

**Hamilton County General Health District  
REGULAR MEETING – BOARD OF HEALTH  
April 11, 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 (via Zoom)  
Elizabeth A. Kelly, M.D., Vice President  
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  
Tyler Meenach, HCPH Harm Reduction Division  
Shana Merrick, HCPH Harm Reduction Division  
Philip Graham, HCPH Harm Reduction Division

Guests: Alexei Krainev, nursing student (via Zoom)  
Kriti, nursing student (via Zoom)  
Randy Quisenberry, JCafe  
Sparkle Scott, JCafe  
Kevin Holt, Ohio Means Jobs

**3. Clean Kitchen Awards**

Craig Davidson read the list of 18 Clean Kitchen Award recipients and congratulated them for their efforts to maintain a high level of sanitation and staff education. J Cafe representatives were present to receive their awards and were thanked for all their good work.

**4. Approval of Minutes**

**Ms. Puthoff** moved to approve the minutes from the March 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 that COVID numbers in Hamilton County continue to be relatively low. Today there are 700 active cases county-wide. The number of cases per day remains steady at 34.. Percent positivity for the region remains at 1.7, slightly lower than it was a month ago. Hospitalization numbers continue to decline; there are 70 patients currently hospitalized and 13 patients in the ICU with 10 individuals on ventilators. Thanks to the recent announcements on booster shots, there has been an increase in the number of people vaccinated. Last week, 283 people were vaccinated, which is significantly higher than three weeks ago, when only about 50 people were vaccinated. Vaccinations continue to operate out of the Board of Elections, with one additional site available as needed. HCPH is open to allow hosting of additional site locations for businesses interested in vaccinating employees. Hamilton County and the entire state of Ohio is currently at a low level of COVID transmission.

Commissioner Kesterman shared a construction update on the HCPH lobby that has been under renovation. The drywall arrived today, and workers will start putting the lobby back together. Estimated completion date is June 10<sup>th</sup>, which should allow HCPH to be back in the regular conference room for the June meeting.

To commemorate Public Health Week, Commissioner Kesterman recognized Rachel Blinka, an epidemiologist who managed large aspects of the COVID pandemic from day one. Rachel accepted an award last week at the Cincinnati Zoo.

Commissioner Kesterman updated that HCPH is officially providing Environmental Health inspection services for the city of Norwood.

As requested by the Board at the February Board of Health meeting, Commissioner Kesterman provided a report on first quarter employment separation. HCPH has six employees recently separated from the agency; this includes one pursuing retirement, one released on probationary terms and four others who are pursuing other opportunities.

Commissioner Kesterman shared details of his travel requests for the Board to approve. These requests include traveling to Columbus for the Association of Ohio Health Commissioners annual conference May 23-25. Additionally, the National Association of County and City Health Officials conference is in Atlanta July 19-21. Finally, Commissioner Kesterman shared that the city of Blue Ash requested that he accompany them to Germany to see their sister city at no charge to the District.

Commissioner Kesterman mentioned House Bill 463, which pertains to the structure of Boards of Health. The Association of Ohio Health Commissioners continue to track this bill and is willing to explore smaller changes regarding restructuring, formulating a middle ground. The Commissioner shared that the bill sponsor will most likely get something thru committee to the floor for consideration. Commissioner Kesterman asked the Board Members to review the Bill and share any comments or ideas for this restructuring so that he can share with AOHC.

Lastly, Commissioner Kesterman shared that Colerain Township is likely going to withdraw from the WeTHRIVE! Program.

## **Staff Reports**

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

Dr. Feagins reported on the COVID-19 treatment, Sotrovimab, stating that it has been recently discontinued due to being found ineffective against BA.2 Omicron subvariant. He stated that the BA.2 subvariant is now the dominant variant, accounting for more than 60-70% of all COVID cases. Dr. Feagins explained that the efficacy of the monoclonal antibody treatments is short-lived because of COVID variants changing so rapidly.

Dr. Feagins also shared the FDA guidance clarifying who qualifies for an additional COVID-19 booster. Specific details can be found in the Medical Director Report.

Dr. Feagins explained that the COVID numbers, while currently low, are still twice what they were this time last year. He shared the importance of HCPH and secondary providers learning about the effect of "long COVID" syndrome and determining how to treat those still recovering. He shared that \$10 million of Federal funding is being committed to research for treatment of "long COVID" cases. Dr. Feagins emphasized the importance of vaccines and early treatment as a way to lessen COVID effects.

Dr. Feagins briefly touched on the H5N1 Avian Influenza, which is an epidemic in non-humans and multiple different bird species that is extremely contagious. This has contributed to the increase in egg prices. Only a few humans are affected and those cases are rare.

Dr. Feagins commented that the lower HIV numbers in Hamilton County are due in part to lack of testing. There have been shortages in the industry for testing materials and these have affected numbers. There are details in the Medical Director Report regarding the Emergency Department Comprehensive Care; specifically additional HIV testing prompts ("best practice advisory") for those who use street drugs. Ms. Puthoff commented that she appreciated the Commissioner's article in The Enquirer about the HIV cases decreasing in Hamilton County.

Dr. Feagins shared details on a Healthcare and Public Opinion Survey – where it was shown that people still have confidence in our healthcare system. He praised the fact that even after all that has happened in the COVID pandemic, we still have the trust of the public.

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 Health Promotion and Education does annual compliance checks within tobacco retail locations. With the help of ODH, they identified 22 stores in the target area of Sharonville and sent secret shoppers under the age of 21 to attempt to buy tobacco products. Surprisingly, 10 of the 22 stores allowed them to buy tobacco products, some even after being asked for age verification. Dr. Mooney shared the process that occurs afterwards: HCPH staff goes in with a police officer, visits the location and provides education on tobacco laws for those under 21. A letter is sent from the Health Commissioner providing information on tobacco laws and regulations.

Dr. Mooney mentioned the recent webinar for the peer-to-peer learning collaborative as part of the Overdose Data to Action grant, which was shared with over 170 attendees from around the country. She praised the good feedback on the evaluations after the webinar.

Dr. Mooney also mentioned the Hamilton County Addiction Response Coalition's annual press conference. It was highlighted that the state has seen elevated overdose stats, while Hamilton County is keeping numbers down. Dr. Mooney celebrated the work of the Harm Reduction Team in achieving those results.

Dr. Mooney introduced members of the Harm Reduction team presenting on the Recovery Friendly Workplace Hamilton County: Tyler Meenach, Shana Merrick and Philip Graham along with Kevin Holt from Ohio Means Jobs.

Tyler Meenach began by explaining the model they are replicating, called Recovery Friendly Workplace New Hampshire. This program ensures that workplaces are able to be part of a solution for onboarding employees recovering from substance use disorder. He explained that the program offers linkage to care, in which Recovery Friendly Workplace Hamilton County would connect with businesses, acting as a liaison to companies in need. They would also provide harm reduction supplies and training.

Kevin Holt from Ohio Means Jobs shared what they can offer: two million dollars in annual training funds, and work supports; expedited rent, deposit, and utility assistance; youth employment, and workforce connections; and employer compensation for provided on-the-job training. In each case, these services are available to support employment connection and stability for job-seekers and employers.

Mr. Meenach went on to explain that they plan to provide formal designation and acknowledgement to recovery-friendly businesses, which would include a vinyl decal given to recognize the business as Recovery Friendly and including the business on the website as such. He defined the expectations on those businesses to include:

- Submitting a formal letter of intent, indicating that they want to join the Recovery Friendly Program and they choose to accept what it entails;
- Declaration of commitment to their employees;
- Agreement to post resources for employees somewhere on the premises (including QR code for resource link and including phone numbers for treatment facilities);
- Annual check- in component (keeping staff current and educated).

Mr. Meenach shared several reasons why a business would want to join the initiative: The program is free of charge; it shows versatility in a difficult market and that you are progressive in the way that you are recovery-friendly. Dr. Kelly asked if HCPH will be one of the organizations to join the Recovery Friendly Initiative? Mr. Meenach confirmed that yes pending the approval of Resolution C. Ms. Puthoff asked if they had gone out to other business to present? Mr. Meenach answered that they are gathering ambassadors to approach businesses that already share these values. Commissioner Kesterman commented that expansion would begin once the program is established in the core businesses. Mr. Meloy commented on the significance of the Recovery Friendly Initiative and the value of the conversations as we move forward.

Mr. Meenach shared that Ohio is looking at doing something very similar with a state-wide recovery-friendly program.

Dr. Mooney reinforced the importance of this initiative to provide connections for members in our community.

The Recovery Friendly Workplace Hamilton County presentation and discussion shall count for 45 minutes of Board of Health Education.

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

Assistant Health Commissioner Mr. Davidson highlighted a slight uptick of numbers in the vaccination clinics. He mentioned that they are working to have nurses make outreach calls from the list of patients to whom they have provided vaccines, reminding them that they can come back and get booster dose(s). They are also putting renewed effort to go out to the community, making sure they are getting out and finding people unable come to clinics for vaccinations.

Mr. Davidson mentioned the “Vax & Vote” concept, in light of the upcoming elections, in which people are able to both vote and get vaccinated at the Board of Elections (BOE). The team intends to set up mobile units in the parking lot to help accomplish this while we are unable to maintain the clinic inside the BOE during voting.

Mr. Davidson highlighted that they will continue to provide inspection services to Norwood. He also provided an animal exposures update. Further details are in the Environmental Health Services Report.

**7. Finances**

Greg Varner, Finance Officer, presented the First Quarter Financial Review. Mr. Varner discussed details of revenue, expenditures, budget, fund balances, and grant activity. HCPH is on schedule with revenue and expenditures. Mr. Varner discussed Resolution D which includes a request to pay late and penalty fees on the credit card. Mr. Varner indicated that the fees were incurred due to the significant use of the credit card during COVID and due to the end of year shutdowns of the County’s finance system. Mr. Varner further indicated that he has begun to make payments directly from HCPH’s Fifth Third bank account prior to the County moving the funds to the County’s bank account. We have discretion on use of these funds until we submit the paperwork to transfer the funds to the County. This significantly reduces delays and should allow for no future penalty charges. The Health Commissioner will review and approve the list of the charges to be paid prior to processing of the payment to Fifth Third. Ms. Puthoff asked what the capital budget is for HCPH lobby renovations? Mr. Varner answered \$105,000. Commissioner Kesterman asked Mr. Varner to detail the large grant received for COVID. Mr. Varner responded that it was \$1.4 million for non-vaccine COVID related work.

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

**Mr. Brett** 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 C: Recovery Friendly Workplace Practices  
**Ms. Puthoff** seconded the motion.  
**Roll Call Vote – All Aye**

**Ms. Puthoff** moved to approve Resolution D: Resolution authorizing use of Credit Card  
**Ms. Kelly** seconded the motion.  
**Roll Call Vote – All Aye**

**Ms. Puthoff** moved to approve the Health Commissioner Travel Request to attend the AOHHC Conference, NACCHO Conference and Blue Ash Sister City trip to Germany.  
**Mr. Brett** seconded the motion.  
**Roll Call Vote – All Aye**

**Mr. Rippe** moved to elect Elizabeth A. Kelly as President of the Board of Health of Hamilton County General Health District  
**Mr. Brett** seconded the motion.  
**Roll Call Vote – All Aye – Dr. Kelly abstained from the vote**

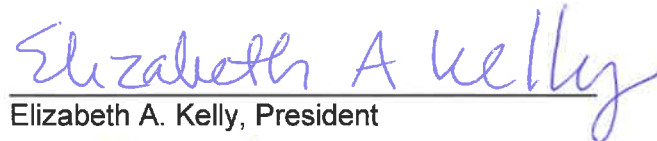
**Mr. Rippe** moved to elect Dan Meloy as Vice President of the Board of Health of Hamilton County General Health District  
**Mr. Brett** seconded the motion  
**Roll Call Vote- All Aye – Mr. Meloy abstained from the vote**

**Mr. Brett** moved to approve the Board of Health meeting schedule: Second Monday of each month at 4 p.m. at the offices of Hamilton County Public Health located at 250 William Howard Taft Road.  
**Mr. Meloy** seconded the motion.  
**Roll Call Vote – All Aye**

**10. Adjournment**

**Ms. Puthoff** moved to adjourn the meeting at 5:36 p.m.  
**Mr. Meloy** seconded the motion.  
**Roll Call Vote – All Aye**

Next Board of Health meeting: May 9, 2022.

  
Elizabeth A. Kelly, President

  
Greg Kesterman, Secretary  
Health Commissioner