

**Hamilton County General Health District
REGULAR MEETING – BOARD OF HEALTH
June 14, 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
Elizabeth A. Kelly, M.D., Vice President
Dan Meloy
Tracey A. Puthoff, Esq.
James Brett

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: Ryan Adcock, Danielle Fenton, Lisa Gehrum Novakov, Joshua Gerth,
Madison Hubbard, Tom James, Megan Sullivan

3. 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.

4. Approval of Minutes

Mr. Brett moved to approve the minutes from the May 10, 2021 Board of Health meeting with the addition to section 7. (d) "Ms. Stowe's presentation and discussion shall count for 25 minutes of continuing education for the Board of Health."

Ms. Puthoff seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote – All Aye

5. Public Comment: None.

6. Cradle Cincinnati Annual Report Review, Ryan Adcock

Mr. Adcock thanked HCPH for their ongoing collaboration with Cradle Cincinnati. Mr. Adcock explained the definition of the infant mortality rate and criteria of the data. 2020 Trends show Hamilton County with 20 fewer deaths than 2019 with an average rate of 7.4. This is by far the lowest rate ever measured in Hamilton County since tracking began in 1968. Hamilton County is still lags behind the state (7.1) and the nation (5.8). For the first time since 1994, the black infant mortality has dipped below the national rate of 10.8.

However, black infant mortality in Hamilton County and the United States continues to be far greater than other racial and ethnic groups. The full annual report is available online at <https://www.cradlecincinnati.org/data/>. Mr. Adcock thanked founding member Dr. Kelly for her ongoing leadership and partnership.

Ms. Puthoff asked for examples of pre-term births. Mr. Adcock explained pre-term is before 37 weeks and extreme pre-term is before 28 weeks. The good news is those numbers have improved.

Dr. Kelly is very pleased with the positive change and thanked Mr. Adcock for his relentless commitment to infant mortality and the HCPH team for their good work.

Ms. Puthoff is also thrilled with the data and asked about media exposure. Cradle Cincinnati has a good partnership with the local media outlets, especially with WCPO and WXXU. And social media has worked well to directly reach families. Commissioner Kesterman shared that Kurstin Jones, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Coordinator is getting involved so HCPH is growing their outreach.

Mr. Adcock's presentation and discussion shall count for 30 minutes of continuing education for the Board of Health.

7. Health Commissioner's Report

Commissioner Kesterman is pleased to report there continues to be drastic improvement in COVID data reviewed each month. The number of active cases is coming down and very happy with the progress in Hamilton County. Average cases per day is 21, compared with 716 cases at the peak in December. The vaccines appear to be working on the variants. The positivity rate (2.6 percent) continues to decline. There was a spike in the reproductive value; however, it was attributed to a couple of days in a row with slightly higher (but still low) case counts – the reproductive value remains not a concern. Hospitalization statistics are improving as well. Hamilton County has vaccinated at a higher rate than Ohio. Get Out The Vax reports 55 percent of total eligible population are vaccinated. Seven out of ten people are vaccinated and statistics by age were discussed. HCPH continues to update its model to manage the vaccine work. HCPH will be running two mobile clinics and the ODH van each day of the week and will be hiring positions for this new model. The goal will be to run this model through the end of the year. At the peak, HCPH delivered 8,000 vaccinations per week and now averaging 505 per week depending on the location and the weather. Nearly 200 providers have vaccine in Hamilton County with many walk-in appointments available (details are posted online at www.testandprotectcincy.com).

Commissioner Kesterman asks the Board to consider approving tonight a proclamation form letter to formally thank our community partners and firefighters. In the Board packet are details of a quality improvement initiative in Lincoln Heights. The goal of the project was to impact their vaccination rate to match that of Hamilton County and included RNs going door to door, flyers, social media, gift cards donated by Kroger, and a partnership with Healthcare Connection, a local FQHC.

Ms. Puthoff asked why the efforts have not shown results yet. A focus group study found a list of reasons, echoing what is being said at the national level: mistrust of healthcare system, speed of vaccine skepticism, financial incentive causes suspicion, concern over the

vaccine ingredients, and why now is there a focus/concern black communities. This information is similar across the state.

HCPH's new syringe van is in, the design is well thought out, and it is easy to drive. The old has been offered to van is for sale and other county entities are interested in it.

Ohio Legislature HB 248-11 was created as a tool to prevent COVID-19 vaccinations from becoming mandatory; however, it applies to all immunizations, including childhood vaccines. This is an overreach in the opinion of Commissioner Kesterman and other health departments and the hospital association. If the Board authorizes tonight, Commissioner Kesterman will write a letter to the editor and House Committee Leadership (draft in the Board packet) that HCPH opposes and is taking a stance against HB 248.

Hamilton County Board of County Commissioners will be voting on a Parental Leave Policy. This leave policy can help with healthy families by reducing infant death, infant illness, and lowering mothers' risk of health complications after birth. Full details are in the Board report. After county approval, Commissioner Kesterman asks the Board to consider updating HCPH's policy. Ms. Puthoff's employer offers this and supports the leave initiative for HCPH staff.

On tonight's agenda is a supervisory agreement Authorization for Medical Director to enter into contract: Standard care arrangement for services to be performed by Laura Elzey Contri, APRN for Hamilton County Public Health with Steven Feagins, M.D. as collaborating physician. Commissioner Kesterman explained that the Board of Health has authorized the Health Commissioner to enter into contracts and agreements. However, this is between the Medical Director and Ms. Elzey. The Medical Director needs authorization from the Board to execute the agreement.

Commissioner Kesterman shared the HCPH conference room is ready to host in person Board meetings. The virtual meetings authorization is scheduled to go away after the end of this month. Mr. Brett shared there is discussion about extending virtual meeting authorization through the end of the year. Tonight, the Board will decide how to proceed for the July meeting.

Mr. Brett thanked Commissioner Kesterman for his presentation to the Hamilton County Township Association Meeting. Mr. Brett has heard nothing but great feedback on Commissioner Kesterman and the HCPH staff.

Staff Reports

(a) Medical Director's Report

Dr. Steve Feagins Medical Director shared highlights from the Health Equity Task Force presentation on Post-Acute Sequelae of SARS-CoV-2 Infections (PASC) "Long COVID." Acute COVID-19 is defined by primary COVID-19 pneumonia with hypoxia, sepsis-like syndrome with multiple organ damage, post ICU syndrome – reasonably defined, and continued guilt from COVID-19 spread to friends or family. There is a wide range of symptoms (fatigue, cough, fever, and many others) and possible autoimmune complications. After six months, 76 percent of patients had at least one symptom. The causes of encephalitis lethargica are still a mystery. After the 1918 influenza pandemic, asylum hospitalizations increased by an average annual factor of 7.2 in the 6 years following the

pandemic. Confirmed diagnosis of COVID-19 now has ICD-10-CM code U07.1. The “Long COVID” symptoms are real and require research prioritization. The COVID-19 vaccine can prevent “Long COVID” like the shingles vaccine protects against the chickenpox virus. The Equity Task Force Recommendations include the best way to avoid “Long COVID” is to avoid COVID-19 through vaccination, home pulse oximeter joins the family thermometer, non-opioid chronic pain management, resources to support ongoing rehab (childcare, time off work), and standard post COVID signs/symptoms as qualifiers for short-term and long-term disability.

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 on the shift in vaccination efforts as demand lessens. HCPH is maintaining fixed locations with support from the mobile clinics, a collaboration with ODH to staff one of the vans, as well as RNs offering homebound services in Hamilton County.

HCPH clinic activity has increased with the uptake of childhood immunizations. Staff anticipate our summer to be busy as many families are playing “catch up” with standard immunizations. Increases in HIV and STI statistics and services are also documented in the Board report. Butler County has seen an uptick in HIV believed to be attributed to drug injection. HCPH is collaborating with Butler County and ODH to mobilize and engage with clients where they are. The clinical staff are also managing an uptick in TB cases. As HIV and TB testing increases, we are likely going to continue to see an increase in cases.

Harm Reduction Committee continues to work as a sub-committee of the Hamilton County Addiction Response Coalition and focusing on harm reduction across social sectors. The committee now has two other co-chairs alongside Dr. Mooney. Linda Gallagher from the Mental Health and Recovery Services Board and Tiffany Mattingly from the Health Collaborative were excited to join as co-chairs.

HCPH was awarded the Ending the HIV Epidemic grant from ODH for \$1.1M for a period of five years. The team also just learned today that HCPH was awarded an additional \$50K grant to help build STI infrastructure to expand scope of services in our clinic across the street.

(c) Department of Environmental Health Services

Assistant Health Commissioner Mr. Davidson shared the ODH contractor to deploy a mobile vaccination unit was great timing with HCPH pivoting its model to manage the vaccine work. That mobile unit is averaging two sites a day and has been a great asset. Vaccination demand is down, but HCPH is having progress with municipal buildings, parks, apartment complexes, libraries, and breweries. The fixed sites are still operating through this month and using the mobile team to staff those as needed.

HCPH was awarded an additional \$150k in funds from the H2Ohio grant. The water quality funding from H2Ohio grant helps with household sewage treatment systems (HSTS). Assistance to qualifying homeowners includes resolving failures by either repairing, partial system replacement, total system replacement, or connecting to existing sanitary sewer

system. A portion of the funding will be set aside to focus on health equity lens distribution. Full details are in the Board packet.

Mr. Davidson reported the work on the new critical care tower at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center (CCHMC) is making great progress and is on track. There is a high level of investment and new technology (photos and details are in the Board packet). Patients are expected to move in this fall.

After discussions with ODH and ODA, it was determined that HCPH will continue the Coney Island pool licensure with the new floating attraction. There will be a dedicated attraction lifeguard and patrons must wear life jacket (photos are in the Board packet). The attraction has been inspected and approved for operation for the 2021 season.

There was one residential condemnation, details are in the Board packet.

8. Unfinished Business: None.

9. Finances

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

Ms. Puthoff moved to approve the monthly disbursements.

Mr. Brett seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote – All Aye; Mr. Brett abstained on Whitewater expenditures.

Finance Officer Greg Varner reported the state audit has begun and the final report is expected to present at the October Board meeting.

10. New Business

(a) Proclamation in appreciation for hosting COVID-19 vaccination clinics.

Dr. Kelly moved to approve the proclamation.

Mr. Meloy seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote – All Aye

(b) Authorization for Medical Director to enter into agreement: Standard care arrangement for services to be performed by Laura Elzey Contri, APRN for Hamilton County Public Health with Steven Feagins, M.D. as collaborating physician.

Mr. Meloy moved to approve Dr. Steve Feagins signing the supervisory agreement.

Mr. Brett seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote – All Aye

(c) July Board of Health Meeting – after discussion, decided to go back to in person meetings, keeping the second Monday schedule at 4:00 p.m. through the remainder of the year. Ms. Puthoff asked if electronic participation is still an option. Chief Assistant Prosecuting Attorney Nee Fong reported virtual attendance is permissible only if ODH legislation extends the virtual meeting option. Mr. Rippe asked if the public will be invited to participate virtually. Only if legislation extends the virtual meeting option. Those not vaccinated are strongly recommended to wear a mask.

Mr. Meloy moved to meet in person at HCPH, 250 William Howard Taft Rd, Cincinnati, OH 45219 at 4:00 p.m. on the second Monday at starting in July 2021.

Dr. Kelly seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote – All Aye

(d) Board Retreat – after discussion, it was determined the best date is October 9 at 8:30-11:30 a.m. at Kenwood Country Club, breakfast will be provided at 8:00 a.m.

Mr. Brett moved to meet on October 9, 2021, at 8:30 a.m. at Kenwood Country Club contingent on the site being available.

Ms. Puthoff seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote – All Aye

The Board discussed HB 248 and agreed that HCPH should voice opposition. Commissioner Kesterman will write to House Committee leadership and submit a letter to the editor.

11. Adjournment

Mr. Meloy moved to adjourn the meeting at 5:42 p.m.

Ms. Puthoff seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote – All Aye

Next Board of Health meeting: July 12, 2021.



Mark Rippe, President



Greg Kesterman, Secretary
Health Commissioner