

**Hamilton County General Health District  
REGULAR MEETING – BOARD OF HEALTH  
September 9, 2024 – 4 p.m.  
Minutes**

**1. Call to Order**

At 4 p.m., Elizabeth A. Kelly, 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: Dr. Elizabeth A. Kelly, Vice President  
Tracey A. Puthoff, Esq.  
Eric Knapp  
Max Miller

District Staff Present: Greg Kesterman, Health Commissioner  
Craig Davidson, Assistant Health Commissioner  
Dr. Steve Feagins, Medical Director  
Dmitriy Bikmayev, Assistant Prosecuting Attorney  
Greg Varner, Finance Officer  
Jeremy Hessel, Director of Division of Environmental Health

Guests Present: Richard Finan, Mayor, Evendale

**3. Pledge of Allegiance**

**4. Clean Kitchen Awards**

Assistant Health Commissioner Craig Davidson read the list of 12 Clean Kitchen Award recipients and congratulated them for their efforts to maintain a high level of sanitation and staff education.

**5. Approval of Minutes**

**Mr. Knapp** moved to approve the minutes from the August 12, 2024, Board of Health meeting.

**Mr. Miller** seconded the motion.

**Roll Call Vote – All Aye, Dr. Kelly abstained.**

**6. Public Comment: None.**

**7. Presentation**

Jeremy Hessel, Director of the Division of Environmental Health, provided an overview of the programs managed by the Division of Environmental Health. An overview of the food program, the biggest Environmental Health program, was provided. The food protection program performs inspections, the frequency of which depends on risk level, and enforces the Ohio Uniform Food Safety Code. There are over 2,800 licensed facilities within Hamilton County that are inspected by the division, including food service operations, retail food

establishments, mobile units, vending machines, temporary events (e.g., festivals and farmers markets). Mr. Hessel noted that there are over 6,000 food inspections a year that include follow-ups, complaints, and illness allegations. Mr. Hessel outlined the public health principles of food safety, which are based on CDC basic risk factors.

The Division of Environmental Health is also responsible for managing public swimming pool inspections and licensing. There are two standard inspections conducted annually and one equipment inspection. Mr. Hessel noted elements of the swimming pool that are examined for safety during an inspection such as equipment, chemistry, and signage.

Housing and nuisance are the second-largest program within Environmental Health. Common complaints include those involving domestic animal waste, lack of heating or other utilities, standing water contributing to mosquito breeding, hoarding, and insect/rodent issues. These complaints often come from tenants, landlords, and other public safety agencies. Mr. Hessel presented the Board of Health with pictures of examples of housing and nuisance complaints. Bed bugs also fall within the housing and nuisance program. Details about bed bugs and their prevalence were shared. Mr. Hessel noted that the Division of Environmental Health continues to conduct mosquito surveillance.

Mr. Hessel noted that the Environmental Health Division conducts biannual school health and safety inspections. The division also contracts with the Department of Commerce to conduct annual manufactured home park inspections. Common issues include tall grass, no house numbers, potholes, trash, leaks, and stray animals. Campground inspections are also a responsibility of the division. There are two inspections performed each year at the 14 licensed campgrounds, and the common issues are similar to those at mobile home parks. The Division of Environmental Health manages the Smoke-Free Ohio program. Enforcement began in May 2007 and has accumulated more than 3,000 complaints since the program's inception. Complaints received often involve smoking in place of employment, ashtrays, signage, and infiltration of smoke. The hotel/motel program is another local program. Inspections are completed twice per year and look for general sanitation, cleaning of bed linens, separation of chemicals, maintenance of pests, and general sanitation and facility maintenance.

Mr. Hessel noted that all animal bites within HCPH jurisdictions are required to be reported. The division maintains records of all bite incidents reported. Animals are quarantined for ten days to ensure that they are not infected with rabies. Animal samples are sent to ODH Vector Disease lab for testing in some cases. Mr. Hessel answered a question from Ms. Puthoff regarding rabies and public health.

Mr. Hessel noted that the Division of Environmental Health emphasizes education over enforcement. The department spends a significant amount of time educating on food and swimming pool safety, mosquitos, and rabies.

Mr. Hessel answered a question from Mr. Miller regarding the cross-training of the staff of Environmental Health.

The Board of Health thanked Mr. Hessel and his team for their work within the community.

This presentation shall be counted as 30 minutes of continuing education.

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

Commissioner Kesterman congratulated the Inaugural 513 Serves winners, which included Board of Health Vice President, Dr. Elizabeth Kelly. Dr. Kelly has been instrumental in improving outcomes for newborns and reducing the loss of children before their first birthday.

Commissioner Kesterman presented Ms. Lindner's Department of Community Health Services report. HCPH was recognized by Ohio Governor Mike DeWine for being the first health department in the state of Ohio to create a recovery friendly workplace through Recovery Friendly Hamilton County. HCPH is issuing a proclamation for three recovery friendly businesses. Commissioner Kesterman highlighted the Drug Checking program. This program collects drug paraphernalia like cottons, baggies, etc., in an effort to get early detection on the drug supply. A recent finding in the drug supply was an industrial drug that can create illness symptoms but would not likely cause an overdose. It was recommended to notify participants but not issue an overdose warning. The program is part of a five-year grant and is nearing the end of year one.

## **Staff Reports**

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

Dr. Steve Feagins, Medical Director, presented the Infectious Disease Working Group findings. Higher levels of pertussis were experienced locally. New COVID-19 vaccines (mRNA and protein) are now available at pharmacies. Options for the RSV vaccine were outlined. Dr. Feagins shared details concerning Mpox diagnostic capabilities and the vaccine. A map was presented that identified the African nations with confirmed Mpox infections. HCPH is monitoring this closely.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services will be relaunching the distribution of free COVID tests. Dr. Feagins explained why it is important to test, including treating to reduce length and severity and mediating transmission. Data was presented on the impact of the vaccine in reducing the precursor to long COVID. The combination of natural and vaccination immunity has shown to significantly reduce the post-acute sequelae. Details of the two COVID-19 vaccines were provided.

Dr. Feagins noted that Mpox testing in the U.S. is processed through national reference labs. Dr. Feagins recognized those who participated in the Tuberculosis Summit on August 19. It was noted that the Association of Ohio Health Commissioners fall conference will be held on Thursday, September 19.

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

### **(a) Department of Environmental Health Services**

Assistant Health Commissioner Mr. Davidson presented the Environmental Health proposed fee adjustments. The goal is to cover the costs of the program while remaining comparable to other county health departments within the state. The largest recommended increase is five percent. Mr. Davidson noted that nearly 3,000 licenses are issued annually. Details

regarding the food service operation proposed fees were provided. Mr. Davidson provided clarity for the Board of Health regarding the fee adjustments.

**Dr. Kelley** made a motion to hold a public hearing for the proposed food service operation and retail food establishment program fee adjustments at 3:45 p.m. on October 14, 2024, at Hamilton County Public Health offices located at 250 William Howard Taft Road, Cincinnati, OH.

**Ms. Puthoff** seconded the motion.

**Roll Call Vote – All Aye.**

Mr. Davidson stated that a mosquito pool recently collected and sent to ODH has tested positive for West Nile virus through the mosquito surveillance program. Mr. Davidson noted that an unlicensed facility operating as a campground has been resisting efforts to bring them into compliance via standard enforcement processes. The need to work with the Prosecutor's Office to pursue court action is expected. Environmental Health enforcement updates are provided in the report.

## 9. Finances

Mr. Varner informed the Board that the 2023 audit is coming to a conclusion and they should receive the audit report from the state auditor's office in the next few weeks. Administration will review the audit in October with the Board, and Mr. Varner noted that there do not appear to be any findings on the 2023 audit.

The August 2024 Disbursement Reports are included in the Board packet. Mr. Varner and Commissioner Kesterman gave clarity on a letter of credit collection and payment in August.

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

**Mr. Knapp** seconded the motion.

**Roll Call Vote – All Aye.**

## 10. New Business

Commissioner Kesterman stated that there will be three Board members to meet quorum next month. The November meeting will be Tuesday, November 12. Internal discussions will determine if a new date should be proposed.

### **Personnel Policy Manual Discussion**

Commissioner Kesterman discussed the impact of the legalization of marijuana on the personnel policy, in which drug testing is done pre-employment. It was noted that Hamilton County only drug tests employees with a CDL license. Under the current policy, new hires have negative consequences for recreationally using marijuana over the weekend unlike current employees who have no consequences. Because of this contradiction and the legalization of marijuana, Commissioner Kesterman recommended that marijuana be removed from the new hire drug screening. Additionally, Commissioner Kesterman committed to researching the best policies.

Commissioner Kesterman answered a question regarding those who drive for HCPH.

**Mr. Knapp** moved to remove marijuana as a prohibited drug from the drug testing panel.

**Dr. Kelly** seconded the motion.  
**Roll Call Vote – All Aye; Mr. Miller abstained.**

**Mr. Knapp** moved to request that Commissioner Kesterman do more research on evidence-based practices for preemployment drug screening.

**Dr. Kelly** seconded the motion.  
**Roll Call Vote – All Aye; Mr. Miller abstained.**

#### 11. Adjournment

**Mr. Miller** moved to adjourn the meeting at 5:25 p.m.

**Mr. Knapp** seconded the motion.

**Roll Call Vote – All Aye**

Next Board of Health meeting: October 14 at 4 p.m.

  
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Dan Meloy, President

  
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Greg Kesterman, Secretary  
Health Commissioner

