

**Hamilton County General Health District
REGULAR MEETING – BOARD OF HEALTH
October 10, 2022 – 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
Dr. Jennifer Mooney, Assistant Health Commissioner
Craig Davidson, Assistant Health Commissioner
Dr. Steve Feagins, Medical Director
Greg Varner, Finance Officer
Felicia Erwin, Director of Water Quality
Christa Hyson, Director Emergency Preparedness

Guests: Tarah Dahal with his friends and family

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

Mr. Brett moved to approve the minutes from the September 6, 2022, Board of Health meeting.

Ms. Puthoff seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote – All Aye; - Dr. Kelly abstained

Ms. Puthoff moved to approve the minutes from the September 6, 2022, Board of Health Environmental Fees Public Hearing.

Mr. Meloy seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote – All Aye; - Dr. Kelly abstained

5. Public Comment: None.

6. Health Commissioner's Report

Commissioner Kesterman shared an update regarding COVID-19 cases. Numbers are low but we could see an increase with the arrival of fall. Hospitalizations are also on a

downward trend. On the vaccination front, Christa Hyson, Director of Emergency Preparedness, has been a key leader. Commissioner Kesterman thanked Ms. Hyson for all her, and her team's good work. HCPH continues to offer boosters and vaccination at the new location on Wesley Avenue in Norwood close to the Board of Elections. Hamilton County's clinic numbers are up compared with the rest of the state.

Monkeypox in Hamilton County remains at 14 total cases (no increase). The CDC's national trend continues to decline. Vaccine eligibility has been changed to include those further down on the risk categories.

There are four proclamations on tonight's agenda: recognizing Tara Dahal for efforts to bring COVID-19 vaccine to more than 700 Nepali and Nepali speaking Bhutanese residents of Hamilton County and Southwest Ohio; recognizing Dr. Jenny Mooney, who is the new Director for Northern Kentucky's Health Department, for her service; recognizing Maggie Baldwin, member of the customer service team, for her service; and recognizing the Board of Elections for its partnership and commitment to Hamilton County Public Health vaccination campaign. The Board of Elections offered space at no cost to HCPH. Commissioner Kesterman will deliver a small token of appreciation with the proclamation.

Commissioner Kesterman thanked the Board for supporting his visit to Ilmenau Germany as a guest of the City of Blue Ash with its Sister City program. It was an intense visit over several days and the trip was very worthwhile. Full details are in his report. Next year, Ilmenau representatives will come to Blue Ash.

The staff appreciation lunch event last week was a success. The weather was great, and staff really enjoyed the opportunity. The Commissioner thanked the Board, on behalf of the staff, for allowing the building to be closed so everyone could enjoy the event.

Commissioner Kesterman outlined the hiring process for a new Assistant Health Commissioner. Dr. Mooney will be missed! The open position announcement has been published and circulated widely in many locations and via a diversity of media and platforms with the intent of reaching as many potential individuals and cultivating as diverse an applicant pool as possible. There are currently six internal candidates and 28-30 external candidates. Commissioner Kesterman shared that his interview panel would include the HR officer, Finance Director and Assistant Health Commissioner. The team would begin prescreening over the next week. Upon completion of the first review, formal interviews would commence. All final applicants will receive the Birkman assessment, at the suggestion of Mr. Rippe, prior to final selection by the interview team. Commissioner Kesterman asked for feedback related to the process, for which there was none.

The Disease Prevention team space and the tuberculosis and STI clinic building is under new ownership. This necessitated some adjustments and HCPH is meeting with the new owners to learn more about the transition plan including their long-term uses for the building and our needs for the space. The team is also working with a broker to tour other properties.

The HCPH Board is required to annually approve the Mercy West Maternity Licensure. There are no violations, but approval is required to continue operations.

Staff Reports

(a) Medical Director's Report

Dr. Steve Feagins Medical Director, reported that COVID-19 predictions are based on increased cases in Europe. Dr. Feagins expects to see that trend here for the foreseeable future.

Flu season appears as if it will be more severe, but initial reports indicate the current vaccine is a good match. Masking is expected to return in the hospital setting. Mr. Rippe asked if the recommendation is to get the vaccination again after four months? No, ages 65+ get a higher dose.

Monkeypox vaccination eligibility has been expanded. Studies show protection two weeks after vaccination and cases are going down because of behavior modification.

Dr. Feagins explained Jaasiel Chapman's work with HIV PrEP education funded by a federal grant. Infection preventionists from various health departments and providers meet every Thursday and Jaasiel Chapman is doing a great job.

Poison Control reports multiple cases of people eating highly toxic wild mushrooms. The local cases were treated through collaboration from the Health Department, Poison Control, and health systems.

The CDC is reporting a 26 percent increase in the number of syphilis cases. Contact tracing is helping to identify and treat. Ms. Puthoff asked how that worked. The physicians follow risk factor protocols to determine testing.

Dr. Feagins explained how natural disasters attributed to global warming negatively affect public health: heat-stroke deaths, outbreaks following tropical rains and flooding, and negative impacts on global food supplies and population movement.

An Infectious Disease Spillover Event is when disease transfers from animals to humans. Human population density plays a part. Clearing forests brings mammals into more contact with humans.

Inbound flights from Uganda are being directed to specific airports for CDC and Homeland Security health screenings due to Ebola concerns. Ms. Puthoff asked if they are being quarantined. Yes, it is a self-quarantine with call in if symptoms develop. Epi monitors them, but currently there are no local cases to monitor.

Johns Hopkins University reports the US has recorded 1,060,408 deaths due to COVID-19 since the start of the pandemic. That number matches the combined toll of three major wars (Civil War, WW2, and Korea).

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

(b) Department of Community Health Services

Assistant Health Commissioner Dr. Jennifer Mooney shared that Safe Services Program has been conducting a pilot study over last several weeks on the intersectionality in drug

use and reproductive health. This is to inform procedures for how to approach clients and make referrals for family planning services, including contraception. The interviews found there is a knowledge gap in where to find services, especially those at little to no cost. HCPH will continue to develop this knowledge base in partnership with UC Health.

The Harm Reduction team is promoting the recovery friendly workplace practices to local employers. Hamilton County is signing on and there will be a county-wide “signing day” in October, which is National Recovery Month.

There has been a sharp increase nationally in maternal mortality. HCPH is the first, and perhaps only local health department examining county level data. The goal is to examine disparities in race, age, education, and cause of death in mothers. The first data “deep dive” led to additional questions and will be an ongoing process.

Jaasiel Chapman and Todd Rademaker presented as subject matter experts in HIV at the Caraconference – sponsored by Caracole. They represented our agency well!

WeTHRIVE! recognition event save the date cards were distributed to the Board. The event is December 8th. The event location is still being confirmed.

(c) Department of Environmental Health Services

Assistant Health Commissioner Mr. Davidson yielded his time to Director of Water Quality, Felicia Erwin, and is happy to answer any questions from the Board regarding his written report.

Ms. Erwin assumed her role as Director of Water Quality for HCPH in June. Ms. Erwin presented on two projects: Kenwood Acres illicit connections and Kenwood Hills sewer project. Illicit connections are when storm water discharge is contaminated by sewage lines that are connected directly to the storm water lines (in most cases due to errors during installation of this infrastructure). This particular instance was discovered when service workers reported findings to HCPH and then confirmed once MSD helped back trace to identify the homes. HCPH has successfully secured funding from the Hamilton County Board of Commissioners to help homeowners with the making corrections. This has likely been going on since the 70s when oversight of infrastructure work was not monitored according to current standards. HCPH is door knocking and mailing letters notifying property owners that \$40,000 is available toward correcting the issue and that correction will be enforced. Mr. Rippe encouraged involving Sycamore Township Administration as well.

Kenwood Hills sewer project involves a subdivision in a suburban area with 96 percent of residences served by Cavitette systems --most with connections to collector lines. There is currently a sewer petition project that intends to bring sewer to the neighborhood. The properties need to be converted to the public sewer system. The estimated cost is \$56,000 per property but County Commissioners, through policy, cap project costs for homeowners to \$12,000 per parcel. Anticipated construction, subject to final approval from the County Commissioners, is set to begin in 2024.

HCPH previously could declare neighborhoods a nuisance should a collector line have bad effluent quality. However, since a law change in 2015, each property must be handled individually with the owner having the right to repair their system. Resident education is imperative. County Commissioners public hearing date is to be determined.

Ms. Erwin's presentation and discussion shall count for 45 minutes of continuing education for the Board of Health, which concludes the year's education requirement.

7. Finances

Finance Officer, Greg Varner, reviewed the 2022 third quarter financial report, discussing year-to-date progress and variances. HCPH revenue remains stronger than anticipated and expenditures are less than originally budgeted. Overall, HCPH is fiscally strong for 2022.

Mr. Varner explained a recent Ohio Department of Health Grant Services Unit Statewide Compliance Ruling. For the past five years, deliverable based grant receipts did not have to be spent within the grant period. Questions were asked by HCPH and other local health departments of the State five years ago and no direction was given. HCPH had an internal policy that all funds remaining past the grant period would be used as needed, for expenses related to the spirit of the grant. The new Statewide ruling is effective for grants that begin July 1, 2022 or after and requires grant funds received must be spent within 30 days from the end of the grant period. Unused funds will be returned to the state.

With this change, HCPH will work to use the remaining funds from the past deliverable grants (prior to July 1, 2022) as efficiently as we can. In this spirit, Mr. Varner and staff looked for applicable personnel expenditures for staff related to the grant efforts to use the past deliverable grant expenditures this year. As a result, the general fund will be better than budgeted.

As to the 2021 State audit, Mr. Varner explained there were no findings and only three verbal comments: written procedures, timely deposits, and ongoing discussion with Board on Internal Control. All have been addressed and internal controls will be shared with the Board on a continuing basis. Mr. Varner thanked his team for all their hard work on the audit.

Mr. Varner also reported on the current COVID-19 grant desk review by the ODH Grant Services Unit Compliance Team and the approximately \$6.5M of expense documentation we have sent the reviewer. To this point, the reviewer's questions are largely about the vaccination gift cards. They have noted that HCPH is missing documentation on \$2,300 of gift cards that were provided to those who received their first vaccination. These funds are likely to be required to be repaid to ODH. The margin of error is immaterial, and the work was done during extenuating circumstances.

Mr. Brett asked if HCPH is getting any of the opioid funds. Commissioner Kesterman explained Hamilton County is getting the funds and they need to be allocated. The funds will be allocated by the OneOhio Region 2 committee for which Commissioner Kesterman is a member. Mr. Brett heard that a separate bank account was recommended. Commissioner Kesterman explained the State will get the money and control the projects. Mr. Brett would like to help smaller communities utilize their funds. Distributing Narcan to the fire departments could potentially be an easy project.

The September, 2022 Disbursement Reports are included in the Board packet. Ms. Puthoff asked if the lease payment for two locations are paid by grants? Mr. Varner confirmed that to be accurate.

Ms. Puthoff moved to approve the monthly disbursements.
Mr. Rippe seconded the motion.
Roll Call Vote – All Aye; - Mr. Brett abstained on White Water expenditures.

8. Unfinished Business: None.

9. New Business:

(a) **Proclamation recognizing Tarah Dahal**

Mr. Kesterman read the proclamation recognizing Tara Dahal for efforts to bring COVID-19 vaccine to more than 700 Nepali and Nepali-speaking Bhutanese residents of Hamilton County and Southwest Ohio. Mr. Dahal expressed his gratitude to HCPH for nominating him. Mr. Dahal deeply appreciates the award and shared the credit with HCPH staff, his community, and his family. It was noted that there were only 35 award recipients in the country, for which he was one.

Dr. Kelly moved to approve the proclamation recognizing Tarah Dahal.

Mr. Meloy seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote – All Aye

(b) **Proclamation recognizing Dr. Jenny Mooney for her service.** Commissioner Kesterman thanked Dr. Mooney for her service, especially for persevering through the pandemic, and looks forward to future collaborations. This Thursday the County Commissioners are also doing a proclamation for Dr. Mooney.

Mr. Brett moved to approve the proclamation recognizing Dr. Mooney.

Ms. Puthoff seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote – All Aye

(c) **Proclamation recognizing Maggie Baldwin for her service.** Commissioner Kesterman explained Ms. Baldwin could not be here this evening because she is taking care of her family.

Mr. Meloy moved to approve the proclamation recognizing Maggie Baldwin.

Mr. Rippe seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote – All Aye

(d) **Proclamation recognizing the Board of Elections for their partnership and commitment to Hamilton County Public Health vaccination campaign**

Mr. Rippe moved to approve the proclamation recognizing the Board of Elections.

Mr. Meloy seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote – All Aye

(e) **Mercy Health – West Hospital Maternity Application**

Mr. Rippe moved to approve the Mercy West Maternity Application.

Ms. Puthoff seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote – All Aye

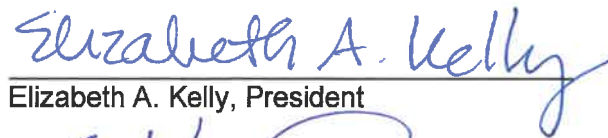
10. Adjournment

Mr. Meloy moved to adjourn the meeting at 5:47 p.m.

Ms. Puthoff seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote – All Aye

Next Board of Health meeting: November 14, 2022.


Elizabeth A. Kelly, President


Greg Kesterman, Secretary
Health Commissioner

