

**Hamilton County General Health District  
REGULAR MEETING – BOARD OF HEALTH  
May 9, 2022 – 4 p.m.  
Minutes**

**1. Call to Order**

At 4 p.m., Elizabeth 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  
Mark A. Rippe  
James Brett, zoom  
Dan Meloy, zoom  
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: Sam Wolfson, Skyline  
Gary Holland, Skyline  
Becky Shelton, Skyline  
Slvapona Shaw, Bitter Sweet  
Vanessa Walker, HCPH  
Rebekah Harlow, HCPH  
Amy Grant, HCPH  
Denise Comeau, HCPH  
Porsha Johnson, HCPH  
Gina Bates, HCPH  
Tom Boeshart, HCPH  
Martina Burrell, HCPH

**3. Clean Kitchen Awards**

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

**4. Appreciation for Rebekah Harlow**

Commissioner Kesterman expressed public appreciation to Rebekah Harlow for her 34 years of dedicated service to HCPH. He highlighted her faithful service as a Customer Service Specialist in the Vitals Department and in serving as Deputy Registrar.

Commissioner Kesterman noted that HCPH has benefited from her expertise in the field and a huge hole would be left at her retirement.

**Ms. Puthoff** moved to approve Resolution E: Expressing Appreciation for the Outstanding and Dedicated Service of Rebekah Harlow

**Mr. Rippe** seconded the motion.

**Roll Call Vote – All Aye**

## **5. Approval of Minutes**

**Ms. Puthoff** moved to approve the minutes from the April 11, 2022 Board of Health meeting.

**Mr. Rippe** seconded the motion.

**Roll Call Vote – All Aye**

## **6. Public Comment: None.**

## **7. Health Commissioner's Report**

Commissioner Kesterman provided an update on the COVID-19 statistics: As of today, there is a seven-day average of 111 cases per day, slightly higher than last month which was 80 cases per day. Hamilton County is seeing increases in cases per 100,000 compared to last month. Percent positivity for the region is increasing at 4.5 percent (for those tests medically provided). Hospitalization numbers continue to be relatively low, with 61 individuals hospitalized with COVID-19, five patients in ICU and five patients on ventilators.

Commissioner Kesterman noted the continuing effort by HCPH in administering vaccinations: 271 vaccinations were completed in the last seven days, with 10-15 of those being first time vaccinations. Efforts continue to operate out of the Board of Elections (following a short break at that location due to the primary elections), with 1-2 mobile units also operating each day. Ms. Puthoff applauded the Board of Elections' efficiency in giving vaccinations.

While the BA.2 variant is still dominant nationwide, the BA.2.12 is starting to take over in our region as the dominant variant.

The Commissioner gave an update on the HCPH lobby construction. Progress continues, with the ceiling expected to be finished in the lobby area soon. The estimated completion date for the project remains June 10.

House Bill 463 continues to progress. The Commissioner provided opponent testimony to Bill 463 and also mentioned there is now a companion bill, Senate Bill 324. The Association of Ohio Health Commissioners and the Township Associations are opposed to the Bill. This Bill would change how members of boards of health are selected.

The Commissioner mentioned both the Program Implementation Plan and the Health Improvement Plan are progressing on schedule. More details are included in the Board packet.

## **Staff Reports**

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

Dr. Steve Feagins, Medical Director reported an update on hospitalization numbers due to COVID-19: although they appear to be increasing by high percentages, they are still low numbers overall. The recent peak in January had hospitalization numbers at twice what they are now. Dr. Feagins also shared that COVID-19 was the third leading cause of death in 2021 behind heart disease and cancer.

Dr. Feagins shared that the COVID-19 vaccine for ages six months to five years old will likely be available in June. The FDA Vaccine Advisory Committee plans to meet three times in June to review the EUA applications from both Moderna and Pfizer. The third dose is now authorized for those ages 5-11 who are immunocompromised. Both Moderna and Pfizer are working to retool their vaccines to be more omicron based.

Dr. Feagins explored the question of whether or not to get a fourth COVID-19 vaccine dose. It is known that a very robust antibody response occurs within four weeks of getting the booster: however, it wanes over time. He concluded that for healthy people with no comorbidities, it is okay to wait until a surge to get the fourth dose; however, the immunocompromised should not hesitate to get their booster.

Dr. Feagins reported that pneumonia, influenza and COVID-19 are now being grouped together to describe respiratory infections as a whole. The current death rate for respiratory infections is 7.1 percent, with most of those being from COVID-19. Flu deaths remain low, with 2,800 flu related deaths nationally so far for the season (the average is typically 30,000 deaths per season). Dr. Feagins shared that the majority of H3N2 influenza viruses are matched closely to the vaccine.

Dr. Feagins shared an update on the H5N1 Avian Influenza, which is spread by migratory waterfowl. There has been only one US case. There remains a low likelihood of H5N1 affecting humans.

The Medicare cost savings from the COVID-19 vaccination was highlighted as significant; the HHS reported that the vaccine saved the nation billions of dollars as vaccinations accounted for 107,000 reduced hospitalizations of Medicare beneficiaries from January – May 2021. Ms. Puthoff commented how surprising it was that that amount of money was saved in a five-month period. Dr. Feagins thanked her for pointing that out.

Dr. Feagins commented on the GI illness that has been associated with eating Lucky Charms. He pointed out that while this issue is still being looked into, it is extremely important for clinicians to collect the production code with the production date and lot code so there can be additional research done.

The increasing number of pediatric hepatitis infections was mentioned. These infections are of unknown etiology, with 169 cases globally. Half of these children were positive for adenovirus. Dr. Feagins affirmed that this was being followed closely.

Finally, Dr. Feagins shared appreciation for nurses during National Nurses Week (May 6-12).

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

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

Assistant Health Commissioner Dr. Jennifer Mooney reported that work has been very busy with the Recovery Friendly Workplace initiative since its adoption last month. One additional staff member is being hired to help with the effort. Six different businesses are in the queue to get on board with the program. Dr. Mooney shared that the staff was very excited with the progress being made.

Dr. Mooney shared an incident that happened while the Harm Reduction/SAFE services team was out on the field distributing supplies. A man that had overdosed required emergency CPR and Narcan, as he was unconscious with no pulse. The staff members present quickly responded, saving his life. Dr. Kelly asked if there is something that could be done to recognize the staff that had saved this man's life? Dr. Mooney shared that as soon as the incident report was submitted, she personally reached out to the staff, praising them for their response. She welcomed any ideas regarding their official recognition. Mr. Rippe asked where the incident happened? Dr. Mooney replied that it was at the new Walnut Hills location. Mr. Rippe asked if the Cincinnati Fire Department could be involved with their commendation, to which Dr. Mooney shared that she had a meeting scheduled already with the Fire Department and would speak with them about it.

Dr. Mooney mentioned the various metrics and graphs presented in the Community Health Services report regarding fentanyl use and testing strips. Full details are in the Board packet.

Ms. Puthoff asked about the status of the accreditation process? Commissioner Kesterman said that is under his direction. He shared that the agency has officially submitted its application, with two months being needed for the official review, and a site visit should be done in June. He anticipates a smooth process.

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

Assistant Health Commissioner Mr. Davidson reported statistics regarding the COVID-19 vaccine efforts. There has been an increase in numbers, as the average was eight per day in March, rising to an average of 40 per day in April. He shared that they had taken over a waitlist from Cincinnati Health Department for home-bound vaccinations. Forty-five home visits have been done in the past month, bringing the department up to over 800 home bound visits for vaccines done in all.

Mr. Davidson praised his team's work in assisting Norwood with environmental health inspections; specifically their work in giving recommendations for facilities that are having trouble. He shared that they are also doing nine different pool inspections.

Mr. Davidson shared that The Great Parks of Hamilton County asked the Water Quality Division to conduct water quality testing at various lakes and parks throughout Hamilton County. Mr. Davidson commented on the great opportunity for partnership and that work will begin shortly..

Program Implementation Plan details and Environmental Health Division enforcement details are provided in the packet.

Dr. Kelly praised Mr. Davidson for his work in regard to vaccines and saving lives. Mr. Davidson commended both the new Emergency Preparedness Director, Christa Hyson, and the nurses for their success in the day-to-day work being done.

**8. Finances**

**(a) Monthly Disbursements**

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

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

**Mr. Rippe** seconded the motion.

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

**9. Unfinished Business: None.**

**10. New Business: None.**

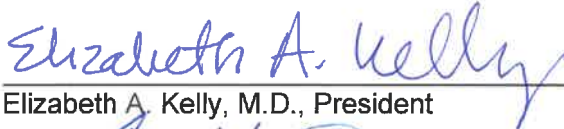
**11. Adjournment**

**Mr. Rippe** moved to adjourn the meeting at 4:53 p.m.

**Ms. Puthoff** seconded the motion.

**Roll Call Vote – All Aye**

Next Board of Health meeting: June 13, 2022.

  
Elizabeth A. Kelly, M.D., President

  
Greg Kesterman, Secretary  
Health Commissioner