

**Hamilton County General Health District**  
**REGULAR MEETING – BOARD OF HEALTH**  
**November 14, 2022 – 4 p.m.**  
**Minutes**

**1. Call to Order**

At 4 p.m., Dr. 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  
James Brett  
Tracey A. Puthoff, Esq.  
Mark A. Rippe

District Staff Present: Greg Kesterman, Health Commissioner  
Craig Davidson, Assistant Health Commissioner  
Dr. Steve Feagins, Medical Director  
Greg Varner, Finance Officer

**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 October 10, 2022, Board of Health meeting.

**Mr. Rippe** seconded the motion.

**Roll Call Vote – All Aye**

**5. Public Comment: None.**

**6. Health Commissioner's Report**

Commissioner Kesterman shared an update regarding COVID-19 cases. While the numbers are under-reported due to home tests, the hospital statistics show the number of cases remain consistent with no significant increases. Vaccination efforts are going smoothly averaging 40-80 people per day. The booster/bivalent COVID-19 vaccine is available for everyone five years old or older with a minimum of two months since their last vaccination.

On the monkeypox front, there are only three additional cases in Hamilton County since the Board last met. The low numbers are attributed to the work of public health including vaccination and public education efforts. We are also seeing a significant decrease in the national numbers.

Inbound flights from Uganda continue to be directed to specific airports for CDC health screenings due to Ebola concerns. HCPH has four local travelers of which three are still in the monitoring period and none are high risk. There are no Ebola cases nationally.

The Board packet contains three agency reports: Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) with all metrics on track; 2022 Strategic Plan Implementation Progress which is on track with significant activity in Q4; and the Program Implementation Plan (PIP) as of Q3 with 98 percent on track or exceeding metrics.

Board Members are invited to attend the WeTHRIVE! Recognition Event Tuesday, December 6 at the Forest Park Senior Center. Note the venue and date changed to Forest Park because they have more affordable catering.

Since Dr. Mooney's departure, Commissioner Kesterman has enjoyed working more closely with staff in the Department of Community Health Services. Finalists for the Assistant Health Commissioner position are completing the Birkman assessment, then there will be a final review of the top three candidates who are all very strong. Leadership will have a call Wednesday, November 16 at 8 a.m. with consultant Cyndi Wineinger. After that call, a final decision will be made. The Board was invited, and Mr. Brett was able to participate. The Board indicated that Mr. Brett was its representative and that he was in a position to authorize the Health Commissioner to make an employment offer based on the discussion.

Anne Arble was promoted to Director of Epidemiology. Ms. Arble has been with HCPH for almost four years and was previously the senior supervising epidemiologist. Ms. Arble has a Master's in Public Health in Epidemiology from UC.

Commissioner Kesterman reported the sale of the 237 William Howard Taft building was not completed. Christ Hospital staff have moved out of the building and signs were removed prior to the anticipated closing date. Our current lease ends on December 31, 2023.. HCPH has requested a short-term lease extension for the Disease Prevention & TB clinic space. In addition, the management team is working with a broker to look at other properties. The ideal location will be close to HCPH's main office.

Hamilton County has 13 active TB cases. One new case is non-compliant with their treatment. Nee Fong Chin, Chief Assistant Prosecuting Attorney is helping staff navigate the legal process to obtain compliance. The homeless patient is self-isolating in a hotel until treatment has been completed. HCPH is prepared to treat in the justice center if needed due to non-compliance.

The Disease Prevention clinic reviewed the emergency kit, its location, and how to run a mock emergency code in the clinic. This emergency procedure ensures patients receive the best proper care should a medical emergency occur.

Commissioner Kesterman provided a few highlights from the 2023 revised budgeting process. Administration is proposing a four percent merit increase to stay competitive in salaries with staff meeting or exceeding expectations. In addition, the budget assumes a three percent increase in 2024 to the assessment for contracted villages, townships, and cities. Finally, the Disease Prevention, Emergency Preparedness, and Harm Reduction budgets include \$70,000 in 2023 and \$120,000 in 2024 for professional fees (architectural/space planning/moving/furniture). Mr. Rippe suggested inclusion of IT costs in any estimates, as they are often considerable.

In response to Ms. Puthoff's facility plan question, Commissioner Kesterman explained that there are currently two potential approaches. The first is to maintain existing space at 250 Wm. Howard Taft while finding another space to combine those Divisions currently occupying the McMillan and Main St. locations. In addition, Commissioner Kesterman is working with County administration to consider purchase of the entire building currently housing Disease Prevention functions, which would allow unification of the entire agency.

Mr. Rippe wants to ensure the budget has sufficient dollars for staff retention. Commissioner Kesterman is working on pay scale. All position opportunities are posted internally to allow for inward mobility and advancement, when skill sets allow for a transition.

## **Staff Reports**

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

Dr. Steve Feagins, Medical Director, shared there are discussions in the medical community to name the Omicron variant COVID-21. We are seeing increased hospitalizations and flu-like illness. The predominate influenza strain is a good match for the flu vaccine. Medical professionals are pushing patients to get their flu vaccinations now. Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center is seeing unprecedented volumes of patients presenting with Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) and other respiratory viruses. The increase in RSV cases could place stress on healthcare systems this fall and winter. On a positive note, the data is pointing to a plateau in Cleveland. Healthcare providers are doing RSV testing in the elderly population.

The CDC expected an Acute Flaccid Myelitis (AFM, EV-D68), a polio-like illness, rebound in 2022; however, there are only 27 cases nationwide. It is a mystery that defies all projections.

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

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

The update is provided in Commissioner Kesterman's report in the Board packet.

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

Assistant Health Commissioner Mr. Davidson was pleased to share that Adam Lengerich was recognized this past month by the Southwest Ohio Environmental Health Association as Sanitarian of the Year. Mr. Lengerich is now in the running for state sanitarian of the year.

Mr. Davidson was also pleased to report the Ohio EPA Waste Management audit showed HCPH is in substantial compliance with no findings or deficiencies noted. The full report is in the Board packet.

The ODH no contact rate for the lead abatement program shows HCPH holding at 0.0 percent rate. A benchmark rate of 24 percent or below is the stated expectation from ODH. Staff member Emily Wanzer's "Get the lead out" article was highlighted along with the research of a University of Cincinnati professor in a recent Soapbox Cincinnati publication.

Mr. Davidson reviewed and explained the proposed plumbing fee adjustments. If the Board wishes to proceed, staff will start the formal process. It has also been discussed that fees could be tied to the consumer price index to allow for automatic adjustments in line with current economic conditions. Mr. Rippe asked about other community's higher rates. Mr. Davidson explained staff do not want to dis-incentivize people to obtain the necessary permits which help ensure health and safety. Some of these rates also include plan review fees which HCPH does charge. Additionally, Commissioner Kesterman noted that we carefully consider equity in fee schedule adjustments, i.e., fee increases relative to project costs. These increases align with HCPH's recent increases to pool and food fees. Mr. Rippe clarified that the last Plumbing increase was in 2014. . Staff will be looking at water quality control fees as well. A public hearing could be held at the December Board Meeting. We would like to complete the process before the director retires in March 2023. Mr. Davidson assured the Board these fees will cover HCPH's expenses and staff time

**Ms. Puthoff** moved to have a public hearing for the proposed fee increases at 3:45 p.m. on December 12, 2022, with the proposed schedule modified such that per fixture fee is \$21.

**Dr. Kelly** seconded the motion.

**Roll Call Vote – All Aye**

## **7. Finances**

The October 2022 Disbursement Reports are included in the Board packet.

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

**Ms. Puthoff** seconded the motion.

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

## **8. New Business:**

Commissioner Kesterman explained the WeTHRIVE! Proclamation which will be used to recognize our communities during the upcoming WeTHRIVE! Event.

**Ms. Puthoff** moved to approve the WeTHRIVE! proclamation recognizing our communities.

**Mr. Rippe** seconded the motion.

**Roll Call Vote – All Aye**

## **9. Executive Session**

**Ms. Puthoff** moved to go into Executive Session at 5:10 p.m. to discuss personnel matters.

**Dr. Kelly** seconded the motion.

**Roll Call Vote – All Aye**

**Mr. Brett** moved to end Executive Session where no action was taken at 5:40 p.m.

**Dr. Kelly** seconded the motion.

**Roll Call Vote – All Aye**

**Dr. Kelly** moved to authorize the Health Commissioner to terminate an employee's employment with the Health District if such employee is within such employee's probationary period. In addition, for an employee who is outside of their probationary period, the Health Commissioner has the authority to terminate employment with notification to the Board President. In both instances, the Health Commissioner shall follow the Board of Health's Personnel Policy Manual, Ohio Administrative Code and Ohio Revised Code.

**Ms. Puthoff** seconded the motion.

**Roll Call Vote – All Aye**


## 10. Adjournment

**Mr. Rippe** 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: December 12, 2022.

  
Elizabeth A. Kelly, President

  
Greg Kesterman, Secretary  
Health Commissioner

