

**Hamilton County General Health District**  
**REGULAR MEETING – BOARD OF HEALTH**  
**February 10, 2025 – 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 Kelly, M.D., Vice President  
Eric Knapp  
Max Miller  
Tracey A. Puthoff, Esq.

District Staff Present: Greg Kesterman, Health Commissioner  
Craig Davidson, Assistant Health Commissioner  
Jackie Lindner, Assistant Health Commissioner  
Steve Feagins, M.D., Medical Director  
Nee Fong Chin, Chief Assistant Prosecuting Attorney  
Greg Varner, Finance Officer  
Allison Babka, Public Information Officer  
Erinn Sweet, Public Information Specialist  
Sean Moore, Director of Plumbing

Guests Present: Daniel Minguez, Kristen Andrew, Rebecca Stansell, Chuck Birkholtz, Jerry Schwab, Melissa Bates, Annita Bryant, Jessica Santiago

**3. Pledge of Allegiance**

**4. Clean Kitchen Awards**

Assistant Health Commissioner Mr. 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 Moe's Southwest Grill in Anderson Township, the Home at Hearthstone in Mount Healthy, and Domino's Pizza #9767 in Blue Ash received their awards in person and took photos with Health Commissioner Mr. Greg Kesterman.

**5. Approval of Minutes**

**Mr. Knapp** moved to approve the minutes from the January 13, 2025, Board of Health meeting.

**Mr. Knapp** seconded the motion.

**Roll Call Vote – All Aye**

**6. Public Comment: None.**

**7. Health Commissioner's Report**

Health Commissioner Mr. Greg Kesterman kicked off his report with an update on Q4 of the agency's strategic plan for 2024. He noted that work in all priority areas remain on track and called out the launch of the agency's Adopt a Class visits to Rothenberg Academy, the staff engagement data walks for the community health assessment (CHA), and the IT team's recruitment of new programmers to work on the water quality database and nuisance database.

Mr. Kesterman shared a reminder about the annual Hamilton County District Advisory Council meeting, scheduled for March 11 at noon. The administration is actively contacting jurisdiction leaders about the meeting in order to have a quorum of 17 members present. During the DAC meeting, Board president Mr. Meloy will seek reappointment, with nobody else signaling an intention to run. Mr. Kesterman said he hopes everyone will join him in supporting Mr. Meloy.

Mr. Kesterman then shared information about how changes at the federal level have been affecting agencies at the state and local levels as well as how Hamilton County Public Health is navigating the changes. He said agency leaders have been reviewing funding information received from grant holders over the past few months while managing team budgets and expectations.

Mr. Kesterman shared a variety of memos, executive orders and other items of note from the newest federal administration. He said that on Jan. 27, 2025, the White House made an announcement about a subsequent order temporarily blocking the freeze with a February 3rd court hearing that has been extended for additional time. He said that the HCPH administrative team has been monitoring the developments, and he personally has been engaging discussions with all agency employees to provide clarity and address concerns. Mr. Kesterman noted that the agency has about \$18 million in federal and state grants. He said that if the federal government doesn't come through on their grants, those items could become HCPH's burden. Mr. Kesterman said that a few days after that freeze, a series of additional memos caused additional funding confusion for many agencies. Mr. Kesterman said that the federal administration then issued a memo instructing all federally funded agencies to stop any programming for "diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) and gender ideology. He said that HCPH has always prioritized ensuring that all agency services are accessible in every community throughout the county and will continue to do so, which is at the core of the agency's mission. Mr. Kesterman also said that he's watching HCPH's equity-based grants and programs closely.

Mr. Kesterman reminded the Board that every federal administration shifts to new priorities and that even though current shifts may be impactful, Mr. Kesterman has not yet seen any cut in funding for the agency. He said he's continued to encourage directors and staff members to share the agency message that HCPH's mission has not changed, and programs will remain available to everyone in the county while also being in compliance with federal requirements. He added that for people outside of the agency, it's "business as usual," but the administration team will continue to prepare for additional changes and will work with communities to plan new approaches as needed.

Mr. Kesterman said that in this time of funding uncertainty and questions about grant deliverables, he recommended that directors slow down major expenditures so that funds are available and to tighten spending where possible. That may include reducing spending

on travel or prioritizing specific activities. This is only a temporary precaution, Mr. Kesterman said.

Mr. Kesterman said that the agency also is considering how it approaches its open positions at this time. He noted that several years ago, the agency had hired a DEI coordinator, but that staff member recently left for an external opportunity and this position will remain unfilled for now. Mr. Kesterman said he's reviewing all open opportunities and will cautiously decide to fill or delay hiring, especially for those positions involving grants. Mr. Kesterman said he does not anticipate major shifts now but there may be some in the future. He said that the Board would discuss personnel related matters during executive session.

Finally, Mr. Kesterman noted that access to certain federal data sets had temporarily been removed from federal agency websites, but most were restored several days later. Some partners had indicated that data they relied on still was unavailable. He said that while some third parties had mined the data and had some ability to share historic data, HCPH and partners would continue to closely watch what the federal administration does with data.

Board member Ms. Tracey Puthoff asked several questions about grant contracts and deliverables. Mr. Kesterman again noted that different federal administrations always have different priorities, so the current administration's priorities do not match the previous administration's priorities, funding and deliverables. They both discussed contract obligations and options to meet deliverables or legally still receive funding.

Board member Mr. Max Miller asked about grants that were most concerning. Mr. Kesterman said that the REACH grant likely would be reviewed, with about five staff positions and external contracts attached. He indicated that HCPH will work with the prosecutor's office to determine next steps.

## **Staff Reports**

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

Dr. Stephen Feagins, medical director, began his report with a look at the current cold and flu season, noting that it's the largest and most potent influenza season seen in 15 years. He said that every hospital in the region had been at capacity during the prior week, with patients needing care and staff also being out. The flu had peaked during the weeks prior but now was rebounding for another larger peak. Patients admitted with flu often also had chronic conditions, developed pneumonia -or had other complications or comorbidities. Dr. Feagins said he will continue to work with the infectious disease group to track the flu and align priorities.

Dr. Feagins said that hospitals are performing subtyping testing for influenza A patients who meet certain criteria, specifically those who have exposure to wild or domestic animals or products. He said that Ohio had the highest number of egg-laying chickens at 10 million, making the state at risk for avian flu deaths and a slowing of egg production. There were positive cases of avian flu in wild birds and geese in Warren County, he said, adding that Ohio was leading the nation in avian flu. The Ohio Department of Health will assist with

subtype testing. Dr. Feagins said that there's been no H5 shared among humans yet, but it was likely just a matter of time.

Dr. Feagins said that there's a shortage of Tamiflu for hospitals due to the surge in flu patients, both locally and nationally. He said the recommendation is to use Tamiflu only during the first 48 hours of flu symptom onset or to provide it to ICU patients. There is a major supply and demand issue, he said, and he is not sure when it will end. Hospitals are dealing with complications similar to those from the COVID-19 pandemic, Dr. Feagins said. There was an estimated 30,000 cases and deaths in the U.S. due to the flu.

Dr. Feagins said that TB activity has been pronounced this year. He noted an outbreak in Kansas City and said that there are 22 active cases of TB in Hamilton County. He said that a growing concern is multidrug-resistant TB (rifampin-resistant). There have been seven rifampin-resistant TB cases in Hamilton County since 2010; it's rare, so it gets attention, Dr. Feagins said. He said that the infectious disease working group praised Hamilton County's TB work, saying that things work well and are appreciated by constituents.

#### **(b) Department of Community Health Services**

Assistant Health Commissioner Ms. Jackie Lindner thanked Dr. Feagins for his reporting of national and state tuberculosis cases and for sharing positive feedback regarding the clinical staff who work on TB.

Ms. Lindner then highlighted the winter coat drive distribution event, which took place in the HCPH large conference room on January 24, 2025. The event featured over 900 items, with approximately 80% of them being distributed to around 40 participants. The remaining items were distributed by SAFE Services at the SSP location the following Monday. Staff who attended the event were enthusiastic about the opportunity to engage with and serve the community.

Additionally, several staff members participated in the Ohio Deflection Association Conference, where they presented on topics including stigma reduction, fentanyl detection, SAFE Services, fatality reporting, and drug checking programs. This conference provided an excellent platform for sharing resources and networking with other harm reduction programs. Board President Mr. Dan Meloy noted that the conference saw representation from 14 states and Canada and that the HCPH presenters were well received. Ms. Lindner commended the success of the conference and the contributions of HCPH presenters.

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

Assistant Health Commissioner Mr. Craig Davidson recapped the proposed adjustment for the 2025 plumbing fees from the public hearing that was held prior to the board meeting.

Mr. Davidson also discussed the county-wide migration of workflows for online permitting, inspections, and contractor registrations managed by CAGIS. It is used by the agency's plumbing and water quality divisions. The current technology for this platform will not be supported in the future. Possible options are being considered, starting with a migration to

the new platform proposed by CAGIS for the plumbing division and then potentially doing the same for the water quality division if all goes well.

Additionally, Mr. Davidson summarized a recent success story involving HCPH's stormwater program, noting that they successfully identified and remediated an incident of illicit discharge. With the help of HCPH's plumbing division, they were able to prevent waste from entering local waterways.

Mr. Davidson went on to summarize updated data from the state data warehouse that confirmed an increase in young children exposed to lead. He mentioned that the exposure levels are reported through blood tests and emphasized the importance of HCPH's lead hazard education and reduction programs.

There were three condemnations this past month and Mr. Davidson confirmed that one licensed food service operation met with Ms. Chin after failing multiple inspections within the 180 probationary period.

Ms. Puthoff asked Mr. Davidson what would happen to the CAGIS system if HCPH moved away from the platform. Mr. Davidson confirmed that the county is in the process of migrating these workflows to a platform based updated technology. He mentioned that the current CAGIS platform has been used for years and the technology upon which it is based will no longer be supported in the future. Other county agencies are in the process of moving forward with the migration, and that if the new platform is not a good fit for HCPH, he is evaluating other options for developing a system with HCPH's IT team.

Mr. Miller inquired about the opportunity to create an internal solution. Mr. Davidson clarified that HCPH would seek this option if no other option was available or if HCPH needed tailored solutions.

Ms. Puthoff asked if HCPH took on an internal solution, how would they access needed data? Mr. Davidson confirmed that read-only access to the data would be available still.

Ms. Puthoff followed up by asking the purpose of mapping our data in addition to using CAGIS. Mr. Davidson clarified that GIS mapping is important and would still be supported.

Mr. Miller asked Mr. Davidson about the cost comparison to previous platforms. Mr. Kesterman responded by noting that the county is restructuring how they charge for CAGIS, and that the previous costs to use CAGIS had been affordable. Mr. Miller then asked if the new technology solutions would be a new cost. Mr. Kesterman responded that the annual cost seemed comparable to previous costs. Mr. Davidson confirmed there would be costs associated with the migration and annual costs thereafter.

## **8. Finances**

Finance Officer Mr. Greg Varner shared the monthly disbursements for approval; the January 2025 disbursements are included in the Board packet. He also noted that the state audit began earlier this year than in previous years, and reminded the Board they recently received a form from the state auditor's staff that each Board member is required to

complete as quickly as they can. This form is about their understanding of fraud and any concerns or issues they have regarding the Health Department's operations and financial reporting.

**Mr. Meloy** moved to approve the January 2025 disbursements.

**Mr. Knapp** and Ms. Puthoff seconded the motion.

**Roll Call Vote – All Aye**

## 9. New Business

Health Commissioner Mr. Greg Kesterman noted that Cleves mayor Chuck Birkholtz and Newtown council member Jerry Schwab were in attendance.

Mr. Kesterman requested the Board's approval for his travel to two Association of Ohio Health Commissioners Conference in Columbus. He delayed his request to attend the NACCHO conference until a later date.

**Mr. Miller** moved to approve Mr. Kesterman's travel.

**Ms. Puthoff** seconded the motion.

**Roll Call Vote – All Aye**

Assistant Health Commissioner Mr. Craig Davidson presented the Board with Regulation 1-2025, Regulation Adopting Revised Local Fees for Plumbing and Medical Gas, effective March 1, 2025. Mr. Miller asked a question related to his thoughts from the Feb. 21, 2025 public hearing on the topic, wondering if language around what constitutes "expedited" work needs to be defined. Mr. Davidson said that his team was working on internal standard operating guidelines to define this and establish expectations for turn-around time. He will consult Ms. Chin's office as needed.

**Ms. Puthoff** moved to approve the regulation as written at 4:45.

**Dr. Kelly** seconded the motion.

**Roll Call Vote – All Aye**

Mr. Varner presented the Board with Resolution A 1-2025, Resolution to Approve Revisions for Construction & Demolition Debris (C&DD) Budget. This would be used as a back-up plan in case funding for the HUD grant award for lead abatement programming becomes uncertain in light of recent federal policy changes. A review of law and changes was completed by Chief Assistant Prosecutor Ms. Chin, who concurred that this was an allowable expense, based on a recent state of Ohio change in using C&DD funds for health & safety items including lead abatement.

This resolution allows the Finance team to request purchase orders using C&DD funds in the event the HUD funding is pulled or frozen to be used against the expenditures. The current HUD grant ends on July 3<sup>rd</sup>, but we must have contracts in place within the next 30 days to be able to complete the contract prior to the grant end. We will have purchase orders using both the HUD grant funds and the C&DD funds so we can pay these important vendors performing this work for us. There were a few questions from the Board on the mechanism of this. Mr. Varner clarified this resolution is using funds we did not intend to use this year in C&DD including the funds received from the Evans' fines over the past two

years, but this does reduce our C&DD availability of funds by \$400k. Mr. Davidson and Mr. Varner agreed to come back to the Board with a report in the summer stating what had and had not been used from C&DD funding for these projects. It was also stated that if we do not see an impact to HUD funding, the purchase order would be cancelled.

**Mr. Knapp** moved approve the resolution at 4:53 p.m.

**Ms. Puthoff** seconded the motion.

**Roll Call Vote – All Aye**

**Mr. Meloy** moved to exit the regular meeting to executive session for personnel matters at 4:54 p.m.

**Ms. Puthoff** seconded the motion.

**Roll Call Vote – All Aye**

Next Board of Health meeting: March 10, at 4 p.m.

#### 10. Executive Session

The Board of Health came out of Executive Session at 5.30 p.m. where no decisions were made.

**Dr. Kelly** moved to authorize Mr. Meloy to negotiate and execute a new contract with Greg Kesterman for Health Commissioner services.

**Ms. Puthoff** seconded the motion.

**Roll Call Vote – All Aye**

**Mr. Knapp** made a motion to end the meeting at 5.35 p.m.

**Dr. Kelly** seconded the motion

**Roll Call Vote – All Aye**

  
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Dan Meloy, President

  
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Greg Kesterman, Secretary  
Health Commissioner

