

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

1. Call to Order

At 4 p.m., Dan Meloy, 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, President
Tracey A. Puthoff, Esq.
Eric Knapp
Max Miller

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
Mary Ellen Knaebel, Director of Health Promotion and Education
Felicia Erwin, Director of Water Quality
Alex Gonzales, Senior Population Health Specialists
Cat Lusky, Senior Population Health Specialists

Guests Present: Brad Johnson, Director of Environmental Services
Mike Kramer, Assistant Director of Environmental Services
Tamika Evans (Terrace View Gardens)
Shawntae Groppenbecker (Terrace View Gardens)

3. Pledge of Allegiance

4. Clean Kitchen Awards

Assistant Health Commissioner, Craig Davidson, read the list of two Clean Kitchen Award recipients and congratulated them for their efforts to maintain a high level of sanitation and staff education.

Mr. Davidson personally congratulated the staff from Terrace View Gardens and presented their award.

5. Approval of Minutes

Ms. Puthoff moved to approve the minutes from the July 8, 2024, Board of Health meeting.

Mr. Knapp seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote – All Aye.

6. **Public Comment:** None.

7. **Presentation (1)**

Division of Health Promotion and Education, Mary Ellen Knaebel, Director, began the presentation by introducing fellow staff members, Alex Gonzales and Cat Lusky, Senior Population Health Specialists and thanked the Board of Health for the opportunity to present.

Ms. Knaebel displayed a breakdown of the focus areas of the division, including Maternal and Child Health (OEI) and the WeTHRIVE! initiative. WeTHRIVE! is a partnership with Hamilton County Public Health and local communities, schools and healthcare providers to create a culture of health, safety and well-being. WeTHRIVE! provides support, collaboration, data and recognition.

A map of Hamilton County was presented highlighting the communities, schools and childcare providers that partner with WeTHRIVE!. Ms. Knaebel discussed the journey of WeTHRIVE!, which began in 2009 and was relaunched by HCPH in 2014 with a much broader focus. Additionally, WeTHRIVE! was recently awarded REACH funding from the Centers for Disease Prevention and Control (CDC) that has allowed the initiative to expand to more populations within the community.

Ms. Knaebel stated that the initiative started with a focus on chronic disease and has since expanded to encompass six pathways. Following the pandemic, much of the work has focused on the Social Connection pathway, which has included holiday walks and free yoga classes as activities. WeTHRIVE! continues to create thriving environments where residents live, work, learn and play.

Ms. Knaebel described the WeTHRIVE! process, which includes adopting a resolution, forming a team, creating a landscape review, and identifying a pathway. The community decides the area of focus and the HCPH team assists with the development and implementation of the plan. There is a plan review every two years and an annual recognition event. Ms. Knaebel noted that the structure of the WeTHRIVE! teams is flexible to meet the needs of the different communities. Teams can include administration, residents or a combination of the two. The role of public health is to be the connector, to ensure an equity lens is included and that the focus remains on population health.

Ms. Knaebel emphasized the WeTHRIVE! Power Sharing model. HCPH provides the processes and framework to assist community and school leaders; however, the WeTHRIVE! teams, which have the best perspective within their communities, identify the focus areas and determine the strategies needed to implement the plan. A goal of Ms. Knaebel's team in 2024 has been to share the story of WeTHRIVE! in an effort to grow the program beyond Hamilton County. The initiative has been shared in recent national and local avenues.

Ms. Knaebel answered a question from Mr. Miller regarding prospective communities. HCPH is not actively recruiting but will not turn away new communities. Mr. Meloy commended Ms. Knaebel and her team for their perseverance. Ms. Knaebel gave the Board details of the recognition celebration for WeTHRIVE! that will take place on December 5. Ms. Knaebel thanked the Board of Health for continued support.

This presentation shall be counted as 50 minutes of continuing education.

8. Old Business: (1)

Department of Environmental Services: Regulation 1-2024: Revised local fees for air pollution control and regulation

Department of Environmental Services, Brad Johnson, Director and Mike Kramer, Assistant Director asked the Board of Health if any further clarification was needed regarding the regulation.

Mr. Kramer noted additional cuts in federal funding that will impact the Department of Environmental Services. There is not currently adequate funding from the state and federal government to support a meaningful program.

Mr. Kramer answered a question from Mr. Miller regarding expenditures and certain budget line items.

Mr. Johnson provided a brief overview of the agency and reminded the Board of their purpose for the visit per Ms. Chin's request. It was noted that only eight percent of funding comes from local fees. The fees have not been increased since they were implemented in the 90s.

Mr. Johnson noted that he will continue to communicate with Commissioner Kesterman regarding funding and will present updates to the Board of Health every three years, per the request of Mr. Meloy.

Mr. Knapp moved to approve the Regulation 1-2024: Adopting Revised Local Fees for Air Pollution Control Regulations.

Mr. Miller seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote – All Aye

9. Presentation (2)

Division of Water Quality, Felicia Erwin, Director began her presentation by outlining the Water Quality programs, which include sewage treatment systems, private water systems and storm water. She noted that there are approximately 20,000 private sewage systems in operation in Hamilton County.

Ms. Erwin noted that her team issues operation permits, educates homeowners on compliance and notifies property owners if repairs are needed. There are two categories of sewage treatment systems: mechanical and non-mechanical. Mechanical systems are inspected annually. Non-mechanical systems are inspected every five years. Inspection is critical as about 71 percent of the systems in Hamilton County discharge effluent.

Ms. Erwin expressed that educating homeowners on proper system maintenance directly impacts public and environmental health. The current failure rate is about 25 percent. Pictures of the Water Quality STS program's pre-treatment and ATU inspection were presented. Ms. Erwin stated that the Water Quality Division oversees the design and installation of new sewer systems. These systems must meet state standards.

Ms. Erwin stated that the Water Population Control Loan Fund, which helps with principal forgiveness, assists about five property owners annually in the replacement of failing systems or sewer connections. Ms. Erwin noted that HCPH received glowing remarks from ODH on its first STS program survey. There were no action items given.

Ms. Erwin discussed the Private Water Systems Program, the smallest of the Water Quality programs. This program is for those without access to public water and helps with well installations, abandonments and water sampling. It was noted that about 30 permits are issued yearly for abandonments, and about 10 permits for new installation and replacements. Most households are connected to or tying into public water service.

An overview of the Storm Water Program was provided, which is a collaboration between multiple departments. There are six required control measures, including training government employees and mapping discharging sewage treatment systems. Ms. Erwin noted that the Water Quality team uses GPS equipment to map the private storm infrastructure. Ms. Erwin provided the Board of Health pictures of illicit discharge elimination. Ms. Erwin presented the Board of Health with a current map of storm water outfall data.

Ms. Erwin concluded her report by providing before and after pictures of a dumpster's impact on storm water near the Sycamore Township administration building. She thanked the Board of Health for the opportunity to present.

The Board receives 45 minutes of Continuing Education for the presentations.

10. Old Business (2)

Board of Health Meeting Date & Time Discussion-

Ms. Puthoff moved that the Board of Health meeting date & time for November 2024 be changed to November 12 at 4 p.m.

Mr. Meloy seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote – All Aye

11. Health Commissioner's Report

Commissioner Kesterman updated the Board of Health on the changes to the Fair Labor Standards Act. The minimum threshold for salaried employees was adjusted and will impact some current employees. The affected positions may be transitioned from salaried to hourly or adjusted. Commissioner Kesterman's team will work on a budget to present for feedback regarding this change.

An update on program implementation and the strategic plan was provided. The administration team has reviewed all measures and is monitoring several areas. There are currently no areas that rise to an action level.

Commissioner Kesterman stated that all HCPH employees and Board of Health members are required to view an eight-minute auditor training video. This video will be shown at the next Board meeting to fulfill the requirement. This will allow the Board to ask questions of staff.

Commissioner Kesterman noted the swimming pool variance outcome. He was able to approve the variance solely based on the aesthetics and the fit within the pool. His approval noted that it was contingent upon concurrent approval by ODH employed experts that would be relied upon for the technical elements of the variance request.

Photos of The Union on Taft space was shared with the Board. The building is nearly complete with students moving in for school in the coming weeks.

Commissioner Kesterman answered a question from Ms. Puthoff regarding the possible move to the Mercy Administration building. Commissioner Kesterman attended a community meeting at the request of Administrator Aluotto. The meeting was well attended and had generally the support of the community. A vote from the Commissioners is likely in the coming weeks and it is anticipated that the move will be supported.

Staff Reports

(a) Medical Director's Report

Dr. Steve Feagins, Medical Director, provided the Board of Health with updates from the Infectious Disease Working Group. The Group is recommending syphilis testing for positive pregnancy tests. In addition, Dr Feagins reported that there is a shortage of Becton Dickinson BACTEC blood culture bottles, which Christ and Mercy both use for testing and diagnostic purposes. There is an alternate maker of these culture bottles in use in the remaining hospital systems in our area. Dr. Feagins went on to mention that monitoring of the home test kits for sexually transmitted diseases, which was discussed at a previous meeting is continuing. Additionally, the Infectious Disease Working Group is working to clarify and standardize West Nile testing, as it is difficult to diagnose. Finally, the Group is analyzing kindergarten vaccination rates, which appear to be declining.

Dr. Feagins provided details of the COVID-19 summer surge. Since 2020, COVID rates have risen in July and August. A graph depicting the U.S. influenza vaccine uptake by season was presented. Dr. Feagins commented on the decline. Dr. Feagins also outlined the incidence of mosquito-borne diseases in Ohio, which are all currently travel related and not locally transmitted. The instance of Lyme disease was briefly mentioned.

Dr. Feagins noted that it is difficult to know all the medical considerations for marijuana. The DEA issued a proposed rule to downgrade marijuana from its current classification as a Schedule I drug to a Schedule III drug. This will allow for research. Dr. Feagins noted that around 40 percent of Americans declared marijuana use. It was confirmed that local hospitals are complying with new state regulations regarding licensing.

Dr. Feagins noted that there is a Tuberculosis Summit on Wednesday, August 21 at the 5050 Section Avenue location.

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 presentation by drawing attention to the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) conference. The

Division of Health Promotion and Education presented a poster on the WeTHRIVE! Initiative, and Jacob Henderson, epidemiologist, presented a poster highlighting a case study on congenital syphilis. Ms. Lindner also acknowledged the Harm Reduction staff members Hannah Shilling and Tyler Meenach who were recipients of the NACCHO Promising Practice Awards for the Stories Over Stigma program and Recovery Friendly Hamilton County program, respectively

Ms. Lindner reported an increased interest in the syringe services program in Hamilton County. The Cincinnati Health Department has expressed interest in collaborating with HCPH to provide syringe services in Price Hill, and our proposal for this work has been accepted. A treatment facility in Forest Park has also reached out to HCPH to explore implementation of a SSP in that area. We are in the process of identifying next steps, which include garnering community support.

(c) Department of Environmental Health Services

Assistant Health Commissioner, Mr. Davidson, presented a list of fees for properties across the county that have become delinquent in payment for sewage treatment fees. This process is detailed in the Board packet. There are currently 683 delinquent parcels that need to be certified and will go to the Auditor's Office for filing with the property taxes for each parcel. Mr. Davidson noted that Ms. Chin's office assists with certification and filing with the Auditor's Office.

Mr. Davidson noted changes to the enforcement process for sewage treatment system violations as there have been challenges with compliance by out-of-town and LLC affiliated property owners [as well as rental properties in general](#). Mr. Davidson stated that notifying of an intent to condemn on a particular property has helped expedite the response from the responsible party.

Mr. Davidson shared a brief overview of a visit by high school students interested in learning about public health. This was done in collaboration with The Health Collaborative.

Mr. Davidson provided environmental health enforcement updates that were included in the Board packet.

12. Finances

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

Mr. Knapp moved to approve the monthly disbursements.

Ms. Puthoff seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote – All Aye

13. New Business

Ms. Puthoff moved to approve the proclamation recognizing the service of Mike Samet.

Mr. Miller seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote – All Aye

Ms. Puthoff moved to approve Resolution B: Certification of Delinquent Sewage Fees.

Mr. Knapp seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote – All Aye


14. Adjournment


Mr. Knapp moved to adjourn the meeting at 5:30pm

Mr. Meloy seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote – All Aye

Next Board of Health meeting: September 9, at 4 p.m.


~~Dan Meloy, President~~ Elizabeth Kelly, Vice President


Greg Kesterman, Secretary
Health Commissioner

