

**Hamilton County General Health District
REGULAR MEETING – BOARD OF HEALTH
December 9, 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
Elizabeth A. Kelly, M.D., Vice-President
Tracey A. Puthoff, Esq.
Eric Knapp
Max Miller

District Staff Present: Greg Kesterman, Health Commissioner
Craig Davidson, Assistant Health Commissioner
Steve Feagins, M.D., Medical Director
Nee Fong Chin, Chief Assistant Prosecuting Attorney
Greg Varner, Finance Officer
Sean Moore, Division of Plumbing Director
Stephanie Taylor, Human Resources Officer
Allison Babka, Public Information Officer

Guests Present: Amanda Richmond (Graeter's Ice Cream)
Margaret Taylor (Graeter's Ice Cream)
Sangeeta Deo (Taco Bell #2524)
Rob Tenaglia (Taco Bell #2524)

3. Pledge of Allegiance

4. Clean Kitchen Awards

Assistant Health Commissioner Craig Davidson read the list of ten Clean Kitchen Award recipients and congratulated them for their efforts to maintain a high level of sanitation and staff education. Representatives from Graeter's Ice Cream and Taco Bell #2524 were present to receive their awards.

5. Approval of Minutes

Ms. Puthoff moved to amend the Executive Session section of the minutes, to note that no decisions were made and moved to approve the minutes as amended from the November 12, 2024, Board of Health meeting.

Mr. Knapp seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote – All Aye; Mr. Miller and Dr. Kelly abstained.

6. Public Comment: None.

7. **Presentation:**

Sean Moore, Division of Plumbing Director

Mr. Moore thanked the Board Members for the time and opportunity to share information on the Division of Plumbing. The Plumbing Division has seven team members, and all are licensed plumbing inspectors with the Ohio Board of Building Standards.

The Plumbing Division conducts plan reviews and inspects all new and replacement plumbing installations in Brown and Hamilton County, except for those within the City of Cincinnati. There are four different inspections before new residential or commercial construction are approved. Division staff also conduct water heater replacement inspections and review different nuisance complaints.

The Plumbing Division also has a backflow prevention program, which works with 11 different water purveyors tracking testable backflow prevention devices and conducts cross-connection surveys on commercial buildings. Mr. Moore noted that there are 13,000 registered backflow devices in Hamilton County and presented photos of different examples of backflow prevention devices that prevent back siphonage into the potable water system.

Mr. Moore shared examples of residential vacuum breakers, devices used for lawn irrigation systems, and testable backflow preventors.

The Plumbing Division conducts medical gas system inspections for all of Hamilton County, including within the City of Cincinnati, Warren County and Brown County. They inspect medical gas systems during installation at healthcare facilities.

Mr. Moore answered a question from Dr. Kelly regarding the timeline for inspectors regarding medical gas. He answered a question from Mr. Miller regarding the number of inspections during the year. He answered a question from Mr. Knapp regarding plumbing fees and backflow fees. Mr. Moore answered a question regarding the percentage of failing inspections. Mr. Davidson noted that there are approximately 10,000 inspections done a year by the Plumbing Division.

This presentation shall be counted as 20 minutes of continuing education.

8. **Health Commissioner's Report**

Commissioner Greg Kesterman introduced Stephanie Taylor, Human Resource Officer, to present on the policy manual updates. Ms. Taylor noted that the group health insurance benefits, retirement benefits, and ethics of public employment proposed revisions are derived from Hamilton County. The other two updates are derived from HCPH changes. Section 6.6 telecommunications policy is based on HIPAA regulations and due to HCPH having integrated Epic software. In addition and alignment with County policy, it now includes a requirement to notify all parties should you wish to record a meeting. Section 6.11 drug-free workplace policy includes proposed language regarding second-chance violations and screening.

Commissioner Kesterman shared enhancements in information technology for HCPH's databases and conference room.

Hamilton County now owns the Mercy Health Bond Hill building, and plans to move are advancing forward. By June of 2025, bidding will begin for the construction of improvements, with construction anticipated to begin in July and occupancy in early 2026. Commissioner Kesterman shared an overhead picture of the new campus and building floor plans. The 5th floor will be for HCPH and includes conference rooms, storage rooms and collaborative spaces. He noted the goal of the layouts is to foster department cooperation.

Commissioner Kesterman answered Mr. Miller's question regarding employee staff surveys.

Staff Reports

(a) Medical Director's Report

Dr. Steve Feagins, Medical Director, noted that it is respiratory infection season and that there are increasing rates of COVID-19 and RSV. On Dec. 3, ODH issued a health advisory regarding an increase in respiratory pathogens. Dr. Feagins noted that there are continued elevated levels of pertussis and that viral pneumonia is still the most common in health systems. The flu season is getting off to a slow start compared to the last five years.

The Region 8 Congenital Syphilis Board met today to review seven cases. Dr. Feagins noted the different items that the Congenital Syphilis Board is reviewing, looking for trends and opportunities for improvement. Region 8 cases have been on the rise since 2020, with Butler and Hamilton Counties being the highest. Dr. Kelly requested additional trend data and analysis related to our cases.

Pediatric lead poisoning saw increased exposures during the pandemic as children stayed home. CCHMC Environmental Health Clinic referrals have increased by about 50 percent over the past two years. Dr. Feagins provided details about lead poisoning treatment and HCPH's lead abatement assistance.

The critical national shortage of IV fluids continues. The Baxter International facility in North Carolina will have 4 of the 12 production lines functional by the end of the year. Healthcare provider conversation strategies have helped preserve IV fluids, and by the middle of December, most health systems will be caught up.

Dr. Feagins concluded his report by noting that the Medical Explorers from Mercy West came to HCPH and it was a great experience for the students. He thanked the HCPH team for their participation and hosting.

Dr. Feagins answered a question from Dr. Kelly regarding prevention and treatment of congenital syphilis. Dr. Feagins noted that they will bring more public service announcements and information to the Board of Health.

The monthly communicable diseases report from the Epidemiology Division was provided in the Board packet.

(b) Department of Community Health Services

Commissioner Kesterman presented for Assistant Health Commissioner Jackie Lindner, who was absent. Since October, HCPH has responded to 37 confirmed and probable pertussis cases, including 29 among county residents and eight linked to an outbreak at a

local school. He noted that as of now, six schools are experiencing outbreaks, with the largest at Loveland Elementary and Middle School. When there are different outbreaks, HCPH provides these local schools with messaging and resources.

(c) Department of Environmental Health Services

Assistant Health Commissioner Craig Davidson began his report by noting there will be updated recommendations for Plumbing Division fees.

Mr. Davidson provided an update on the Ohio Smoke-Free Workplace program. He noted there were about 500 complaints in 2007, compared to only around 30 complaints on average during the in the last five years.

Mr. Davidson presented an update on the Water Quality Division – Water Pollution Control Loan Fund (WPCLF). He noted the Ohio EPA provides \$150,000 in grant funding each year, which helps alleviate nuisance conditions caused by household sewage treatment systems. Typically, five projects are funded each year. Mr. Davidson noted the primary purpose of the WPCLF program is to assist owner-occupied households within HCPH's jurisdiction in addressing household sewage treatment system issues —mostly through system replacements and connections to the sanitary sewer system.

Mr. Davidson shared that HCPH staff toured the Rumpke Recycling Center and enjoyed a day of staff development and education. Photos are in the Board packet.

Environmental Health enforcement updates are included in the Board packet.

9. Finances

Mr. Varner began his presentation noting the budget variances over the past two years and the estimated variances for 2024, and it showed a favorable budget outlook. The budget objectives for 2025 are to continue investment in HCPH salary structure, space cost considerations, strengthen general fund and specific restricted fund balances (increase fees in certain funds and services), continue investment in staff development, and continue investment in technology. The objective investment in salary structure would increase pay ranges with market adjustment of 1% - to top of range. He noted that this budget objective allows HCPH to remain competitive with other LHDs and to increase the average time staff works at HCPH to reach maximum range amount. He noted that 2026 estimated budget includes 3% merit increase. Mr. Varner explained the space cost considerations for the upcoming year and noted that with the move to Bond Hill, there won't be big moving costs initially: \$25,000 in 2025, and then \$50,000 in 2026. Mr. Varner explained the 2025 budget objective to strengthen general fund and specific restricted funds balances. Mr. Varner shared details of fee increases that were approved previously for which they are budgeting as well as fee increases referred to in the Plumbing presentation by Mr. Moore. Mr. Varner explained that HCPH budgeted for a slight increase in Vitals revenue, although there are changes coming in 2025 in the state system, including that the state will allow producing copies of death certificates for anyone who passed in the state of Ohio much like the birth certificates have been for years. HCPH will be monitoring the impact of that change. The change in systems also requires a change in the duties of the Registrar for Vitals certificates. For staff development, there are needs of performance management council and other staff for training and staff development. Technology includes annual maintenance

of software applications. HCPH is planning migration to new CAGIS supported permits platform in plumbing.

Mr. Varner presented the change in budget revenue from prior year's budget, the different details for budgeted expenditures from 2024 to 2025, the general fund balances from 2021 to 2026, and restricted fund balances change from 2021-2026. Mr. Varner answered a question from Ms. Puthoff regarding the general fund balance. Mr. Varner then presented the 2025 revised expenditure budget totaling \$11,610,750, the 2026 estimated expenditure budget, and projected grants.

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

Dr. Kelly moved to approve the monthly disbursements.

Ms. Puthoff seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote – All Aye

10. New Business

Ms. Puthoff moved to empower Health Commissioner Kesterman to select a registrar or deputy registrar.

Mr. Knapp seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote – All Aye

Ms. Puthoff moved to approve Resolution D-2024: 2025 Revised Budget and 2026 Estimated Budget for the Hamilton County General Health District.

Mr. Miller seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote – All Aye

Ms. Puthoff moved to adopt the Policy Manual Updates of Sections 5.2 Group Health Insurance Benefits, 5.6 Retirement Benefits, 6.0 Ethics of Public Employment, 6.6 Telecommunications Policy, and 6.11 Drug-Free Workplace Policy.

Mr. Knapp seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote – All Aye

11. Adjournment

Mr. Knapp moved to adjourn the meeting at 5:37 p.m.

Dr. Kelly seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote – All Aye

Next Board of Health meeting: January 13, at 4 p.m.



Dan Meloy, President



Greg Kesterman, Secretary
Health Commissioner

