

**Hamilton County General Health District
REGULAR MEETING – BOARD OF HEALTH
October 12, 2020 – 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

Guests: None

3. Clean Kitchen Awards

Craig Davidson read the list of 14 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 14, 2020 Board of Health meeting.

Mr. Meloy seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote – All Aye

5. Health Commissioner's Report

Commissioner Kesterman reviewed COVID-19 statistics in Ohio and Hamilton County. The number of cases in Hamilton County is 15,089, hospitalizations are 1,206, deaths are 360, and presumed recoveries are 12,855. The reproductive value in Hamilton County is 1.28 and the region is 1.23.

Hamilton County's COVID-19 Test and Protect Program is up and running. All test locations, dates, and times are listed on HCPH's website. Commissioner Kesterman explained Hamilton County's metrics that are driving the State's advisory system. Keep in mind, the State data, in some instances, is 14 days in arrears. Schools are doing well, and the governor is reviewing school guidelines for possible changes.

Staff have done an amazing job keeping most programs on track despite COVID-19. The most significant impact of COVID-19 was in Harm Reduction and Epidemiology. Overall 12 percent of metrics are currently behind or postponed. Staff's flexibility and commitment to public health enabled HCPH to exceed/complete 8 percent of metrics, 80 percent are on track, and new grants have been pursued and awarded. All inspections and grant requirements are in compliance with State or grant requirements. Full details of the Program Implementation Plan are in the Board packet.

HCPH received 96 applications for the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Coordinator and interviews are being scheduled. Mr. Rippe asked where the position was posted. Commissioner Kesterman shared that most HCPH career opportunities are posted on Indeed. For the DEI Coordinator posting, HCPH also reached out to other diversity departments in the county. Mr. Brett would like to be in on the DEI Coordinator interviews.

Commissioner Kesterman explained the State and local preparation and planning for vaccine distribution. HCPH is working with Hamilton County CARES Act funding to purchase three vaccine vans, ten tents that will be used for drive-thru vaccine clinics, ipads and wireless hotspots, walk in refrigerators and freezers as well as other equipment to help stand up clinics. Ms. Puthoff asked about timing of the vaccine. Dr. Feagins reported the Pfizer vaccine is anticipated by the end of 2020, but by and large the majority of vaccines will be after the first of the year. Mr. Brett asked about HCPH staff phase classification. Commissioner Kesterman explained that staff are in the first phase; however, staffs' family are not. Mr. Brett would like for high-risk health workers' family to be included. Changes are expected from the State as the vaccines become available.

Hamilton County CARES Act funding is also being used for HCPH space redesign in several areas to create COVID safe desks and increase the total seating capacity for certain areas. As a result of COVID-19, we have increased several staff positions, particularly in our Epidemiology Division. HCPH is working with the architectural firm to also look at our customer lobby, information technology, water quality, and health promotion and education areas. Some of the build outs that may not be completed this year under CARES Act funding may be brought before the Board for 2021 budget considerations.

Tonight, Greg Varner will present on the 2019 audit and third quarter financial reports.

Commissioner Kesterman is looking forward to moving beyond COVID-19 reporting and getting back to reporting regular business.

Staff Reports

(a) Medical Director's Report

Dr. Steve Feagins Medical Director thanked the Infectious Disease medical directors and infection preventionists from the healthcare systems who continue to meet weekly with Public Health. They make recommendations to the hospital steering committee and multi-agency task force. Hospital occupancy rates are good, and no hospital has had to go to surge capacity. It was discussed whether to make the vaccine for staff required or strongly recommend. The committee does NOT recommend mandatory employee vaccination for any FDA Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) vaccines. They are focusing on vaccine

education with staff and the general public. Post-vaccine, PPE requirements and safety precautions should continue as universal precaution.

The influenza vaccine is strongly encouraged at this time. There is a recommended two-week separation between the influenza and the COVID-19 vaccine. Dr. Feagins explained vaccine development and preparations for vaccine distribution. Planning for Post-COVID-19 syndromes “Long Haulers” identification, care options, and support groups for patients are also being reviewed by the Infection Control Committee to develop local recommendations. Full details are in the Board packet.

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

(b) Department of Community Health Services

Assistant Health Commissioner Dr. Jennifer Mooney is happy to answer any questions from her written report and is excited to share that, in the near future, Tableau software will be used as a data lens for a variety of different data dashboards. The team has recently uploaded the daily overdose report into our Tableau dashboard. More to come on that front, but the work is to make information accessible to all. HCPH is hosting a staff flu vaccine clinic and nearly half of the agency signed up for a flu shot. Mr. Rippe liked the software development initiative. Dr. Mooney shared that staff are excited to use the new platform. Mr. Rippe asked to add 2019 syringe data for YTD comparisons. Ms. Puthoff asked for an update on HIV and Syphilis data compared to 2012 when HCPH took over the program. Dr. Mooney explained some of the new initiatives that were delayed by the pandemic such as Ending the HIV Epidemic, are now underway. Dr. Mooney will present more details at the next Board meeting.

(c) Department of Environmental Health Services

Assistant Health Commissioner Mr. Davidson is pleased to report the award of a \$2M waste management grant for lead and home health hazards reduction. Special thanks to Rebecca Stowe, Performance Management & Grants Coordinator and Chuck DeJonckheere, Waste Management Director, for the quick turnaround and to Hamilton County Planning + Development Department for the \$300K match.

Mr. Davidson is glad to be back, getting involved in the community, and observing the great work by HCPH staff. Among the site visits listed in the Board packet, Mr. Davidson highlighted a complex septic sewer system installation and inspection.

Enforcements updates are detailed in the written report, and Mr. Davidson thanked Ms. Chin for her assistance regarding a status meeting for a licensed food service operation in North College Hill.

Ms. Puthoff asked for a percentage of homes that need lead remediation. Commissioner Kesterman will get the details and estimated numbers to share with the Board. Mr. Meloy asked if there were data used to select the communities in the target group for lead remediation? And are there local funds available - they may get on board to help close the gap? Yes, there are data behind the targeted communities. Staff will keep local funding opportunities in mind as the program ramps up. Mr. Rippe asked about helping residents navigate the remediation system. HCPH is sub-contracting with People Working

Cooperatively (PWC) to support critical services and activities like navigation the application process. Resident assistance is part of their scope of work.

6. Unfinished Business: None.

7. Finances

Finance Officer Greg Varner reviewed the 2020 Third Quarter Financial Review PowerPoint discussing year to date progress and variances. Mr. Rippe asked about the staff calculations for COVID-19 funding. Mr. Varner explained HCPH staff calculations that are reported in "other" category and the contracted contact tracers that are expensed at 100%. Ms. Puthoff asked what CARES Act total funds are for HCPH. Mr. Varner indicated \$2.8M

Mr. Varner explained one classification of revenue comment from the 2019 State Audit that has been classified the same way since at least 2014. The classification has been changed per the auditor's request. Two non-compliance findings were discussed that were attributed to a complicated grant. Other recommendations were to items that had not been called out in prior years but have been changed going forward.

Meetings on the 2021-22 operating budget have begun and the budget is to be presented at the December Board meeting. Given the healthy reserves, Ms. Puthoff recommend to not increase assessments to local governments. Mr. Brett agreed and would like to waive the 3% increase for 2021 if it is not too late. Staff will investigate how to un-do the 2021 increase with the DAC. Mr. Rippe asked if there is an investment policy for the reserves. Mr. Varner explained Hamilton County holds HCPH funds but staff will investigate. Mr. Rippe asked hypothetically what happens to HCPH funds if Hamilton County would go under. Mr. Varner will also make inquiries with other health departments.

Ms. Puthoff asked if there are public health needs that are not being met. Dr. Kelly echoed finding ways to use the reserves (i.e. more pandemic mask public education). Commissioner Kesterman added a big question is expanded space (or bigger building) for staff and for expanded services. Dr. Kelly asked about another press release given the increase in COVID-19 cases. Commissioner Kesterman participates weekly on a press meeting with Hamilton County Commissioners. The increased numbers have been shared with the media. COVID-19 funding has been good, the vaccination vans are being built out now. All ideas to utilize additional reserves within HCPH mission are welcome.

Ms. Puthoff asked about the safety of staff. HCPH has not received any threats. Ms. Puthoff and Dr. Kelly indicated that the Board supports resources to be spent on staff security and staff mental health.

The Board thanked Mr. Varner for his quarterly report and the 2019 State Audit report.

The September 2020 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.

8. New Business:

Mr. Brett moved to hold the November 9 Board Meeting at 4 p.m. via Zoom.
Dr. Kelly seconded the motion.
Roll Call Vote – All Aye

Ms. Puthoff moved to approve Resolution E – 2020 Expressing Appreciation for the Outstanding and Dedicated Service of Janice Goodman.
Mr. Brett seconded the motion.
Roll Call Vote – All Aye

9. Adjournment

Mr. Meloy moved to adjourn the meeting at 5:43 p.m.
Mr. Brett seconded the motion.
Roll Call Vote – All Aye

Next Board of Health meeting: November 9, 2020 at 4 p.m. via Zoom.



Mark A. Rippe, President



Greg Kesterman, Secretary
Health Commissioner

