

Hamilton County General Health District
REGULAR MEETING – BOARD OF HEALTH
April 12, 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
Kurstin Jones, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Coordinator
Rebecca Stowe, Director of Health Promotion & Education

Guests: B Biggs, Ben Blue, Tracie Bowling, Beverly, Catherine, Carrie Davis, Christina, Nikki Ferneding, Tom James, Michelle, Lisa Novakov, Raj Rajagopal, Nick S, Kiana Trabue, Turner, G. Willis, Molly Yeager, Lisa Zistler

3. Clean Kitchen Awards

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

4. Approval of Minutes

Dr. Kelly moved to approve the minutes from the March 8, 2021 Board of Health meeting.
Mr. Meloy seconded the motion.
Roll Call Vote – All Aye

5. Public Comment

Carrie Davis expressed concern about the lack of communication regarding Rumpke's third expansion in Southwest Ohio on Bond Road. Concerned citizens, many present today, have created a Facebook group and GoFundMe page and plan to hire an environmental attorney to work to stop the expansion. Ms. Davis also expressed concern over the current monitoring program and lack of citations from odor complaints submitted by residents. Citizens would like to see more representation for the residents. Ben Blue echoed these

concerns. Nikki Ferneding concurred, adding that the Rumpke trucks leave slippery waste debris on the road which creates hazardous driving conditions.

Commissioner Kesterman explained Rumpke is currently requesting a facility boundary expansion for better road access. A detailed update will be posted to the HCPH website in a few days. Mr. Davidson stated the history of the property starting in 1960s as an industrial waste landfill for Monsanto. In 1999, the site was transferred to Bond Road Site Inc., which was acquired in 2001 by Rumpke. In February 2021, Rumpke submitted a permit alteration request to Ohio EPA. The expanded boundaries do not expand the fill area, it moves road access to Sand Run Road and adds new infrastructure. Full details are in the report. The request is under review by Ohio EPA and Commissioner Kesterman explained that public notice, if required, would be issued through the Ohio EPA.

Concerns were expressed over hazardous spills on the roads not being reported and citizens are also concerned about nearby water contamination. Commissioner Kesterman requested photos be forwarded to HCPH for follow up. HCPH's role is to oversee daily operations, but there has been very limited activity at the site. HCPH also follows Ohio Revised Code landfill operations statutes. HCPH does not set the statutes.

HCPH staff will investigate all operational complaints including road or leachate issues when reported. HCPH will place an overview of the Bond Road landfill on its website and will work to create a more comprehensive list of questions & answers prior to the next Board meeting.

Lisa Novakov expressed concern about safety of roof water collection for residential cisterns and regular monitoring of the two creek run-offs. Ms. Davis thanked HCPH staff for the courteousness and professionalism.

6. Health Commissioner's Report

Commissioner Kesterman reviewed COVID-19 case statistics in Hamilton County and cautioned citizens to maintain preventative measures (masking, hand washing, and social distancing). Seven-day average is 91 cases per day. The increased vaccination percentages are attributed to the decreased hospitalizations. Hamilton County is 36.7 percent vaccinated. Vaccination clinics are at capacity and appointments are more readily available. HCPH has vaccinated over 37,000 people. Now vaccinating ages 16 and older.

State enforcement orders have been streamlined into one six-page document. The Ohio Senate Bill 22 passed despite the Governor's veto that was overturned. The Bill goes into effect June 22 and reduces local health department authority to impose community-wide restrictions. Ms. Puthoff is very disappointed in our state legislators for passing this bill and asked for more information about its impact on HCPH. Commissioner Kesterman explained that Nee Fong Chin, Chief Assistant Prosecuting Attorney is still reviewing the bill and HCPH may need to cite other ORC nuisance language. Mr. Brett asked if businesses can still impose restrictions on their own. Yes, businesses can. A question was asked of Ms. Chin if a government agency could impose more strict guidelines, such as the requirement to wear a mask. Ms. Chin would have to review the rules prior to making this determination.

Commissioner Kesterman thanked Rebecca Stowe, Performance Management & Grants Coordinator and her team for compiling and submitting HCPH's 2021 annual report. It was an overwhelmingly positive report and is the final annual report before reaccreditation, which

takes place in the spring of 2022. Several favorable comments and highlights are in the Board packet.

Despite the heavy workload from the pandemic, HCPH staff are still meeting 85 percent and exceeding 7 percent of the Program Implementation Plan in Q1. The 8 percent that is behind is being re-started and re-evaluated. These delays have no impact on State or grant requirements.

The CDC issued an Ebola Level 3 Travel Notice providing guidance for people who may have been exposed. However, Ebola is not getting a lot of press due to the pandemic. There are 27 low risk cases in Southwest Ohio and HCPH is monitoring two of those cases. The Board will be notified if there are any major changes.

The new syringe exchange van is in fabrication. Commissioner Kesterman would like Board authorization to remove the existing van as an asset either through sale or transfer to another governmental agency.

Mr. Brett moved to authorize Commissioner Kesterman to remove the existing syringe exchange van as an HCPH asset.

Ms. Puthoff seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote – All Aye

Mr. Rippe asked Commissioner Kesterman to express appreciation to the entire staff for their great work on the Public Health Accreditation Board Annual Report as well as the Program Implementation Plan.

Staff Reports

(a) Medical Director's Report

Dr. Steve Feagins, Medical Director, shared the Cincinnati Business Courier's Healthcare Heroes Awards included a special "Heroes in Action" award presented to the Regional Hospital Steering Committee for its groundbreaking collaboration in response to the COVID-19 crisis.

Dr. Feagins reviewed the clinical trials statistics stating the vaccine has been very effective. The therapies have not been as effective. For example, convalescent plasma is not indicated for the treatment of COVID-19 patients because the outcomes were not significant with variants. Dr. Feagins explained the current variant concerns. Hospitalized patient positivity rates are expected to hover around 6 percent. Healthcare staff case rates have improved significantly due to vaccinations. The 18 to 49 age group is now contributing to current patient admission cases.

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

(b) Department of Community Health Services

Assistant Health Commissioner Dr. Jennifer Mooney explained staff are working to distribute the vaccine creatively and with particular attention to health equity. Also, the team had some success in a pilot vaccinating syringe services clients. HCPH is working with Talbert House to help vaccinate its high-risk clients. The Epidemiology Division is trying to get back

to normal after all contact tracing work has been transferred to the State. Some contact tracers were retained to help with vaccination efforts such as working clinics and the call center.

Dr. Mooney explained overdose trends report and efforts to increase community linkage to harm reduction resources and our team. HIV testing is predominately in the ER setting but after five new HIV cases among people who inject drugs (PWID) were identified this past month, the team is enhancing testing efforts. In addition, we have seen the number of TB cases double this past month, possibly due to people now seeking treatment and being tested.

At the request of the East Price Hill Improvement Association (EPHIA) to relocate the harm reduction program from Warsaw Avenue, HCPH is terminating the lease with Santa Maria and canvassing the area for possible locations. Ms. Puthoff asked for more information regarding East Price Hill's objections. The Warsaw Avenue space is under revitalization and they do not want substance using clients lining up on the street. Dr. Mooney explained HCPH's efforts to educate and engage other groups in the community for potential partnership. Mr. Brett asked if services will be expanded back to normal in the new location. Yes, and there will be more collaboration with the community to meet their needs.

(c) Department of Environmental Health Services

Assistant Health Commissioner Mr. Davidson has COVID-19 site operation updates in his report. HCPH is addressing the home-bound population with Council on Aging, which has been an outstanding partner. Fire departments maintain geocoded registration lists to find residents and provide vaccine. HCPH provides the vaccine to the departments and HCPH's logistic team is working to fill the gaps by sending out nursing teams to provide vaccines.

Board of Elections has been a great vaccination site partner. They need the space for May election activity, so HCPH will be vacating by the end of May and moving to the lower level of Sharonville Convention Center (similar square footage). Public transportation is not as accessible at that location; however, the survey showed no transportation concerns.

HCPH Waste Management referred to the Ohio Attorney General ongoing, observed environmental violations caused by Evans Landscaping. The Ohio Attorney General filed a lawsuit on March 12 against Evans Landscaping (and holdings) for illegal disposal of construction and demolition debris, establishing unlicensed construction and demolition debris facilities, open dumping of solid waste, and operating an unlicensed solid waste facility.

Mr. Davidson congratulated the Plumbing Division staff for their COVID-19 creativity for devising virtual water line inspections. The virtual process is going well and has received positive feedback from contractors. Full details are in the Board packet.

Two residential and one restaurant enforcement updates are detailed in the Board packet.

(d) Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion (DEI)

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Coordinator Kurstin Jones shared her background and provided an overview on her activities and accomplishments. After orienting, Ms. Jones produced HCPH's monthly Health Equity Magazine and has published three issues so far.

Ms. Puthoff asked where newsletter is going. Presently, it is an internal newsletter for HCPH staff. Ms. Jones developed an equity in vaccinations plan. Hamilton County is second in Ohio for vaccinating Ohioans of Color! Ms. Puthoff asked for the vaccination percentages. Ms. Jones stated the campaign has gone from at 11 percent of African Americans vaccinated to the current 14.1 percent. Ms. Puthoff asked if acceptance rates are up. There is still some hesitancy in the African American community, as well as with other populations, but that is improving. Many churches have been terrific partners.

Ms. Jones' vision for 2021 and beyond includes re-envisioning the Health Equity workgroup and training curricula and incorporating health equity as a priority focus in the next strategic plan. Juneteenth is celebrated on June 19. Traditional modern observances include reading of the Emancipation Proclamation, singing traditional songs, readings of works by noted African American writers, and social events including Miss Juneteenth contests. Hamilton County adopted Juneteenth as a paid holiday for a day of learning and a day of action. Ms. Jones recommends HCPH adopt June 19 as an observed holiday. Ms. Puthoff is in favor of Juneteenth and asked for more information about the local event. The 2020 festival was cancelled due to the pandemic. Staff are encouraged to read and research.

Ms. Davis asked for a vaccination clinic on the east side of Colerain – specifically the Northbrook community. Also, would like to see the impact of landfills on diverse communities.

Mr. Brett acknowledged Ms. Jones came on at a very difficult time. Mr. Brett supported Juneteenth African American reading and research and would like to get vaccine messages out to those who are resisting the vaccine. Ms. Stowe explained Ms. Jones has been reaching out to other vulnerable populations as well. The Board thanked Ms. Jones for her excellent work. Ms. Jones presentation and discussion shall count for 35 minutes of continuing education for the Board of Health.

Unfinished Business: None.

7. Finances

Greg Varner, Financial Officer, presented the First Quarter Financial Review. Mr. Varner discussed details of revenue, expenditures, budget, fund balances, and grant activity. HCPH had an overall successful fiscal first quarter. Ms. Puthoff asked if the funding from the county levy will be enough to continue to cover TB program operating costs in future years. Yes, we have a significant fund balance although increasing personnel costs are something we will continue to monitor. We had a good discussion with a volunteer levy committee last month and will continue an ongoing discussion with the county. Mr. Brett reminded the Board that HCPH can opt out if the situation becomes unfavorable. The current HCPH office space will eventually be outgrown.

The March 2021 Disbursement Reports are included in the Board packet.

Dr. Kelly moved to approve the monthly disbursements.

Ms. Puthoff seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote – All Aye

8. New Business

Mr. Brett moved to approve Amended Personnel Policy Section 5.1: Holidays / Personal Days

Dr. Kelly seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote – All Aye

Ms. Puthoff moved to approve Mark Rippe to serve another term as Board President

Mr. Meloy seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote – All Aye

Ms. Puthoff moved to approve Dr. Kelly as Board Vice President

Mr. Brett seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote – All Aye

Mr. Rippe discussed the timing of going back to in person meetings and keeping the start time at 4 p.m. Mr. Brett would like to see a hybrid option when we go back to in person. Ms. Puthoff asked about legislature statute about virtual meetings. It was determined to keep the May 10 meeting on Zoom.

9. Adjournment

Mr. Meloy moved to adjourn the meeting at 6:25 p.m.

Ms. Puthoff seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote – All Aye

Next Board of Health meeting: May 10, 2021 at 4 p.m. via Zoom.



Mark Rippe, President



Greg Kesterman, Secretary
Health Commissioner