

**Hamilton County General Health District
REGULAR MEETING – BOARD OF HEALTH
January 10, 2022 – 4 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 followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Roll Call of Members

Members Present: Mark A. Rippe, President
Elizabeth A. Kelly, M.D., Vice President (via Video Call)
James Brett
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 (via Video Call)
Jeremy Watson, Assistant Finance Officer
Mike Samet, Public Information Officer

3. Clean Kitchen Awards

Mr. Davidson read the list of 11 Clean Kitchen Award recipients and congratulated them for their efforts to maintain a high level of sanitation and staff education.

4. Approval of Minutes

James Brett moved to approve the minutes from the December 13, 2021 Board of Health meeting.

Dan Meloy seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote – All Aye (Dr. Kelly unable to vote remotely)

5. Public Comment: none

6. Health Commissioner's Report

Commissioner Kesterman reported on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) updated guidance for quarantine and isolation, including the school "Mask to Stay; Test to Play" guidance enabling students to stay in school following specific exposures. The vaccination campaign continues to move forward with the largest numbers of vaccinations occurring among the five-11 age groups. Last weekend, HCPH conducted a clinic in Colerain Township vaccinating more than 400, many from the Nepalese community.

There are currently more than 28,000 cases in the County – the most ever recorded. There are also 950 hospitalized – also the most ever recorded. During the week of January 5, 97 percent of those in the hospital were not vaccinated. Mr. Rippe asked that this statistic be added to the HCPH website.

The "Test & Protect" program funded by Hamilton County and operated by the Health Collaborative accounted for only 10 percent of the testing taking place in the County, as private sector testing filled much of that space. As such, the County is modifying the program and will allocate \$1.5MM to testing. Rapid tests are in short supply and we are receiving fewer than needed/ordered. National Guard testing facilities will begin operation in the County this week. Flu cases are also on the rise in Hamilton County, following a year in which flu was minimal likely due to COVID-19 restrictions.

The Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) is included in the Board packet and demonstrates great progress toward goals, even during the pandemic. Mr. Rippe indicated that this is the end of the three-year cycle and asked if metrics will roll over into subsequent year reporting. Commissioner Kesterman clarified that the three-year cycle is for the Strategic Plan for which progress is tracked on the last page of the PIP. The PIP is used to track annual performance and metrics will be updated for 2022 and presented the Board during the first quarter. Dr. Mooney noted that COVID rendered some of the metrics unable to be completed, such as the overdose death and child fatality reporting. Mr. Rippe thanked staff for performance to metrics.

Staff Reports

(a) Medical Director's Report

Dr. Feagins compared COVID death data from 2020-2021, showing the transition from the Delta to Omicron variant, indicating that there are still Delta patients hospitalized. Children's Hospital's Anderson Center reports that COVID deaths are considerably higher among those not vaccinated. Cases per 100,000 population are rising in southwest Ohio. One in 75 persons hospitalized in the U.S. is in Cuyahoga County. Southwest Ohio hospitals are receiving some transfer patients from hospitals overloaded elsewhere in the State.

The rapid upswing in cases should be followed by a rapid downswing, however, cases are currently rising. Hospital systems are looking at a peak of 1,200 hospitalized COVID patients, which will impact staffing, moving to crisis management care. The problem is staff out ill, causing hospitals to triage resources and postpone some "elective" procedures.

Mr. Rippe asked if the new anti-viral drugs are effective and Dr. Feagins responded that they are most effective when administered quickly after symptom onset. There is a long production time for these drugs and they are in short supply.

Mr. Rippe asked about a new variant identified in France. Dr. Feagins responded that it is not yet a variant of concern.

Mr. Rippe asked about an additional booster shot – in some cases, the fourth shot in the series. Dr. Feagins responded that the next series could be implemented in Fall, 2022.

Dr. Feagins concluded by referencing the current Ohio rates of syphilis. Hamilton County is not the home of the highest number of cases in the State, but close.

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

(b) Department of Community Health Services

Dr. Mooney reported that the harm reduction team launched a very robust stigma campaign with the message that addiction is a disease. One of our very own staff was a model for it as well as a handful of others with lived experience.

The injury surveillance epi team is creating another dashboard based on coroner data. This dashboard will help visualize substances attributing to an overdose death, as well as decedents' home ZIP codes. There is also a graph depicting data on drug seizures – not surprising, fentanyl is still the most commonly seized although amphetamines/methamphetamine is not far behind. This dashboard will give us one additional layer of information around the addiction crisis. Mr. Rippe asked about the mental health aspects of addiction, to which Dr. Mooney replied that HCPH is investigating suicide data from the coroner which will give indication of mental health issues. Mr. Brett asked how many people tracked by HCPH come through the jail system and probation/parole, to which Dr. Mooney replied that the current strategy is diversion from the prison system into treatment programs. Mr. Meloy added that it is highly recommended that probation departments be part of the rehabilitation system. Mr. Meloy also mentioned that Hamilton County's team are known around the country for their great work.

Dr. Mooney reported that BoxKite Strategy Group will assist HCPH in development of the "roadmap" that is needed to implement the new Ending the HIV Epidemic funding. The BoxKite team has unique experience with community engagement and coalition building, and will advise the HCPH team in the build out of program related activities based on the targets outlined by the Ohio Department of Health (ODH).

Ms. Puthoff asked the status of the OD2A grant. Dr. Mooney replied that CDC has been respectful of local health department pandemic involvement and will look to extend funding beyond the 4 year grant period. The grant is currently in year 3.

(c) Department of Environmental Health Services

Mr. Davidson reported that the vaccination site at the Board of Elections averaged 100-150 vaccinations per day through the holiday season. HCPH administered just over 80,000 doses in 2021, nearly 4,000 of which were pediatric. Staff is watching vaccination numbers closely to manage resources most effectively. ODH has required 75 percent of vaccination

funding starting January 2022 and through June 2023 to be dedicated to underserved populations. Ms. Puthoff asked if the displayed vaccination chart includes all doses administered, to which Mr. Davidson responded in the affirmative.

Mr. Davidson reported that Program Implementation Plan numbers for his department continued to trend positively during the fourth quarter. Any metrics that were delayed because of COVID will be completed by year-end, given reduced pandemic requirements.

The Waste Management Division has caught up on lead inspections. These were delayed as the pandemic precluded staff visiting homes.

Mr. Davidson reported on progress with the construction and demolition debris facility licensing process. Ms. Puthoff inquired about the ongoing nature of the Loveland Landfill facility reporting. Commissioner Kesterman responded that HCPH is in possession of the financial assurance deposit for the facility and that the landfill is benign – i.e. not accepting waste or causing environmental issues while ownership pursues sale of the facility. Ms. Puthoff asked what the long-term plan is as several of these landfills are approaching capacity limits. Commissioner Kesterman replied that recycling of waste in these facilities can help extend use as landfills reach maturity, prior to leading to new sites. Mr. Rippe asked about the Evans property, to which Commissioner Kesterman responded that the facility is not a landfill, but a recycling facility.

7. Finances

Mr. Watson reviewed year-end financial performance. HCPH received 98 percent of its budgeted revenue for the year, with shortfall mostly from unpaid invoices. Personnel expenses are well under budget as COVID grants covered significant staff costs. Consolidated revenue achieved 97.9 percent of budget; general fund revenue 94.5 percent; restricted fund revenue 102.9 percent. Total expenditures came in at 86 percent of budget. Mr. Watson also covered year-end fund balances as well as grant activity. He indicated that these figures were preliminary as some post-holiday entry adjustments are pending.

Mr. Rippe asked why plumbing revenue was down, to which Commissioner Kesterman replied that the budget was set too high. Mr. Rippe asked that by the next Board meeting, he would like a report of all 2022 grants, as well as only provide line-by-line report with explanations on items of importance.

Mr. Rippe also requested a quarterly report covering employee retention and to include primary cause for the employee leaving.

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

Ms. Puthoff moved to approve the monthly disbursements.

Mr. Meloy seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote – All Aye; - Mr. Brett abstained on White Water expenditures. (Dr. Kelly unable to vote remotely)

8. Unfinished Business: None.

9. **New Business:** Mr. Brett indicated that he had not yet decided on his future term on the Board of Health.

10. Adjournment

Mr. Brett moved to adjourn the meeting at 5:30 p.m.

Mr. Meloy seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote – All Aye (Dr. Kelly unable to vote remotely)

Next Board of Health meeting: February 14, 2022.



Mark A. Rippe, President



Greg Kesterman, Secretary
Health Commissioner

