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Board of Health introduces changes for septic procedures

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The Jefferson County Board of Health used its first meeting since firing longtime Health Administrator Ralph Armand to develop a new form department officials said will enable residents to prove they have a working septic system.



Monroe

During its regular quarterly meeting Tuesday, the board implemented a new septic system verification form that will allow residents who do not have a septic system on file with the health department to request an inspection. If the inspection - which involves exposing the lateral lines, distribution box and tank - reveals that a system is in place, the resident will be given the OK to pursue a building permit.

Then, 90 days after the house is occupied, the health department will conduct a follow-up check of the system. It will be at the cost of the resident to prove the system is in place, but the board did not add fees for the verification form.

Tammy Monroe, who was named interim health administrator after Armand was fired, said the form was established because two county residents with working septic systems were denied building permits in the past because a system was not on file.

"It used to be that if they had nothing on file, then they were made to put in a new system," she said.

Ginger and Rich Davidson, owners of Lee Bottom Flying Field, suggested that the board research the use of cameras or septic tank readers that can determine where components of the system are located, and if a system exists at all. The cameras or locators would keep residents from having to dig or probe for a system. Monroe said she would research both methods.

In addition to the septic system form, the board considered changing the process of how installers are added to the county's certified septic system installation list.

Clarification - May 3, 2012

The Jefferson County Board of Health will advertise for the open health administration position for two weeks. A story Wednesday did not include that the position will be advertised. The board will have executive sessions June 5 and June 12 to discuss personnel. The board set the dates Wednesday afternoon.

Monroe also suggested that the board allow the use of new types of septic systems that are approved by the Indiana State Board of Health but have not been recognized by the local health department.

Currently, the county has a list of seven certified septic system installers who can install either a gravity, pump or mound system. The board voted to add three new septic systems to that list: chamber, drift or presby units.

To become a certified installer in Jefferson County, a contractor currently needs to have installed the three types of systems recognized in the county, with the health department checking every step of the way. There is no written test for the approval process.

Monroe and Health Officer John Hossler suggested easing back on the skills check-off process for the installers but also adding a written test to the certification process.

"I think a written test and a demonstration of skills capability needs to be done," he said.

Rich Davidson said in the past it was difficult for new installers to gain the county's certification and get their names on the list.

In one specific, Monroe said she spoke with a contractor in the county who has not been allowed to install septic systems for several years. During an open forum to discuss septic system issues shortly after the tornado March 2, Armand told the contractor he was court-ordered not to install septic systems in Jefferson County.

After checking with County Attorney Wil Goering, Monroe said she could not find any such order in place against the installer.

"If he wishes to apply to become a certified contractor, we need to allow him to do that," she said.

Also during the meeting, the board announced it will begin advertising for a permanent health administrator. The board agreed to accept applications for three weeks and then set up executive sessions in early June to review resumes and conduct interviews.

Executive sessions for personnel matters are not open to the public. However, the board must hold a public meeting to vote on the new administrator.

Rich Davidson said he wants to see an administrator who is pro-business and willing to work with county residents.

"Find someone who is people-oriented and really wants the county to grow and benefit," he said.

In other business:

- Karen Buchanan, director of nursing for the health department, reported that the health department held four clinics and one mobile clinic after the tornado March 2. In Chelsea, she said, the health department administered 69 tetanus vaccinations.
- The board members decided to shift their regular meetings from the afternoon to the evening. The next meeting will be at 6 p.m. July 16 in the Jefferson County Health Department conference room.
- Ginger Davidson presented a book signed by several community members as a thank-you to the health board for listening to the public's concerns about septic system issues and health department personnel.