

**Hamilton County General Health District
REGULAR MEETING – BOARD OF HEALTH
February 12, 2024– 4 p.m.
Minutes**

1. Call to Order

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

District Staff Present: Greg Kesterman, Health Commissioner
Jackie Lindner, 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 Present: DeAngelo Frodie (The Home at Taylor's Pointe, Foundation's Health)
Nichole Homan (University of Cincinnati)
Eric Knapp (Board of Health candidate)
Max Miller (Board of Health candidate)

3. Pledge of Allegiance

4. Clean Kitchen Awards

Craig Davidson read the list of 10 Clean Kitchen Award recipients and congratulated them for their efforts to maintain a high level of sanitation and staff education. Mr. Davidson personally thanked the Home at Taylor's Pointe representative who received their award in person.

5. Approval of Minutes

Mr. Rippe moved to approve the minutes from the January 8, 2024, Board of Health meeting.

Dr. Kelly seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote –All Aye

6. Public Comment: None.

7. Board of Health Candidates

Dr. Kelly welcomed the two Board of Health candidates, Mr. Knapp and Mr. Miller. Both candidates answered two questions in advance: 1) Why do you wish to serve on the Board of Health? and 2) Should you be appointed to the Board, what qualifications or experience would you bring as a Board member? Responses are included in the Board packet.

Both candidates reviewed their backgrounds and expressed their interest in joining the Hamilton County Board of Health. Commissioner Kesterman and Board members answered questions regarding Board of Health meeting attendance as well as the reasons behind two Board positions coming open – one member no longer eligible to serve and one who is rotating off of the Board after many years of service.

Commissioner Kesterman advised the two candidates that the District Advisory Council (DAC) meeting will be at noon on March 12, 2024, and gave a brief synopsis of the process of being elected by the council.

8. Health Commissioner's Report

Commissioner Kesterman began his report by presenting the Dollars-for-Dentures program with the Oral Health Coalition. This program provides funds for dentures and oral care for needy patients in Hamilton County. Commissioner Kesterman noted that 110 patients were served through this program. Additional breakdown is found in the packet.

Commissioner Kesterman reported that the 513-relief bus held a kickoff event February 7. During the event, HCPH provided 100 birth certificates at a reduced rate. From the program's start to present, there have been 362 birth certificates issued. These certificates are paid for through the Hamilton County Commissioners and COVID-19 relief funds.

Commissioner Kesterman highlighted from his Quarterly Performance Report specific performance reporting numbers for HCPH. The first metrics he presented were regarding average employment length for HCPH staff. He also showed the percent of eligible Children with Medical Handicap (CMH) program families by quarter. Commissioner Kesterman stated that the goal for the CMH program is to perform more visits for children within the program which has been made possible with additional nursing and an increase in salary for these nurses.

In general, HCPH is noticing a decrease in positive lead results in children. HCPH will investigate if doctors' offices are testing less for lead. HCPH has seen an increase in homes benefitting from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development grant funds used to perform repairs and improvements to reduce lead exposure.

HCPH has seen a higher number of tuberculosis cases recently. Commissioner Kesterman noted that these cases could be due to seasonality and the possibility of increased immigration into the area. Commissioner Kesterman also noted the increase in sexually transmitted infection numbers.

Commissioner Kesterman displayed a graph from The Health Collaborative showing updated numbers of COVID-19 hospitalizations. The graph also showed the impacted age groups from COVID-19 infections and deaths. Commissioner Kesterman showed another graph that displayed COVID-19 deaths in southwestern Ohio. Commissioner Kesterman noted that there were 155 COVID-19 deaths in 2023 and reported that it is still having an impact on the community. Reporting requirements for COVID-19 have changed and have caused changes to the way data is reported. Most of the current data is derived from federal reports. He noted that HCPH will continue to work with The Health Collaborative on improving data gathering for present and potential future outbreaks.

Commissioner Kesterman answered a question from Ms. Puthoff regarding hosting an upcoming Board meeting at the new location. It was suggested that the March meeting could be hosted at the new office.

Staff Reports

(a) Medical Director's Report

Dr. Steve Feagins, Medical Director, began his report by elaborating that the COVID-19 testing data is hard to acquire. He then noted that the older age groups have higher rates of infection because they are evaluated more frequently.

Dr. Feagins presented in his report the number of COVID-19 hospitalizations. He stated that the area emergency departments (ED) designated 986 "at capacity" hours in January 2024 compared to 522 in January 2022. ED directors are meeting next Tuesday.

Dr. Feagins also noted the second wave of influenza, which is usually observed after the holiday season, is peaking. Some of the highest incidences of influenza cases are in the pediatric age group.

Dr. Feagins then reported that there was a measles case in Montgomery County. In conjunction with this case, 342 contacts were traced resulting in 247 individuals with documented proof of immunity and 89 individuals being placed in quarantine. Dr. Feagins discussed the specific symptoms of a measles case and how it is reported. Dr. Feagins reported that the measles vaccine is very effective for this virus.

Dr. Feagins described how measles transmission occurs and noted that the average incubation period is 14 days. Dr. Feagins is in close contact with the Medical Director of Public Health Dayton-Montgomery County regarding this case. He noted that complications from measles are more common among children younger than five years of age, pregnant women, and people with compromised immune systems.

Dr. Feagins noted the school vaccination data for Hamilton County and Ohio. He stated the required immunizations for school entry with the three different benchmarks, kindergarten, 7th grade, and 12th grade. Dr. Feagins presented the MMR vaccine coverage for Hamilton County and remarked that the "herd immunity" number is established at 95% for measles. Dr. Feagins stated that adequate coverage is defined as two doses of the MMR vaccine. Currently the kindergarten numbers are lower than the 95% benchmark as reported via Department of Education reports.

Dr. Feagins continued his report by presenting a sexual health clinic resident rotation curriculum that is being developed. He noted that the process of education includes working with other clinicians and teaching how to treat patients and how to manage communication for contact tracing.

Dr. Feagins answered a question from the Board regarding childhood immunizations. Dr. Feagins noted that many of the reasons that the data points are low are due to limitations with data collection. Dr. Feagins noted that the data for immunizations collection is from school nurses that is sent to the state. Ms. Lindner also added that if there is no dedicated school nurse for the school it is extremely difficult for other administrators to gather and submit the data.

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

(b) Department of Community Health Services

Assistant Health Commissioner, Ms. Lindner, began her report by stating that all three Harm Reduction vending machines are now operational. The locations of these machines are the Cincinnati Fire Department, NeighborHub Health, and the University of Cincinnati Medical Center Emergency Department. The UC vending machine has received the most traffic. It has dispensed 21 doses of Naloxone in one week. The Cincinnati Fire Department has dispensed four Naloxone kits, and the Neighborhood Health location has dispensed five kits, in addition to other harm reduction supplies.

Ms. Lindner thanked Mr. Meloy who assisted in sourcing a donated vending machine.

Ms. Lindner continued her report with an update on the Drug Checking Pilot Program funded through OD2A: LOCAL grant. This program, currently a pilot project with the Empowerment Group at Caracole, allows individuals who are in active use to have their substances tested. The individual who submits a self-collected sample is given a QR code that allows them to retrieve their test results. HCPH receives those results in aggregate, allowing for improved surveillance of substances currently circulating in the local drug supply, thereby improving overdose surveillance. She noted that there was a notable result alerted by the University of North Carolina Street Drug Analysis Lab. In one of the samples provided, an adulterant, medetomidine was found.

Ms. Lindner noted that Dr. Yen, a toxicologist from Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center, is helping by creating short, easy to understand descriptions of the substances identified through participant use.

(c) Department of Environmental Health Services

Assistant Health Commissioner, Mr. Davidson, began his report by informing the Board of the Norwood environmental health services agreement. This agreement was put in place so HCPH could assist with food and other inspections for Norwood. The environmental health team has so far been able to conduct 130 food inspections. Mr. Davidson noted that it was agreed upon that Norwood follow HCPH's standardized operating procedures for environmental health work. Commissioner Kesterman noted that newly licensed facilities have provided feedback that they are pleased with the arrangement and the process.

Mr. Davidson noted that every five years, there is a review of the Ohio Administrative Code (OAC) sections that address licensing requirements for food service operations and retail food establishments. One aspect of this review, conducted by the Ohio Departments of Agriculture and Health, resulted in defining new risk levels for mobile food licenses. They are now categorized as high risk and low risk. The Departments of Agriculture and Health are communicating how these new procedures will be implemented. Importantly, they have indicated that since this change is defined by the OAC, the Board will not need to hold a hearing for this fee change.

Mr. Davidson noted that out of the 326 mobile food operations, 36 are designated as low risk. Mr. Davidson noted that the fees assigned to these operations will be 50 percent of the current mobile fee.

Mr. Davidson noted that there was a grant of \$10,000 given to HCPH for a Pet Shelter Strike Team. These funds, Mr. Davidson noted, will be used to augment staff salaries for those working on this project from the Emergency Preparedness Division.

Mr. Davidson continued his report by reviewing the ImpactU Leadership Program he is attending. This program, through the Anderson Center at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center, has helped Mr. Davidson receive an in-depth understanding of improvement science. Mr. Davidson's project is specifically targeted to helping families with children suffering from asthma. Mr. Davidson described this project to the Board and expressed his desire to expand the project.

Mr. Davidson concluded his report with the environmental health enforcement updates and noted that three food facilities accepted voluntary closures.

9. Finances

The January 2024 Disbursement Reports are included in the Board packet.

Mr. Rippe moved to approve the monthly disbursements.

Ms. Puthoff seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote – All Aye

10. New Business:

Ms. Puthoff moved to approve the Medical Director Renewal Contract and for Dr. Kelly to sign the contract.

Dr. Kelly seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote – All Aye

Mr. Rippe noted that the new Board members would benefit with from exposure to the grant and financial process for HCPH. He also noted that an abbreviation key would be helpful for the new Board members. Commissioner Kesterman stated that after the DAC meeting, he would meet with the candidates. He also noted that if there was not a quorum for the DAC, then an executive team at the meeting would elect the prospective Board members.


11. Adjournment

Mr. Rippe moved to adjourn the meeting at 5:16 p.m.

Ms. Puthoff seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote – All Aye

Next Board of Health meeting: March 11, at 4 p.m.



Elizabeth A. Kelly, M.D., President, *Vice*
Dan Meloy



Greg Kesterman, Secretary
Health Commissioner