

**Hamilton County General Health District
REGULAR MEETING – BOARD OF HEALTH
May 12, 2025 – 4 p.m.
Minutes**

1. Call to Order

At 4 p.m., Tracey Puthoff 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: Tracey A. Puthoff, Esq.
Eric Knapp
Max Miller

District Staff Present: Greg Kesterman, Health Commissioner
Jackie Lindner, Assistant Health Commissioner
Steve Feagins, M.D., Medical Director
Nee Fong Chin, Chief Assistant Prosecuting Attorney

Guests Present: Dionne Johnson

3. Pledge of Allegiance

4. Clean Kitchen Awards

Commissioner Greg Kesterman read the list of 11 Clean Kitchen Award recipients and congratulated them for their efforts to maintain a high level of sanitation and staff education. Dionne Johnson from Sharon Hill Daycare and Preschool was present to receive their award.

5. Approval of Minutes

Mr. Miller moved to approve the minutes of the April 14, 2025, Board of Health meeting.

Mr. Knapp seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote – All Aye

6. Public Comment: None.

7. Health Commissioner's Report

Commissioner Kesterman began his report with Q1 Performance Reporting highlights. The number of business days from job closing to job offer has increased, in part due to a slowdown related to the uncertainty with federal funding. The average employment length for HCPH staff in years is trending up. The percentage of individuals passing food safety education class is trending down. Commissioner Kesterman noted that one of the contributing factors could be due to language and cultural barriers. All details of the Quarterly Performance Reporting metrics were provided in the Board packet.

Mr. Miller asked if HCPH's hiring process is related to the number of days to make a job offer. Commissioner Kesterman noted that they are working to update their candidate search process but noted that some candidates discontinue their interest due to accepting other opportunities.

Commissioner Kesterman provided federal and state government funding news including influenza and vaccine updates. Ms. Puthoff asked if there was enough time to create the new COVID vaccines for rollout in the fall. Dr. Feagins answered that they are unclear at this time, but certain vaccines will be developed. Commissioner Kesterman reported that the Federal Office of Management FY 26 Budget has reductions for the CDC targeting workforce, preparedness, and other programs. He noted that they are still unsure how the proposed federal funding cuts will affect HCPH. In the proposed Ohio budget, Commissioner Kesterman noted different public health programs that are possibly facing budget cuts or significant changes through the budget process. These programs include public health laboratory funding, sewage treatment system soil evaluation, and the Lead Safe Ohio program and funding.

With the drop in funding, the HCPH administration continues to adjust roles to ensure that we remain efficient and align positions with secured funding. One employee has shifted roles this week with at least one other position being considered for a transfer.

Staff Reports

(a) Medical Director's Report

Medical Director Dr. Steve Feagins began his report by noting that the Ohio Public Health Laboratory is a highly valuable test center and that this laboratory provides valuable information and support to health systems around the state.

Dr. Feagins provided statistics for confirmed influenza-associated hospitalizations in the Southwest Ohio region. He noted that there was only one influenza-associated hospitalization in MMWR week 18. Dr. Feagins provided a table displaying hospital "at capacity" status by month, which showed that hospitals' capacities are manageable and under control. Dr. Feagins noted that one of the hospitals that did not get close to capacity during peak season was Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center, which they attributed to the effectiveness of the RSV vaccine.

Dr. Feagins explained the Ohio Wastewater Monitoring Network sites, noting there are 82 sites in Ohio and 4 wastewater treatment plants in Hamilton County. These include Taylor Creek, Muddy Creek, Mill Creek, and Little Miami. Dr. Feagins explained an anti-microbial resistant project at Mercy West Hospital Effluent Treatment Facility evaluating the flow of wastewater. This unique opportunity studies whether genetic fragments of ESBL E. coli and anti-microbial resistance genes can be detected. Treatment options such as ultraviolet A can be applied with testing downstream. Dr. Feagins noted that this is the first sewer shed-level treatment study in the U.S. They won't be able to present the data to the Board of Health until the data is sent for publication.

Dr. Feagins finished his report by presenting 2024 compared to historical data on Lyme disease in Ohio. The infectious disease team is deliberating on how to properly diagnosis Lyme disease.

Dr. Feagins stated that information on bedbugs and their treatment was included in the Board packet.

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

(b) Department of Community Health Services

Assistant Health Commissioner Jackie Lindner began her report by highlighting the Drug Checking Day event in which participants learn more about drug-checking services and engage with various harm reduction organizations dedicated to supporting community health and safety. The event had to move indoors due to rain, but eight individuals provided samples, which the HCPH team considered a success.

Ms. Lindner noted that the epidemiology staff are now participating in a new drug trends group created by the Hamilton County Office of Addiction and law enforcement agencies. This group shares data to better understand drug trends in the local, regional and national landscape.

Ms. Lindner shared that a team of HCPH staff will be attending the Lincoln Heights Council meeting this evening to advocate for harm reduction services being located in the community, in conjunction with staff from The HealthCare Connection. HCPH is hoping to initiate the SAFE Services program in Lincoln Heights.

Ms. Lindner reported the WeTHRIVE! program hosts a recognition event every fall to recognize WeTHRIVE! communities. Ms. Lindner noted that they are going to move this event to early summer next year where they can make it more of a family event and cut some expenses due to budget concerns. Ms. Lindner shared that the WeTHRIVE! staff desire to give a short presentation on their work to the Board at the December meeting and invite some communities to be recognized by the Board. Board members welcome the presentation and supported the recognition event at the December meeting.

Mr. Miller asked a question about the gastrointestinal illness that has been prevalent recently. Ms. Lindner noted that there was an increase in GI illness, specifically norovirus, in March which has trended down a bit in April.

Mr. Knapp asked a question about certain congestion allergy sickness that is going around. Dr. Feagins noted that it is common around this time of year post-influenza season.

(c) Department of Environmental Health Services

Commissioner Kesterman presented for Craig Davidson who was absent. HCPH is recommending revisions and updates for plumbing fees and the local plumbing regulations. The goal of these revisions is to provide clearer and more concise wording, minor formatting changes, and updates to or removal of references to the Ohio Revised and Administrative Codes or other local regulations. Commissioner Kesterman noted that it is necessary to hold a public hearing for this regulation to be updated. A process for routine review of all local regulations has been initiated.

Commissioner Kesterman noted that there was a substantial increase in the number of food licenses issued this year. The biggest increase was in the mobile units. He also noted that the vending machine licenses have dropped substantially.

Environmental Health enforcement updates are included in the Board packet.

8. **Finances**

The April 2025 disbursement reports are included in the Board packet.

Mr. Miller moved to approve the monthly disbursements.

Mr. Knapp seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote – All Aye

9. **New Business**

Mr. Knapp moved to announce a public hearing on June 9 at 3:45 p.m. at 250 William Howard Taft Rd., Cincinnati, OH 45219 for approval of the proposed and revised Hamilton County General Health District Plumbing Regulation.

Mr. Miller seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote – All Aye

10. **Adjournment**

Mr. Knapp moved to adjourn the meeting at 4:41 p.m.

Mr. Miller seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote – All Aye

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



Dan Meloy, President

Greg Kesterman, Secretary
Health Commissioner