

**Hamilton County General Health District
REGULAR MEETING – BOARD OF HEALTH
March 11, 2024– 4 p.m.
Minutes**

1. Call to Order

At 4 p.m., Dan Meloy, Vice 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: Dan Meloy, Vice 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: Annita Bryant, Erica Holtman, Mary Knight, Eric Knapp, Max Miller,
and Jessica Santiago

3. Pledge of Allegiance

4. Clean Kitchen Awards

Assistant Health Commissioner Mr. 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. Mr. Davidson personally thanked The Home at Hearthstone and Transfiguration Spirituality Center representatives who received their award in person.

5. Approval of Minutes

Mr. Rippe moved to approve the minutes from the February 12, 2024, Board of Health meeting.

Ms. Puthoff seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote –All Aye

6. Public Comment: None.

7. Health Commissioner's Report

Commissioner Kesterman began his report by thanking the Board for coming to the new office location at 5050 Section Avenue and noted future meetings, unless directed otherwise by the Board, would continue at 250 William Howard Taft Ave.

Commissioner Kesterman continued his report by discussing the total solar eclipse that will occur on April 8 and will transpire in Hamilton County at 3:09 p.m. for about four minutes. Commissioner Kesterman displayed several time maps of the eclipse's duration and location. Commissioner Kesterman noted that there are three areas that could potentially impact Ohio during the eclipse which include increased traffic, inclement weather, and communication issues, particularly in more rural parts of the state. Commissioner Kesterman confirmed availability of the Board for the April meeting as the date of the meeting aligns with the eclipse.

Commissioner Kesterman noted that the District Advisory Council meeting will be held on March 12 at noon. There is currently a quorum of members who responded.

Commissioner Kesterman noted that the CDC has changed the COVID guidelines and gave some clarity regarding a five-day masking period.

Staff Reports

(a) Medical Director's Report

Dr. Steve Feagins, Medical Director, began his report clarifying the CDC guidelines for COVID. He noted that UC and Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center (CCHMC) still maintain a five-day mask policy.

Dr. Feagins continued his report by noting that influenza activity remains high. Dr. Feagins reported that influenza B activity often rises later in the flu season and that is what the current numbers represent. ODH reports that the B/Victoria flu virus is the B type currently circulating in our region and affects more children than adults.

Dr. Feagins displayed graphs of Ohio emergency department visits by respiratory illnesses and compared COVID, influenza, and RSV viruses. He also displayed CCHMC positive cases for COVID-19, RSV, and influenza. In the graph presented, Dr. Feagins showed that influenza cases are still the most prevalent of the three respiratory viruses.

Dr. Feagins also described the CDC recommendations which include an additional dose of updated COVID-19 vaccine this spring for individuals aged 65 and older. He also noted that people with conditions that compromise their immune systems can get another dose at least two months after their last dose of COVID vaccine.

Dr. Feagins continued his report by stating there is strong interest in a measles regional planning meeting. Dr. Feagins noted that there is concern for those who are unvaccinated. He noted that those preparing for spring break travel, especially internationally, need to be prepared to provide evidence of measles vaccination to avoid a 21-day quarantine. He noted that Hamilton County is preparing to prevent any potential outbreak and is closely coordinating with the infectious disease group on weekly calls.

Dr. Feagins concluded his report by covering the solar eclipse and noted that proper eye protection is needed to view it. In his slide, Dr. Feagins gave specifications on the correct glasses that contain special-purpose solar filters that give needed protection for viewing the eclipse.

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 updating the Board on the clinical facility and noted that the new clinic now has 10 exam rooms vs. four at the previous location. She also noted that expanding appointments and initiating a billing project will generate revenue.

Ms. Lindner also reported that a new nurse practitioner is joining the agency. Ms. Lindner noted that now they have two nurse practitioners and this better positions HCPH to schedule additional patients. Ms. Lindner also shared that a staff member graduated with a social work degree and will be placed in the Harm Reduction Navigator position to assist patients to link to needed resources.

Ms. Lindner noted that the WeTHRIVE! team has conducted several events and thanked that team for all their great work. Ms. Lindner noted that the WeTHRIVE! team director will speak at the May Board meeting to describe all the team's recent Initiatives.

(c) Department of Environmental Health Services

Assistant Health Commissioner, Mr. Davidson, began his report by noting that quarterly performance reporting showed a downward trend for blood lead level testing. Mr. Davidson and his team investigated if the number of tests stayed consistent reported that the number of tests stayed fairly level while percent positivity has trended downward.

Mr. Davidson continued his report by discussing climate change and its connection with public health. He noted that the CDC has created an agency-wide Climate and Health Task Force This task force recently published the Climate and Health Strategic Framework with the intention of helping communities track, prevent, and respond to the public health threats of climate change. Mr. Davidson wanted to make the Board aware and inform them of these efforts. If there is any future opportunity for an initiative or programming at HCPH it will be brought back to the Board.

Mr. Davidson continued his report by discussing the animal bite exposures survey. This survey corresponds with an annual state report for rabies prevention efforts. Overall, Mr. Davidson noted that animal bite exposures are slightly elevated.

Mr. Davidson concluded his report with the environmental health enforcement updates included in the Board packet.

8. Finances

The February 2024 Disbursement Reports are included in the Board packet. Mr. Varner answered all questions regarding expenditures to move into the Section Avenue site compared to budget. Moving expenses are currently approximately \$250,000 under budget.

Mr. Rippe moved to approve the monthly disbursements.

Ms. Puthoff seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote – All Aye

9. New Business:

Commissioner Kesterman thanked Mr. Rippe for the many years of Mr. Rippe's contributions as a member of the Hamilton County Board of Health

Mr. Meloy moved to approve the Proclamation Recognizing the Dedicated Service of Mark Rippe.

Ms. Puthoff seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote- All Aye

Mr. Rippe expressed his gratitude toward the HCPH staff and the rest of the Board for their contributions over his tenure.

10. Adjournment

Ms. Puthoff moved to adjourn the meeting at 4:48 p.m.

Mr. Meloy seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote – All Aye

Next Board of Health meeting: April 8, at 4 p.m.

Elizabeth A. Kelly MD

Elizabeth A. Kelly, M.D., President



Greg Kesterman, Secretary
Health Commissioner