

**Hamilton County General Health District  
REGULAR MEETING – BOARD OF HEALTH  
May 8, 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.

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

Guests Semone Grigsby (Alphabet Academy)

**3. Pledge of Allegiance**

**4. Clean Kitchen Awards**

Craig Davidson read the list of nine Clean Kitchen Award recipients and congratulated them for their efforts to maintain a high level of sanitation and staff education. Ms. Grigsby from Alphabet Academy was present to receive a second-time award. Congratulations!

**5. Approval of Minutes**

**Ms. Puthoff** moved to approve the minutes from the April 10, 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 discussed the COVID-19 community levels provided by the CDC. The entire state is classified as low transmission. There is a downward trend with hospitalizations along with ICU admissions. He also noted that the national public health emergency declaration has ended. HCPH's COVID-19 vaccination clinics will close June 2 and he noted that there are a significant number of other providers in Hamilton County including primary care offices and pharmacies.

The date for the Public Health Accreditation Board's reaccreditation virtual visit will be June 21. The meeting will be approximately four hours and is anticipated to be successful.

Commissioner Kesterman explained changes to the proposed 2023 state budget that include removal of three items that directly impact public health: \$20M for local public health; a state-wide ban on flavored tobacco; and language related to dry wells have been removed from the budget. The Association of Ohio Health Commissioners continues to lobby for increased funding, among other items. Full details are in the Board packet.

HCPH switched to new software called Clear Impact which has assisted in producing a new look for the quarterly performance report and includes new metrics for performance reporting. The first quarter strategic plan is on track. More details are in the Board packet.

Lease negotiations for new clinical space continue, including discussions regarding build-out costs. The current estimate for property build-out is \$2M. HCPH is discussing financing for the increased costs. One option is to increase the square footage rate from \$16 up to \$22 and HCPH contributing \$200-\$400 thousand up front. Commissioner Kesterman has requested additional support from Hamilton County to cover some of the upfront costs which could exceed initial estimates as finalized pricing comes in.

New TB Program terms were negotiated with Hamilton County which provides protection regarding the new lease for HCPH. Should Hamilton County wish to take back over the program, they would be required to provide a longer notice to HCPH and negotiate in good faith any ongoing lease or contractual obligations. Commissioner Kesterman is negotiating with the current landlord for the public health clinic a new hold over, should the new space not be complete by year-end. Commissioner Kesterman expressed appreciation for Ms. Chin's and Mr. Rippe's assistance.

Ms. Puthoff asked about the State removing the proposed statewide flavored tobacco ban. Commissioner Kesterman stated that Ohio has several cities with bans, but Ohio does not have a statewide ban. The Governor's proposed budget would have included a statewide ban, which was removed by the Ohio House.

Mr. Brett commented on Senator Brown's financing request for public health and appreciated the potential funding for HCPH. Commissioner Kesterman shared that HCPH is in partnership with Franklin County for an additional proposal that has been forwarded to the federal appropriations committee for consideration.

## **Staff Reports**

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

Dr. Steve Feagins Medical Director looks forward to a non-COVID-19 report in the future and stated that the current inpatient COVID cases are 1 percent of total cases. The Infectious Disease Group will be meeting in June to discuss recommendations for the Fall vaccine. COVID-19 is now ranked #4 in the U.S. as underlying causes of death in 2022. Heart disease is the leading cause followed by cancer, then unintended injury. Boosters will always be available. Dr. Feagins stated the COVID-19 variant estimates of Omicron total 99 percent in CDC's Region 5, which includes Ohio. Nationally, the total is 96.8 percent.

Healthcare providers are looking at the connection between syphilis and HIV transmission. Thirty percent are dual diagnosis. The Infectious Disease Group is continuing to look at the testing recommendation for syphilis. Penicillin G benzathine is in short supply as syphilis cases increase. However, HCPH currently has an adequate supply of medication.

Latent tuberculosis infection (LTBI) screening recommendations, treatment, and follow up were discussed. It is important that treatment regimens be closely followed to be effective. There is a shortage of some medications, but the local supply is adequate.

The CDC-recommended immunization schedule for pupils in grades kindergarten-12 is in the Board packet. Dr. Feagins stated COVID is not on the list because of vaccine efficacy and reduced vulnerability for children and adolescents.

The total deaths due to overdoses have started to trend downward. Dr. Feagins reported that xylazine, which is making its way into street drug supplies is being combined with fentanyl. As xylazine is not an opioid, it does not respond to Narcan. Healthcare providers are adapting treatment protocols to deal with this new drug mixture.

Dr. Feagins reported the local area hospitals' Infection Preventionist representatives are joining the weekly public health calls and are very engaged. HCPH's contact list is the most up to date that it's ever been.

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

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

Assistant Health Commissioner Ms. Lindner described the ODH enhanced operations EO22 grant that included mini-grants to address COVID response and strategies, community re-engagement, resiliency, and public education. Locally, 17 communities were awarded a \$15K mini-grant. Communities expressed gratitude for these additional funds.

Ms. Lindner thanked staff who helped with the "OD2A Local" grant that was submitted this morning. The award announcement is expected August 1. The OD2A grant is divided into three components, and awards can be made for all three. HCPH's application includes collaboration with Addiction Services Council, Hamilton County Addiction Response Coalition, and many other organizations.

Ms. Puthoff asked about the state of the current OD2A grant. It was a four-year grant that ends this August. Mr. Varner reported that all funds awarded have been obligated to be spent. If for some reason we do not receive the new grant, other grants have been secured to help cover essential staff, but some cuts may be needed if not awarded this grant. HCPH will continue to look at other avenues of funding. Mr. Brett is optimistic that HCPH will get all three components.

Mr. Meloy inquired about xylazine test strips and stated that Cuyahoga County is using them. HCPH is looking into them for distribution through SAFE services. This distribution will include education on their appropriate use.

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

Assistant Health Commissioner Mr. Davidson was pleased with the UC College of Medicine collaboration on an Emergency Preparedness (EP) project. Students assisted with the development of a toolkit for standing up an emergency medical shelter with a list of supplies and best practices. HCPH will incorporate this into existing plans and the student engagement aligns with HCPH's strategic plans.

Mr. Davidson reported on a collaboration with the Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center (CCHMC) Asthma Learning Health System (ALHS) team. Several patients and parents participated in a facilitated discussion about the current state of asthma care and innovative ideas to bridge the gap between current versus ideal states of asthma care. A summary of the results will be shared by the CCHMC team.

Food licensing is completed for this year and the numbers are fairly level; however, vending machines continue to decline. Late fees are on par with last year. There were no referrals to Ms. Chin.

Mr. Davidson noted last year, there were nearly 200 water samples collected at six different Great Parks sites by the Water Quality (WQ) Division as part of a contract for services to monitor the sites during recreation season. There were only a small number of incidents of slightly higher levels, but none were waters in which swimming is allowed so no action to restrict recreational activities was taken. THE WQ Division is conducting the program again this year with a slight cost increase to cover HCPH's costs. The WQ team enjoys providing this service and it's a great partnership.

There was one residential condemnation in Mt. Healthy and the occupant was transported to the hospital for evaluation. The second issue, an encampment in Harrison, is being resolved by the landowner who did not give permission for the people to be there. The Environmental Health team will follow up to ensure the area is cleaned up.

Ms. Chin asked Mr. Davidson to brief the Board on Ollie's Bargain Outlet property. Mr. Davidson stated there was a substantial rat infestation. With Ms. Chin's assistance, the business was closed for seven days for extermination. They are now open on probation and will close immediately if there are any new issues.

## **8. Finances**

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

**Mr. Brett moved** to approve the monthly disbursements.

**Mr. Meloy** seconded the motion.

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

## **9. Adjournment**

**Ms. Puthoff** moved to adjourn the meeting at 4:58 p.m.

**Mr. Meloy** seconded the motion.

**Roll Call Vote – All Aye**

Next Board of Health meeting: June 12, 2023

*Elizabeth A. Kelly, MD*

Elizabeth A. Kelly, M.D., President

*GK*

Greg Kesterman, Secretary  
Health Commissioner

