

**Hamilton County General Health District
REGULAR MEETING – BOARD OF HEALTH
March 13, 2023 – 4 p.m.
Minutes**

1. Call to Order

At 4 p.m., Elizabeth A. Kelly, President, called to order the regular session of the Board of Health of Hamilton County General Health District followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Roll Call of Members

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

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

3. Pledge of Allegiance

4. Clean Kitchen Awards

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

5. Approval of Minutes

Mr. Rippe moved to approve the minutes from the February 13, 2023, Board of Health meeting.

Mr. Brett seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote – All Aye

6. Public Comment: None.

7. Health Commissioner's Report

Commissioner Kesterman shared that Hamilton County's COVID-19 cases are currently ranked in the lowest category per the CDC. The Omicron variants have low hospitalization statistics and subsequent subvariants are following the same low hospitalization pattern. The current 7-day average is 65 cases per day which continues the downward trend. HCPH is wrapping up COVID-19 vaccination efforts at the end of June which follows state and federal timelines. Despite an active start to flu season, the numbers continue to reflect a relatively mild flu season.

Commissioner Kesterman thanked Mr. Meloy and Mr. Rippe for going on site visits to see prospective new locations to house HCPH's operations. Commissioner Kesterman expects to have an update soon from County Commissioners on property options. An update regarding status will be presented to the Board at the April meeting and possible Board action may be requested.

House Bill 33 includes a budget increase for local public health. The allowance is \$1 to \$2 per capita, which is a significant increase and the first increase in quite some time. HB33 also includes concerning language related to dry wells and Assistant Health Commissioner Mr. Davidson will elaborate on that in his report.

Added to tonight's agenda is a Proclamation for Lisa Humble who is retiring at the end of this month from her position as Director of Plumbing. Ms. Humble, who was not in attendance, wanted to convey her appreciation to the Board.

The District Advisory Council annual meeting is March 14 at noon. Dr. Kelly up for reelection. All Board members are invited to attend this public meeting.

Mr. Rippe congratulated staff on the 102 percent public swimming pool ODH audit. Mr. Rippe asked if public education notices are sent to permit holders reminding them about lifeguards and other requirements. Mr. Davidson explained that all permits were caught up last year so there shouldn't be an issue. Mr. Davidson also shared that keeping permit holder email contacts updated is a challenge.

Staff Reports

(a) Medical Director's Report

Dr. Steve Feagins, Medical Director explained the benefits of electronic health records. It was this time three years ago that everything shut down because of COVID-19. The data shows that COVID-19 deaths among the unvaccinated continue to be higher than vaccinated deaths. There may be an updated vaccine this fall. COVID-19 hospitalization numbers are routine compared to three years ago. The focus is now on post-COVID, called long COVID syndrome. There is work in progress to define long COVID syndrome as an illness for disability. Thanks to electronic health records in our region from The Health Collaborative's health information exchange (HIE), we know there is an estimated 6,700 cases. US Census Data indicates 11 percent currently have long COVID.

Dr. Feagins provided an overview on *Legionella pneumophila* which can lead to Legionnaire's disease. It grows best in hot tubs and outbreaks are associated with large and complex water systems, including hospitals. As a result, monthly testing of water systems is often performed.

Southwest Ohio is unique in that all health systems and the Cincinnati Department of Health are all on Epic electronic medical records (EMR) software which make it easy to share patient information across providers and systems. HCPH is working to access the Epic system. Provider best practices are shared and implemented region wide. To purchase the software outright is too great of an expense. Epic subscriptions through a primary user make it affordable for health departments to participate. HCPH will likely leverage several relevant grants and grant earned revenue to make the purchase of the software in coming months. HCPH has been in discussions with Mercy Health and is awaiting a quote on the

cost of joining the Mercy Health Epic system as a contractor. The Board asked several questions about the need for an EMR system, the pricing, and the primary user partner. The Board asked Commissioner Kesterman to get several pricing data points from two health districts that are currently on the Epic system, and to explore with other potential health system providers any opportunity to join their instance of Epic for cost comparison purposes. Dr. Kelly looks forward to the day that HCPH's clinical data is on the Epic system for continuum of care.

(b) Department of Community Health Services

Assistant Health Commissioner Ms. Lindner followed up from the last Board meeting request on congenital syphilis case statistics. Syphilis increased across the country with Ohio experiencing its highest rates in 2022. Hamilton County had 9 congenital syphilis cases in 2022 and 7 in 2021. ODH and HCPH staff review all cases to ensure there are no missed opportunities. The CDC shows a national trend of increase, so it is not unique to Hamilton County. Locally, the lack of prenatal care and substance abuse are key drivers to the increase in cases. Dr. Kelly challenged the team to continue to look upstream for solutions. Further, Epic may assist with early interventions that could prevent congenital syphilis. In addition, Ms. Lindner provided clarification on the services offered through the STI clinic, stating that pap tests are not being offered at this time.

HCPH hired a new medical assistant in TB and is conducting phone screens for open nurse positions.

(c) Department of Environmental Health Services

Assistant Health Commissioner Mr. Davidson shared that Sean Moore is replacing retiring Lisa Humble as the new Director of Plumbing. Mr. Moore has been with HCPH for more than 20 years and will do a great job. HCPH is currently looking for a new supervisor to backfill his old position.

HB33 is the Ohio General Assembly's budget bill for fiscal year 2024-25. It contains language that would declare drywells a public health nuisance. Ohio Revised and Administrative Codes deem local health departments responsible to abate nuisances. If passed, it is estimated the cost per homeowner to replace a drywell to an effluent treatment system is \$20,000 to \$50,000. HCPH is advocating for a transitional plan to help homeowners plan for the financial burden. The Terrace Park community would be significantly impacted. Commissioner Kesterman shared the drywell statistics of other local communities and reminded that this Board recently authorized changes to our local regulations to allow homeowners until 2045 to work towards upgrades and replacements.

Mr. Davidson was pleased with the ODH Public Swimming Pool Program audit results and staff will be adopting the recommendations.

The Emergency Preparedness team's after-action report for a recent anthrax tabletop exercise is in the final draft stages of development and will be submitted to ODH. HCPH's Epidemiology team performed very well. Working to improve communications with local and other health departments was noted as an opportunity for improvement.

ODH has been planning to provide an inventory management system from the CDC. In the meantime, HCPH is using Excel and researching what other health departments are using. Ms. Puthoff asked about current tracking mechanism for medication. E-Clinical Works is used to track medications from clinics while ArmorVax is used for Covid vaccination clinics. HCPH would like to use the state's platform, but there is no date when it will be available. Mr. Rippe shared there are many good inventory tracking systems on the market.

There was one condemnation in Anderson Township. Mobile Crisis team transported the resident to the hospital for evaluation and the owner is aware of the property issues.

8. Finances

The February 2023 Disbursement Reports are included in the Board packet.

Mr. Rippe moved to approve the monthly disbursements.

Ms. Puthoff seconded the motion.

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

9. Old Business:

Resolution A: Hamilton County Board of Health Bylaws. Commissioner Kesterman made the update requested by Ms. Puthoff. There is ample time for the Board to review the bylaws. Mr. Rippe asked if "meetings" need to be defined as "scheduled meetings." Ms. Chin recommended adding that clarity.

Mr. Rippe motion to approve Resolution A: Hamilton County Board of Health Bylaws with changes as noted.

Mr. Meloy seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote – All Aye

10. New Business:

Ms. Puthoff moved to approve the Health Commissioner travel requests for the AOHC & ODH Combined Conference April 24-26 and the AOHC Conference September 13-15.

Mr. Bett seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote – All Aye

Ms. Puthoff moved to approve the Proclamation recognizing Lisa Humble.

Mr. Meloy second the motion.

Roll Call Vote – All Aye

11. Executive Session

Mr. Meloy moved to go into Executive Session at 5:15 p.m. to discuss personnel matters.

Dr. Kelly seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote – All Aye

Ms. Puthoff moved to end Executive Session where no action was taken at 5:51 p.m.

Dr. Kelly seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote – All Aye


12. Adjournment

Ms. Puthoff moved to adjourn the meeting at 5:52 p.m.


Dr. Kelly seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote – All Aye

Next Board of Health meeting: April 10, 2023.



Elizabeth A. Kelly, President - Vice
Dan Meloy



Greg Kesterman, Secretary
Health Commissioner

