with UHS-Candor and UHS-Newark Valley staff to discuss what we do regarding lead care coordination and environmental investigations for children with elevated blood lead levels.
- Attended the Suicide Prevention Coalition meeting which included a Question-Persuade-Refer (QPR) training for members.
- Presented posters on the Tioga Mobile Dental Program and Wellhead Program at the 2024 New York State Rural Health Symposium in Binghamton also attended various breakout sessions regarding the rural aging population and suicide prevention.
- Communicating with Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE), sharing information about the highly pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) outbreak.
- Creating Healthy Schools and Communities (CHSC) staff met with the CHSC team from Broome County Health Department to discuss initiatives to take place during Year 4 of the grant.
- ASAP Coalition hosted the Overdose Awareness Vigil at Draper Park. The event recognized those who have lost their lives to overdoses and highlighted resources in the community to prevent overdose deaths. Ten community agencies and around 40-50 individuals came together during the vigil.
- The Tioga ASAP Steering Committee met for the first time since our department has taken over these grants, and was informed of all the work that has been done during this transition.
- An "All Welcome" sticker flyer was created and the Chamber of Commerce has added it to their e-blasts to engage businesses in the initiative.
- A lunch and learn for Narcan Training was provided at 56 Main Street, training 5 staff members,
- Public Health Educator attended the Village of Waverly board meeting with a member from Tobacco Free Broome Tioga, the mayor was interested in adopting a smoke free policy.

### Environmental Health

- Received great feedback from a recent animal bite victim, telling staff that their experience with us was "spectacular" from their first interaction to their last!
- Staff attended New York State Lead Poisoning Prevention meeting in Syracuse.
- EH Director participated in the NYSACHO Environmental Health Committee Call discussing vape regulations and enforcements.
- EH Director and Sanitarian attended the Annual Environmental Health meeting.
- Rabies vaccine clinic in Richford went well, vaccinating over 145 pets! Stray Haven partnered, and provided over 100 Parvo-distemper vaccines.



### **Patient Services (EI, Dental, Clinic)**

- The Quality Assurance Team added a Quality Improvement project to evaluate and address staff and patient safety and security on the mobile dental van.
- Dental Van started off the school year at Elm Street Elementary in Waverly, over 120 children have signed up for services.
- Tioga County IT assisted in installing Cradle Point onto the Mobile Dental Van, which allows for better internet/phone connection throughout Tioga County.
- Dental Van staff completed cultural competency training and Director of Patient Services completed class on HIPAA/FERPA updates for School Based Dental Program.
- Early Intervention staff have been attending regularly scheduled webinars to prepare for the EI Hub going live in October.
- Children's Services had increased number of referrals, and were able to link 19 children to begin services (enrolling in Early Intervention, Child Find, or Committee on Preschool Special Education).
- The clinic has been busy vaccinating children due to be excluded from school. Also held a Public Health staff flu vaccine clinic.
- Our PHN has completed training to be a certified CPR instructor.
- Completed the full Immunization Quality Improvement Program (IQIP) one-year cycle with Guthrie Owego.
- Established an agreement with Tioga County Emergency Services to host one of our backup vaccine storage units onsite in case of emergency and needing to relocate vaccine.

### **Administrative Services**

- PHD presented UHS-Candor and UHS Newark Valley with certificates in recognition of their 2023 blood lead screening rates, which were the highest in Tioga County.
- PHD presented to Kiwanis as part of Strategic Plan to strengthen partnerships with community agencies.

### **Ongoing Support/Partnerships**

- Allies in Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition
- Child Fatality Review Team
- Family Enrichment Network (Head Start)
- Lourdes PACT Advisory Board
- Mothers and Babies Perinatal Network
- New York State Association of County Health Officials (NYSACHO)
- New York State Association for Rural Health (NYSARH)
- New York State Association of Counties (NYSAC)
- Racker Center
- Rural Economic and Partnership (REAP)
- Rural Health Network
- Safe Harbor Committee
- S2AY Pivotal Partners Finger Lakes
- Team Tioga
- Tioga County Board of Health
- Tioga County Commissioner's Advisory Council
- Tioga County Council of Governments
- Tioga County Immunization Coalition
- Tioga County Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC)
- Tioga County Mental Health Sub-Committee
- Tioga County Non-Profit Network
- Tioga Opportunities

### **Attachments:**

1. Financial Snapshot, YTD thru 8/2024.
2. Summary Statement: Tioga Castings Public Health Order, September 24, 2024.
3. Article: "Foundry Property deemed a threat to Public Health," Morning Times, September 25, 2024.
4. Flyer: "What the Health!?", September 2024.
5. Bulletin Board: "As your Child Changes...So should their Car Seat," Health & Human Services Building, Owego, September 2024.
6. Billboards: "As your child changes...", "Narcain Saves Lives!," September 2024.
7. Data Spreadsheet August 22-September 25, 2024.

**Financial Snapshot  
Year-to-date through August 2024\*1**

	<b>Budget 2024</b>	<b>Actual YTD 2024</b>	<b>Percentage of 2024 Budget</b>
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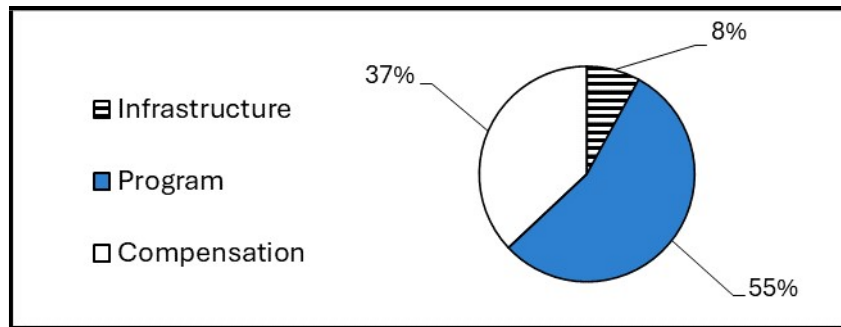
**REVENUES**

Fees	1,257,068	466,206	31 %
State/Federal	3,779,346	1,373,544	36 %
Local	3,397,408	2,302,288	68 %
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>8,433,822</b>	<b>4,142,038</b>	<b>49 %</b>

**EXPENSES**

Compensation	2,818,444	1,544,290	55 %
Program Expense	5,088,313	2,276,317	45 %
Core Infrastructure	527,065	321,431	61 %
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>8,433,822</b>	<b>4,142,038</b>	<b>49 %</b>

**Allocation of Expenses  
Year-to-date through August 2024**



**\*Notes:**

1. Most of January & February revenue are adjusted back to prior year as payments during this time are for services performed in the prior year. State Aid reimbursement is reported a couple months after each quarter ends.

## **Summary of Tioga Castings Public Health Order**

On May 23, 2024 Tioga County Public Health investigated a nuisance complaint from the Village of Owego Code Enforcement Officer at a location on Foundry Street in the Village of Owego, Tioga County, New York 13827. During the investigation of the complaint Tioga County Public Health found that the site was inhabited by a group of 15-25 individuals experiencing homelessness. The site was found to have numerous Public Health hazards including raw sewage, food garbage and toxic materials. At this time, it was also determined that the individuals were living on a Brownfield site.

The Brownfield site, also known as Tioga Casting Facility, is a seven-acre parcel with one acre fenced in, which is currently monitored by Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) as a level four New York State Department of Environmental Conservation's Registry of Inactive Hazardous Waste Disposal Sites. The remaining six acres, where the encampment is situated and individuals are residing, is unfenced and zoned as commercial/industrial.

Tioga County Public Health staff noted broken concrete and standing water at the property during the initial complaint investigation. With concerns of contamination and potential health risks for individuals residing on the property, Tioga County Public Health staff collected soil samples from the six acre parcel. Soil sample results were received on June 17, 2024 and indicated high levels of the heavy metal Cadmium. At this time, it was determined that the property was unsafe for human habitation and initial stages of developing a plan for the health and safety of individuals experiencing homelessness began. Additional soil sample results indicated exceedingly high levels of Cadmium and Lead.

Health risks of Cadmium and Lead on the human body can result in acute exposure symptoms such as respiratory distress, flu-like symptoms, gastrointestinal disturbances, abdominal pain, headaches, and fatigue. Long-term exposure could lead to chronic illness such as cognitive impairment, anemia, kidney damage, hypertension, reproductive toxicity, bone demineralization, lung cancer and/or prostate cancer.

Upon request of Tioga County Public Health and the Tioga County Legislature, due to the concern for safety of individuals living at the site, the Department of Environmental Conservation re-evaluated the site on July 11, 2024. In a follow-up notification, the DEC stated that the property continues to only be suited for commercial/industrial use and not suitable for human habitation.

Several stakeholder meetings were held, which included members from Tioga County Public Health, Tioga County Board of Health, Tioga County Legislature, Village of Owego, Owego Police Department, Tioga County Sheriff's Department, Village of Owego Code Enforcement, Tioga County Department Heads and community representatives. Stakeholders discussed strategies on approaching this matter with sensitivity and the utmost concern for the safety and wellbeing of individuals living at the property and ensuring that services are provided to individuals when moved from the property.

A Notice of Violation was made on September 16, 2024 to the owner of the property. The Notice requested for corrective action and abatement for the violations, granting due process opportunity, within 5 business days for the owner to respond.

The Tioga County Board of Health deemed the Tioga Casting Facility property located at Foundry Street in the Village of Owego, Tioga County, New York 13827 an Imminent Threat to Public Health due to the contamination in the soil, the property is unfit for human habitation, in addition to the land not being zoned as residential. A Public Health Order was issued on September 24, 2024 to the occupants residing on the property as well as the property owner on record stating that no individuals may occupy nor reside on this property and that the property shall be cleared of all occupants within 24 hours of the posting of the order. Upon issuance of the order, the property was also placarded indicating that the property is unsafe for human habitation. Any failure to comply with the order will result in misdemeanor violations, punishable by fines or by imprisonment.

On October 8, 2024 an Administrative Hearing will be held for any respondent of the Public Health Order to be able to personally appear and be heard.

# Foundry property deemed a threat to Public Health

Multiple agencies partner to clear property; offer services

By WENDY POST  
Times Correspondent

On Tuesday, Sept. 24, 2024, multiple agencies arrived at the Foundry Street homeless camp in Owego, N.Y. to post the property as a threat to public health, and to offer services and assistance to those residing there.

With the Tioga County Sheriff's Office, Owego Police Department, Department of Environmental Conservation representatives, Tioga County Mental Health and Department of Health, clergy, social service workers, and organizations that assist the homeless and local officials on hand, entry to the property was made and signs posted.



Photo by Wendy Post

**On Tuesday, Sept. 24, 2024, multiple agencies arrived at the Foundry Street homeless camp in Owego, N.Y. to post the property as a threat to public health, and to offer services and assistance to those residing there. A small handful of residents that aren't interested in county assistance were required to vacate in 24-hours.**

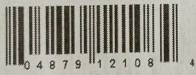
Of the approximately 14 residents remaining that have been calling the encampment their home, they were offered immediate assistance at the Renewal Ranch on West Main Street, where organizations were gathered and waiting to begin assisting those desiring help.

Several residents of the encampment did not leave, but were told they have 24-hours to vacate. When this writer asked them where they would go, they said they didn't know.

One gentleman in particular, who this

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Morning Times

## Threat

From Page A1

writer has spoken with before at the grounds, said that he could never comply with requirements, and was concerned that he would end up in jail. He spoke of his family, and his plight, but our conversation was cut short as another camp resident was already digging through his personal items, and he had to return to his campfire and the area where he was squatting.

The journey from the initial settlement at the Foundry location to Tuesday's delivery by the Department of Health of an order deeming the property a health risk has been a challenge for social service workers as well as officials, with a dumpster placed at one point to assist with the looming crisis, and municipal buildings that have opened their doors to welcome our homeless residents during the winter months.

But now, and on Sept. 24, 2024, the property is deemed uninhabitable, and posted signs warn residents of the hazard. Those who enter the property can be fined or charged with a misdemeanor, with a combination of fines rendered and a maximum of 6-months in prison for the violation.

It all began with an investigation into a Village of Owego complaint, with Tioga County Public Health determining that numerous public health hazards existed at the property including food and household garbage, raw sewage and human waste, toxic materials, drug paraphernalia, and most concerning, soil containing Cadmium and Lead.

The Brownfield site, also known as Tioga Casting Facility, is a seven-acre parcel with one acre fenced in, which is currently monitored by the Department of Environmental Conservation as a level four on the New York State DEC Registry of Inactive Hazardous Waste Disposal Site. Homeless residents also occupied the remaining six acres, where the public health hazards and soil contamination were found.

According to Tioga County Public Health, the health risks of Cadmium and Lead on the human body can result in acute exposure symptoms such as respiratory distress, flu-like symptoms, gastrointestinal disturbances, abdominal pain, headaches, and fatigue. Long-term exposure could lead to chronic illness such as cognitive impairment, anemia, kidney damage, hypertension, reproductive toxicity, bone demineralization, lung cancer, and/or prostate cancer.

"Due to the potential risks for individuals associated with exposure to these heavy metals, the Tioga County Board of Health and Public Health Director feel it necessary to issue an order declaring the property unfit for human habitation," Heather Vroman, Tioga County's Public Health director.

According to the DEC's re-evaluation of the site in July, the levels of contamination mean the property should stay zoned for industrial or commercial use only; and is not fit for residential or living use. However, the surrounding community can rest assured that there is no concern or health risks for those residing outside of the seven-acre parcel, Vroman emphasized.

"We recognize this is a sensitive issue with many facets," said Vroman, adding, "However, first and foremost, it is the mission of Tioga County Public Health to protect the health and safety of the community and all those living here."

She continued, "Once it was brought to our department's attention that people living in temporary



Photo by Wendy Post

**On Tuesday, Sept. 24, 2024, multiple agencies arrived at the Foundry Street homeless camp in Owego, N.Y. to post the property as a threat to public health, and to offer services and assistance to those residing there. A small handful of residents that aren't interested in county assistance were required to vacate in 24-hours.**

structures on the site may be exposed to hazardous pollutants we acted immediately. We have been working with county officials and community partners to ensure resources are provided to individuals as they relocate."

The DSS Commissioner, Shawn Yetter, confirmed that assistance for temporary housing is available for anyone from the Castings property. Further, Vroman noted, this continues to be a collaborative effort with multiple local and State agencies and community partners.

Two individuals that have worked personally and on behalf of their organizations and ministry have been painstakingly moving towards a resolution for the homeless population.

Michelle McLaren, with Catholic Charities, has been successful in assisting individuals at the property, getting them connected with services and oftentimes housing.

Pastor Jay Geistdorfer, from the Owego Nazarene Church, has also been "boots on the ground" through this process, working to connect the homeless population with resources.

"This is the best group I have ever worked with to resolve a problem," said Geistdorfer about the urgency of protecting Public Health and getting the homeless residents the services they need.

"It's a unified effort, and we are trying to provide them [the homeless residents] with options."

After the property was deemed uninhabitable on Tuesday morning, the folks wanting services were taken directly over to Renewal Ranch to begin the process.

There is no set date for when the property will be cleared, but it will most likely take some time. Vroman stated that the DEC, since their initial determination on July 11, 2024, will continue to monitor things.

Walking through the camp on Tuesday, this writer observed multiple structures, built by residents to provide shelter from the elements. There was a teepee, tents, wooden structures, campfires, grills, and even several stray cats that were living among the residents.

One tent, in particular, caught my eye. It was cleverly constructed between two trees; an additional tarp tiered over the top, offering an extra layer of protection from the elements. The resident built a deck off the front, had a fire pit for night time heat, and even had a grill for cooking. A broom leaned against a nearby wheelbarrow, indicating that the resident took pride in the construction of their homeless abode.

Another structure was enclosed, with shelves on the outside, and strewn toys and children's shoes scattered about. It was evident that someone made this their home, and put time and work into it as well. Inside was a bed, blankets, more book-type shelves, and a bevy of belongings.

Alternatively, layers of trash covered the ground in many areas, with one overflowing dumpster needing to be emptied again. This writer found needles, trash and diapers; and basically what one would expect to find in the absence of a working sewer or running water.

But all was not lost here, some of our area's homeless residents found a place to settle in; but for the county, health is the number one priority, and the agencies, organizations and individuals working together to find a solution did so painstakingly, and with complete abandon, assisting the area's vulnerable population.

To learn more about public safety, how you can get resources or find services, contact the Tioga County Department of Health by calling (607) 687-8630. A remediation plan is forthcoming.



# What the Health!?

September 2024

**BE DISASTER AWARE.  
TAKE ACTION TO PREPARE!**

*Visit [Ready.gov/plan](https://www.ready.gov/plan)*

In 2021, 220 people died each day from an opioid overdose in the United States.

**Know the signs of an opioid overdose and learn how to save a life with Narcan nasal spray!**



## KEEP YOUR LITTLEST PASSENGERS SAFE!

Make sure your children are in the correct car seat for their age, weight, and height!



**BIRTH TO 3 YEARS:**  
Keep children in a rear-facing car seat as long as possible, until they exceed the seat's maximum weight and height limits. All children must stay rear-facing until at least age 2!



**4 - 7 YEARS:**  
Keep children in a forward-facing car seat with a harness as long as possible, until they exceed the seat's maximum weight and height limits.



**8 - 12 YEARS:**  
Keep children in a booster seat until they fit in a seat belt properly.  
All children must be in a child safety seat until at least their 8th birthday.



**UNDER 13 YEARS:**  
Children should always sit in the back seat with a seat belt where they're safest.  
For more information:  
[NHTSA.GOV/THERIGHTSEAT](https://www.NHTSA.GOV/THERIGHTSEAT)

**YOU  
MATTER**

Text.  
Call.  
Chat.

**988**  
SUICIDE  
& CRISIS  
LIFELINE



Bulletin Board: Health & Human Services Building, September 2024



Billboard Design, Various locations, September 2024

# DATA SPREADSHEET

August 22- September 25, 2024

<b>PUBLIC HEALTH ACTIVITIES</b>	<b>Y-E 2022</b>	<b>Y-E 2023</b>	<b>Aug-24</b>	<b>Sep-24</b>	<b>Y-T-D</b>
<b>Community Health</b>					
Communicable Disease	885	2438	267	323	2591
- General Infectious Diseases (Campylobacterious, Salmonellosis, etc)	N/A	61	6	10	274
- Zoonotic Diseases (Anaplasmosis, Lyme, etc)	220	375	28	25	294
- Vaccine-Preventable Diseases (COVID-19, Influenza, etc)	400	1897	227	279	1928
- Hepatitis	89	15	1	1	12
- PPD Test Administered	0	6	0	0	1
Child Passenger Safety Seats Inspected	40	47	8	4	43
- Child Seats FAILED Inspection	31	36	3	3	35
Immunizations total child and adult	35	62	2	27	43
Children Lead Tested (6 years and under)	712	913	57	88	642
Newly Identified Children with Elevated Blood Lead Levels	N/A	22	0	0	6
Current Children with EBLL Caseload	N/A	N/A	34	25	N/A
- Welcome Baby Packets Mailed	N/A	77	34	22	237
People Trained w/ Narcan	1	145	0	0	11
Opioid Overdose Reporting Forms received	3	3	0	0	4
<b>Dental</b>					
New Clients	340	311	20	28	226
Dental Screenings	1120	1141	74	138	860
- Clients with Low Decay Risk	265	374	32	43	329
-Clients with Moderate Decay Risk	496	419	15	32	193
- Clients with High Decay Risk	347	344	27	64	344
Extractions	100	102	16	20	121
<b>Children Services</b>					
Early Intervention Referrals	148	206	14	25	145
- Early Intervention CURRENT Caseload *Monthly total	N/A	N/A	29	24	N/A
- EI children waiting for service(s)	N/A	N/A	1	1	N/A
<b>Preschool</b>					
- Children in tuition-based program	N/A	N/A	33	19	N/A
- Children receiving transportation services under Serafini contract	N/A	N/A	20	14	N/A
- Children receiving transportation by parents	N/A	N/A	13	5	N/A
<b>Child Find</b>					
- Current Children being served	17	N/A	15	15	N/A

<b>Environmental Health</b>					
Animal bite investigations	153	198	29	23	196
- Individuals requiring Rabies Series (N)	7	2	9	2	44
Rabies Clinics	7	8	0	2	8
- Number of Animals Vaccinated	1012	1098	0	218	1254
Food Establishment Inspections	151	247	14	33	174
Temporary Food Inspections	57	66	19	3	53
Clean Indoor Air Act Complaints (Smoking)	6	0	0	0	1
Mobile Home Park Inspections	12	37	4	3	21
Swimming Pool Inspections	18	11	1	0	7
ATUPA Checks (Underage Tobacco Sales)	70	108	0	37	112
- ATUPA Violations	2	3	0	0	2
Wellhead Replacement Projects In Progress	N/A	N/A	2	4	
Wellhead Replacement Projects Completed	N/A	N/A	2	3	25
Children's Camp Inspections	8	7	2	0	13
Agriculture Fairground Inspections	2	2	1	0	2
Nuisance Complaints	16	7	4	3	15
Enforcement Actions	29	72	2	5	32
<b>Weights &amp; Measures</b>					
Inspection Sites	123	110	17	20	149
-Devices Inspected	475	604	16	68	269
Training Hrs/Equipment Maintenance	24	27	2	0	34