

**Hamilton County General Health District**  
**REGULAR MEETING – BOARD OF HEALTH**  
**January 11, 2021 – 4:00 p.m.**  
**Minutes**

**1. Call to Order**

At 4 p.m., Mark A. Rippe, President, called to order the regular session of the Board of Health of Hamilton County General Health District, conducted by conference call, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

**2. Roll Call of Members**

Members Present: Mark A. Rippe, President  
James Brett, Vice President  
Elizabeth A. Kelly, M.D.  
Dan Meloy  
Tracey A. Puthoff, Esq.

District Staff Present: Greg Kesterman, Health Commissioner  
Dr. Jennifer Mooney, Assistant Health Commissioner  
Craig Davidson, Assistant Health Commissioner  
Dr. Steve Feagins, Medical Director  
Nee Fong Chin, Chief Assistant Prosecuting Attorney  
Greg Varner, Finance Officer

Guests: None

**3. Clean Kitchen Awards**

Craig Davidson read the list of 36 Clean Kitchen Award recipients and congratulated them for their efforts to maintain a high level of sanitation and staff education.

**4. Approval of Minutes**

**Mr. Brett** moved to approve the minutes from the December 14, 2020 Board of Health meeting.

**Ms. Puthoff** seconded the motion.

**Roll Call Vote – All Aye**

**5. Health Commissioner's Report**

Commissioner Kesterman thanked the Board Members from all the staff for last month's monetary bonus and additional holiday time. Staff have been working extra hard during the pandemic and sincerely appreciate all recognition.

COVID-19 statistics are experiencing growth with Ohio reporting 777,065 cases, 41,158 hospitalizations, 9,627 deaths, and 534,085 presumed recovered. Hamilton County reports 59,441 cases, 2,257 hospitalizations, 432 deaths, and 48,897 presumed recovered. The increase is likely attributed to the holidays and the numbers have plateaued again. The R Factor is 1.11 for Hamilton County and 1.20 for the 14-county region. Daily hospitalization is trending downward at 5-10 per day in Hamilton County; however, regional hospitalization

has plateaued at a high level which puts stress on the hospitals and staff. ICU admissions are elevated. Ms. Puthoff asked if the hospitalization numbers are a swap out of admissions/discharges. Commissioner Kesterman stated that is likely, but there is potential the hospitalization numbers will shift up after the holidays.

Most of Ohio is at Level 3 Public Health Advisory. Hamilton County has a star which indicates the metrics are approaching Level 4. The downward trend in school numbers is attributed to winter break. Based on OSU studies, requirements for quarantine have been reduced which helps relieve the quarantine burden on schools and helps to keep children in the classroom.

Vaccinations started on December 23, so we are in week 3. Only those in Phase 1A are eligible to be vaccinated. Fire departments and nursing homes have been completed in Hamilton County. HCPH is now scheduling appointments for all 1A at our clinic and at Sharonville Convention Center. Vaccine for those in Tier 1B and over 80-years begins the week of January 18 and schools vaccines are anticipated by February 1. However, tier 1A has not been completed and the vaccine supply is limited. The governor is working on public messaging that enough vaccines for 80-year olds that want to be vaccinated may not be available for a couple months. Ms. Puthoff asked why we don't have more vaccine in the state. The state is getting 100,000 from federal government. There are many logistical issues with not knowing how much HCPH is getting and with only a couple days' notice prior to receiving vaccine.

HCPH has up to nine RNs associated with just vaccine distribution. The goal is to administer doses within seven days. Ms. Puthoff asked if there were any lost doses. There were two fire departments that didn't administer all doses that were distributed to them. As a result, they will not be given second doses for self-administering and will have to receive their second dose at a HCPH clinic or another fire department. Ms. Puthoff inquired about a Kroger Little Clinic employee being told they are not eligible to get the vaccine – is that right? Commissioner Kesterman said those clinicians should register with HCPH. HCPH will deplete current stock of vaccines this week.

Ms. Puthoff asked how public messaging is getting out. Commissioner Kesterman does joint press conference weekly with County Commissioner Driehaus. The elderly will not be required to use the registration app. HCPH will be calling those that are over 80 and have registered to receive the vaccine. Early registration is available on HCPH's website.

The Program Implementation Plan Q4 2020 results are in the meeting packet. 2020 was not the year we planned; however, HCPH staff persevered and met or exceeded 87 percent of the metrics. Some programs were postponed due to COVID-19. Staff have done a phenomenal job. The CARES Act funds were extended and should last until June. HCPH expects to get additional funds for vaccination efforts. The facilities upgrades were successful and turned out very nice. The new carpet was from last year's budget and desks with six foot spacing were paid for by CARES Act funding. More improvements are in the 2021 budget.

Commissioner Kesterman will find out tomorrow who the providers are that are getting the doses for the 80-year olds. Public Health will be seeing 300-500 doses. Mr. Rippe asked if people are to get on the list at all locations? The governor is providing more direction for the public as there is a lot of confusion. The Health Collaborative is trying to create a local community registry to simplify the process. The Board stated that HCPH's messaging

needs to help educate the public about the vaccine process and the limited supply available. The slow release of information from the state makes it difficult to execute locally. Ms. Puthoff is disappointed the state didn't have a distribution plan in place. HCPH will work to have as many of the dispensing locations (as soon as they are known) on the HCPH website and reinforce the information in press releases. The Board will support the resources needed to make HCPH's website the best source for information about the vaccine rollout in Hamilton County. The Board thanked staff for their hard work and dedication throughout the pandemic.

## **Staff Reports**

### **(a) Medical Director's Report**

Dr. Steve Feagins, Medical Director reviewed the Region 6 Infectious Disease Working Group priorities for 2021. Dr. Feagins attributed the extremely low 2020-21 seasonal influenza hospitalizations to masks and social distancing. Hamilton County and the nation is seeing significantly increased COVID-19 pneumonia related mortality. Region 6 hospitals report 738 confirmed cases, 189 in ICU, and 133 on ventilators. The ventilator patients have a 50 percent chance of survival, so providers are working to administer high flow oxygen instead which has been the mainstay of COVID-19 therapy. Oxygen is in high demand, but our region has an adequate supply.

Healthcare personnel are the largest limiting factor; that is why they are the focus of tier 1A vaccine distribution. Hospital capacity remains at 80-90 percent due to open surge units and down 20 percent from normal. So far, we have not seen the highly transferable strain locally, but are ramping up variant testing capability. Children's Hospital Medical Center's Behavioral Health Unit has been maxed out. Local daily census and admissions closely mirror the state's numbers. Treatment continues to improve and seeking more ways to support those on the front lines.

The monthly Communicable Diseases Epi report was provided in the Board packet.

### **(b) Department of Community Health Services**

Assistant Health Commissioner Dr. Jennifer Mooney reported staff have been running clinics and gearing up for the big vaccine distribution at Sharonville Convention Center. The no-show rate is 2.5 percent, but no vaccine is wasted. Staff have a standby list for extra doses. While vaccine distribution is the current major focus, contact tracing continues to happen and the process has been refined to where case assignment has nearly become completely automated. Full details are in the meeting packet. HCPH Teams/Squads are led by seasoned RNs. HCPH is contracting six additional RNs for administering vaccinations. Staff are being mindful of sign-up alternatives to the app. Also strategizing the second dose clinic logistics.

Overdose and syringe reports are in the meeting packet and available online.

The Ohio Equity Institute (OEI) Team recently completed a quality improvement project. The primary goal is to identify efficient and effective strategies to engage pregnant women in Hamilton County's targeted communities and connect them to needed services. Ms. Puthoff asked what is a hot card and how were the results doubled? Dr. Mooney explained the hot

card is a referral card placed in target community locations like Kroger's diaper and/or pregnancy test aisles. The locations are being tracked to determine which have the best engagement returns. The team is refining the process to connect with more pregnant women in hopes of connecting them to prenatal services. This project is one of many in our County aimed at reducing the infant mortality rate.

**(c) Department of Environmental Health Services**

Assistant Health Commissioner Mr. Davidson explained the fire/EMS department vaccine dispensing clinic covered 28 drop offs in one day (34 total departments as some shared resources) and 1,100 doses distributed to these front-line healthcare workers. Efficient delivery routes are detailed in the meeting packet.

Staff conducted a review and assessment of data for food service operation (FSO) and retail food establishment (RFE) closures and temporary licenses. COVID-19 has not yet noticeably impacted the FSO and RFE data as it is on par with the prior three years. However, the closure impact may be more significant down the road. Staff also looked at temporary licenses (e.g. festivals) and saw a drop, which was expected. However, an increase in applications by Kroger for its grill-out events helped compensate for the lower temporary license application numbers.

Staff overseeing the state license programs have adjusted their process and communications regarding license renewal to make license holders aware of the House Bill 404 temporary extension of deadlines. Full details are in the meeting packet.

Bill Dolash, an inspector in the Plumbing Division, recently completed the Leadership for Results series of professional development courses offered by Hamilton County Human Resources and Development. Mr. Davidson congratulated him for his hard work and commitment to working through this program. Mr. Rippe asked Mr. Davidson to express congratulations to Mr. Dolash from the Board.

Ms. Puthoff asked for a status update on the new health equity position. Commissioner Kesterman explained that Kurstin Jones has already submitted some recommendations and she has been a good resource to leadership. Ms. Jones will present to the Board sometime in the next three months. Hamilton County adopted Juneteenth as a holiday, but HCPH has not done that. Commissioner Kesterman indicated that this would be an item that he would ask Ms. Jones to include in her presentation to the Board. Mr. Brett asked, and Commissioner Kesterman confirmed that HCPH typically follows the county's holiday schedule.

Housing enforcements are detailed in the meeting packet.

Ms. Puthoff asked about the timing of the Board Program Implementation Plan and Strategy meeting. Commissioner Kesterman indicated the timing is the end of 2021 and would start dialogue with health equity. With a grant writer and person responsible for health equity on staff, HCPH should be able to leverage more federal dollars in other program areas.

**6. Unfinished Business: None.**

**7. Finances:**

Finance Officer Greg Varner reviewed the Fourth Quarter and Preliminary Year-End 2020 reports. Mr. Varner spoke to revenue and expense variances, fund balances, and grants. We have revenues over expenses of approximately \$490k with receipts added after our reports were produced, the final number will approach \$700k surplus and nearly \$1.5M positive variance over 2020's budget. Ms. Puthoff asked about the total local COVID-19 grant funding and size of local population. Mr. Varner reported the Hamilton County population is approximately 484,000 and in 2020 HCPH received approximately \$4.3M in COVID-19 funding. With the two COVID-19 grants in 2021, that takes the total up to \$5.8M. Hamilton County paid for or reimbursed HCPH for various COVID-19 needs totaling approximately \$800k through the County's CARES Act funding. Mr. Rippe asked if any grants will have expenses greater than revenue. Mr. Varner reported no, staff are shifted accordingly as needed.

The December 2020 Disbursement Reports are included in the Board packet.

**Ms. Puthoff** moved to approve the monthly disbursements.

**Dr. Kelly** seconded the motion.

**Roll Call Vote – All Aye; Mr. Brett abstained on White Water expenditures.**

## 8. Adjournment

**Dr. Kelly** moved to adjourn the meeting at 5:36 p.m.

**Mr. Brett** seconded the motion.

**Roll Call Vote – All Aye**

Next Board of Health meeting: February 8, 2021 at 4 p.m. via Zoom.

  
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Mark A. Rippe, President

  
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Greg Kesterman, Secretary  
Health Commissioner

