

**Hamilton County General Health District  
REGULAR MEETING – BOARD OF HEALTH  
March 14, 2022 – 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 followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

**2. Roll Call of Members**

Members Present: Mark A. Rippe, President  
Elizabeth A. Kelly, M.D., Vice President  
James Brett  
Dan Meloy  
Tracey A. Puthoff, Esq. (Zoom)

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  
Chris Griffith, Director Division of Water Quality (Zoom)

Guests: George Winkler, student (Zoom)  
David Conner, Mount Notre Dame Health Center  
Rebecca Siegel  
Emma McDermott  
Bonnie Stewart  
Landen

**3. Clean Kitchen Awards**

Craig Davidson read the list of 13 Clean Kitchen Award recipients and congratulated them for their efforts to maintain a high level of sanitation and staff education. Mount Notre Dame Health Center and Covenant Village of Green Twp. representatives were present to receive their awards and were thanked for all their good work.

**4. Approval of Minutes**

**Mr. Brett** moved to approve the minutes from the February 14, 2022 Board of Health meeting.

**Mr. Meloy** seconded the motion.

**Roll Call Vote – All Aye**

**5. Public Comment: None.**

**6. Health Commissioner's Report**

Commissioner Kesterman reported on the rapidly decreasing number of COVID cases in Hamilton County. As of March 14, the number of active cases of COVID in the community are 3,300; one month ago, they were at 9,500. Similarly, at the peak of the wave in January, the highest daily count was 2,470; today it is down to averaging 40 cases per day. There is currently a 2.6 percent positivity rate. Hospitalization numbers are down; there are 108 patients hospitalized currently while one month ago there were 504. Seven percent of hospital patients are COVID patients (it was previously as high as 30 percent). ICU stats are down, with one out of five ICU patients having COVID (that number was as high as four out of ten). On the vaccination front, the 30–39-year-old age group met the national goal of 70 percent threshold. The regional goal of 80 percent threshold was met in the 60-year-old and over age groups.

While the number of vaccine doses administered daily is down (both on state and national levels), HCPH continues to run 2-3 vaccination locations, additionally having a team of nurses going to homebound individuals' homes. HCPH will carry on with that work as long as the state continues funding. Mr. Rippe asked how many people are showing up for vaccinations? Commissioner Kesterman shared that between 4-10 people are getting vaccinated in Hamilton County per day. Fifty percent of those vaccinations were first dose vaccinations. Recently, the homebound team made nine visits in one day.

Regarding masking requirements, Hamilton County dropped below the 50 cases per 100K population threshold, which allows the removal of mask mandates in public places for the general public (currently at 47 cases per 100K). There continues to be low community transmission throughout the state of Ohio, however the federal masking requirements for transportation are still in effect. Businesses are welcome to require masks for their customers if they so choose. Mr. Rippe asked if anything has changed in hospitals since masks have been gone? Dr. Feagins explained that he will address that in his report to the Board.

Commissioner Kesterman mentioned publishing the second Health Equity report on the HCPH website – which gives data to the public to drive change over the next five years. Mr. Rippe asked if it would be helpful to share the data that the *Enquirer* put out with our epidemiologists? He explained that the *Enquirer* recently published an online article sharing 20 different data metrics by neighborhood regarding health equity. Commissioner Kesterman responded that yes, he would share that data with the team.

Commissioner Kesterman reminded that the annual District Advisory Council meeting will be held March 15, 2022 via Zoom. Mr. Brett is up for reelection with no other known candidates.

Tonight, there will be a brief update from Mr. Griffith regarding Resolution A updates to HCPH sewage policies. The Board packet contains a letter of support for Board approval regarding HCPH's reaccreditation process. It is anticipated that there will be approval by July. Mr. Rippe asked, given the timeline to complete once started, is HCPH prepared to start the process and finish in time? Commissioner Kesterman confirmed staff are ready and able to complete on time.

The One Ohio Regional Foundation is detailed in the Board packet and explains that Hamilton County will receive approximately \$54M of the \$800M settlement money in the coming years from the payouts in response to the opioid crisis. Commissioner Kesterman is

excited to be a part of the Hamilton County Foundation that will influence change for the opioid crisis.

Commissioner Kesterman shared a brief update related to the Norwood Health Department and explained that HCPH is available to assist as they transition staffing, and to help with any or all services. Mr. Kesterman offered HCPH help directly in a conversation with the Norwood Mayor.

## **Staff Reports**

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

Dr. Steve Feagins Medical Director touched on the regional Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA), as detailed in the Medical Director's report. The electronic health records include 11 components of social health that can now be accessed and shared between multiple health systems. CHNA data will be used for planning over the next three years.

COVID hospitalizations and ICU patient numbers are decreasing; however, there is a significant number of people navigating post-COVID chronic illness needing PCP's. A majority of ICU patients are unvaccinated. Dr. Feagins mentioned the national CDC data chart comparing the vaccinated and unvaccinated, in which there is a huge difference in illness/hospitalizations between the two groups. He discussed the efficacy and necessity of the third booster dose.

Dr. Feagins detailed the recommendations of the Infectious Disease Working Group, which is a committee comprised of over 50 individuals (from several health departments, health systems and infectious disease) giving recommendations for mask requirements and testing. Their recommendations are as follows:

- All health systems allowing two visitors.
- Masks optional for non-clinical areas. Dr. Feagins explained that a clinical area is any area that provides billable services.
- Discontinue universal pre-op testing. Instead, implement more selective, risk-based testing. Could having COVID affect the procedure?
- Eye protection is no longer necessary. The exception being requiring vaccine-exempt employees to continue wearing eye protection.

Dr. Feagins reinforced the availability of outpatient COVID-19 treatments (both infusion and oral medicines). He shared the need for more "Test to Treat" pharmacy-based clinic sites - where clinicians can both test, diagnose, and dispense treatment medicine in one location.

Dr. Feagins described the implications of what would happen when the COVID emergency ends: various funding and resources would no longer be available; Test to Treat locations would no longer be authorized under the Emergency Use Authorization; and millions of people would no longer be enrolled in Medicaid.

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 an initiative in the Harm Reduction Division – the Recovery Friendly Hamilton County (RFHC) initiative. This initiative will encourage recovery friendly workplaces by allowing businesses to get better education on addiction, have training components for management and formal acknowledgement for being a participating business. HCPH would be the first to sign off on this initiative. Tyler Meenach will present this initiative at the April Board meeting.

Dr. Mooney also shared that the harm reduction team has a new point of access for its SAFE Services (Stigma Free Access for Everyone). This new location will be in Walnut Hills.

Dr. Mooney shared that there was a decline of HIV cases in Hamilton County in 2020-2021 (even though the region saw HIV cases increase during that time). Ms. Puthoff commented that she wished there was publicity celebrating that fact, especially given the success of the harm reduction program that was lobbied for. Commissioner Kesterman replied that he would look into writing a letter to the editor to get coverage.. Dr. Mooney commented that the state of Ohio looks to Hamilton County as a leader, and referenced an HIV grant awarded to Hamilton County, which provides additional avenue to hire more staff and provide more resources. Ms. Puthoff congratulated Dr. Mooney on her team's work.

Mr. Brett commented that the WeTHRIVE! program does great work. Dr. Mooney agreed and shared that the *Enquirer* has highlighted the WeTHRIVE! program numerous times recently.

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

Assistant Health Commissioner Mr. Davidson introduced Chris Griffith, Director of Water Quality, and discussed the suggested updates to the Terms and Conditions for Sewage Treatment Systems and Gray Water Recycling Systems Operation Permits for Maintenance, Monitoring and Operation. Full details of the changes proposed are in the Board packet. Mr. Rippe praised Chris Griffith for the work he is doing, specifically in helping people work through the process of sewage permits. Mr. Brett asked about any changes to the testing requirements? Mr. Griffith responded there is a small change regarding the Ohio EPA permit and the language changed to reflect the permit changes.

Mr. Davidson commented on vaccine clinics; specifically, the adjustment of staff levels to be prepared to handle additional demand for vaccines should that be needed in the future. He highlighted the good turnout working with Hamilton County Developmental Disability Services and mentioned nice comments given from them. He also highlighted the work done in distributing over 4,100, \$100 gift cards to first time recipients of the COVID vaccine. Mr. Rippe asked if those were Visa gift cards, and if there had been any issues with them. Mr. Davidson replied that they were indeed Visa cards, and that early on there were some issues with people stealing the numbers of the gift cards from Visa. He explained that people were told if they had issues, to contact them directly.

Mr. Davidson explained on the emergency preparedness front, they recently participated in a statewide tabletop exercise, which tested surge capacity with regards to a simulated infectious disease concern.

Regarding the HUD grant for lead hazard abatement, Mr. Davidson shared that there are two contracts in place to do the work. He anticipates a productive year getting the work done.

**7. Finances**

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

**Ms. Kelly** moved to approve the monthly disbursements.

**Mr. Meloy** seconded the motion.

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

**8. Unfinished Business: None.**

**9. New Business**

**Mr. Brett** moved to approve Resolution A: Revising the Board of Health Operation and Maintenance Program standards: Specifying terms and conditions of operation permits for the maintenance, monitoring, and operation of sewage treatment systems and graywater recycling system.

**Mr. Meloy** seconded the motion.

**Roll Call Vote – All Aye**

**Mr. Meloy** moved to approve Resolution B: To accept and authorize an execution of payment between Hamilton County Board of Health and Wasserstrom Company.

**Mr. Brett** seconded the motion.

**Roll Call Vote – All Aye**

**Ms. Puthoff** moved to authorize Mr. Brett signing the Board of Health letter of support for Reaccreditation.

**Dr. Kelly** seconded the motion.

**Roll Call Vote – All Aye**

Ms. Puthoff clarified the state authorization of virtual meetings ends at the end of June. Commissioner Kesterman does not expect the virtual meeting authorization to extend beyond June 30.

Mr. Rippe acknowledged the students observing tonight’s meeting. There were no questions from the students.

**10. Adjournment**

**Ms. Puthoff** moved to adjourn the meeting at 5:15 p.m.

**Mr. Meloy** seconded the motion.

**Roll Call Vote – All Aye**

Next Board of Health meeting: April 11, 2022.

  
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Mark A. Rippe, President

  
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Greg Kesterman, Secretary  
Health Commissioner