

Hamilton County General Health District
REGULAR MEETING – BOARD OF HEALTH
December 8, 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 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
Jackie Lindner, Assistant Health Commissioner
Nee Fong Chin, Chief Assistant Prosecuting Attorney
Greg Varner, Finance Officer
Allison Babka, Public Information Officer

Guests Present: Raheem Henry, Colerain Wingstop
Carolyn Rentz, J.F. Dulles Elementary School
Abbie Schneider, Velvet Smoke BBQ
Andrea Schneider, Velvet Smoke BBQ

3. Pledge of Allegiance

4. Clean Kitchen Awards

Assistant Health Commissioner Craig Davidson read the list of the eight Clean Kitchen Award recipients and congratulated them for their efforts to maintain a high level of sanitation and staff education. Representatives from the Colerain Wingstop, J.F. Dulles Elementary School, and Velvet Smoke BBQ were present to receive their awards.

5. Approval of Minutes

Mr. Miller moved to approve the minutes of November 10, 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 by highlighting HCPH efforts throughout the year. With the federal government reopened, federal updates and information that had stalled through the shutdown on grants is now flowing to HCPH's grant coordinators. He continued his report by noting that approximately 120 staff from six organizations attended Hamilton County Central "meet the neighbors" meeting. The meeting was designed to offer an overview of each agency's services and to help teams become familiar with one another. He noted that there will be great collaboration among agencies throughout the central location in the new building. The latest update regarding move-in time is still April or May of 2026.

Commissioner Kesterman praised Ms. Allison Babka and her media team for an excellent job promoting awareness of Legionnaires' disease with fact sheet handouts. The communications team arranged interviews between Dr. Feagins and WVXU-FM, WKRC-TV, and WLWT-TV to discuss how people might encounter legionella, how doctors evaluate for and treat the disease, and how residents can reduce their risk.

Commissioner Kesterman noted that Ms. Puthoff will step down from the Board of Health at the end of her term in March 2026. Ms. Puthoff noted that there is a colleague who is an attorney and is interested in the opportunity. Commissioner Kesterman then asked permission from the Board of Health to contact this individual to gauge interest and next steps. Ms. Puthoff indicated that when she was introduced to the Board of Health, geographical diversity and attorney's background was important to the Board of Health. Ms. Puthoff then explained her reason for stepping down, saying that she intends to continue to travel and did not believe it was fair to miss meetings with virtual attendance not an option. Commissioner Kesterman and the Board of Health thanked Ms. Puthoff for her 20 years of service to the Board of Health. Ms. Puthoff will share the contact information of her recommended candidate. Commissioner Kesterman then provided an outline of the process of a new board member's candidacy. They would meet the Commissioner, come to a Board of Health meeting and then their candidacy would be voted on at the DAC meeting.

Staff Reports

(a) Medical Director's Report

Medical Director Dr. Steve Feagins was absent from the Board of Health meeting. Commissioner Kesterman referenced Dr. Feagins' report in the Board packet.

The monthly communicable diseases report was also provided in the Board packet.

(b) Department of Community Health Services

Assistant Health Commissioner Jackie Lindner began her report by noting that the winter coat and food drive is continuing and the donations thus far have been very encouraging. Food and clothing donations will be collected through December 17 and distributed on December 18.

Ms. Lindner noted the WeTHRIVE! team hosted the WeTHRIVE! recognition event for WeTHRIVE! communities, schools and childcare providers that have met annual recognition requirements. Ms. Lindner thanked Commissioner Kesterman and Board president Mr. Meloy for attending and offering their congratulations to the teams.

Ms. Lindner continued her report by sharing that WeTHRIVE! previously received a grant centered on tobacco and vaping that had ended; however, the emphasis on Tobacco work continued. Forest Park has continued their work by creating a resolution restricting tobacco and vaping stores near schools, with Ms. Lindner noting that this was a win for the community. Mr. Miller asked if HCPH will monitor the efforts for the tobacco zoning policies. Ms. Lindner said yes, and the grant funding helps the efforts get off the ground initially. Mr. Meloy asked if there are other communities in Hamilton County regarding tobacco zoning initiatives. Ms. Lindner stated that Forest Park was the only community that made a resolution and that she would follow up with the WeTHRIVE! staff. Mr. Miller asked if there are any more grant opportunities related to tobacco programming. Ms. Lindner stated that grant activity is extremely limited at this time.

(c) Department of Environmental Health Services

Assistant Health Commissioner Craig Davidson began his report by providing information on the Lead Hazard Reduction Grant through HUD funding. Through the \$2 million grant received from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development in 2020, the program served families with young children countywide and ultimately completed lead hazard control in 68 homes, 54 of which also received Healthy Homes interventions to reduce other environmental health risks. He noted that HCPH also increased outreach with healthcare providers to increase lead screening. A 5% increase in screenings occurred during the funding period.

Mr. Davidson provided an example of plumbing safety issues identified during a backflow survey during a site visit at a rental property, praising the HCPH plumbing inspector who identified the water heater and boiler flue drafting problem. Property management reported that corrective action has since been taken and will be verified during a follow-up inspection.

Mr. Davidson provided a year-end surveillance update on the mosquito and West Nile virus surveillance efforts. The division of environmental health (EH) team trapped and submitted for testing 89 sample vials of mosquitoes with each vial containing up to 50 mosquitoes. Three of the submissions were reported as positive for West Nile virus. Per established protocol, media releases were issued, and surveillance was conducted within a half mile radius of each trap location by the EH team. Educational materials were given to residents, and any potential breeding sites were either drained or dunked. One human case of West Nile virus infection was reported among residents of HCPH jurisdictions. The case was investigated by the division of epidemiology in late September, and the EH team conducted surveillance in the area near the resident's home.

Environmental health enforcement updates are included in the Board packet.

8. Finances

Mr. Varner began his presentation by noting the estimated variances for 2025, the 2026 revised budget, and the 2027 proposed budget. He provided an overview of how budgets are formulated; it is a lengthy but solid process, he said.

Mr. Varner explained the 2026 revised budget details for the general fund, restricted funds, and consolidated funds totals. He then provided a graph displaying the consolidated agency budget compared to end-of-year actual expenses for the last five years, which showed an average variance of \$1,402,022.

Mr. Varner explained budget objectives for 2026, which included continued investment in HCPH salary structure, final space change in strategic plans, strengthening general and restricted funds, and continued investment in staff development and technology. He noted that the budget objective of investment in salary structure increases the upper pay ranges with market adjustments of 2%. All staff will receive a 1% market adjustment in pay. There is a continued tuition reimbursement at \$9k per staff/year for four staff positions.

Mr. Varner explained the budget objective of the space cost considerations. 2026's budget includes \$334k of expenses related to the upcoming move to Hamilton County Central in April. He noted that expenses for the move include moving servers and copiers, new printing needed for the new site, and the second payment to Hamilton County upon completion of the move to the new building. In the 2026 budget, HCPH budgeted \$40k for unknown/unanticipated costs at the new site.

Mr. Varner explained the budget objective of fund balances. The approval of fee increases for food service operators & campgrounds will increase revenue and would assist in maintaining fund balances, as well as plans to request an increase in the sewage treatment system fees in 2026. He noted the 2026 revised budget includes use of \$75k of Oral Care Coalition funds. Mr. Varner said the agency budgeted flat revenue numbers in many departments due to economic concerns in EH funds, state changes in vital statistics, and Complex Medical Help "catch-up" funds received in 2025. With vital statistics fees, there is unknown and uncertainty due to the move and how customers will interact with HCPH.

Investments in staff development and technology were discussed as a 2026 budget objective. This includes performance management council and other staff for training and staff development of \$80k. Annual maintenance of software applications EPIC and HealthSpace is needed, Mr. Varner said.

Mr. Varner explained significant expenditures in 2026, which included strategic planning beyond 2026 at an estimated cost of \$16k. Another highlighted expenditure for 2026 was the public information team's request of \$44k for website updates and software. He noted different capital expenditures, including two replacement copiers and one replacement vehicle.

Mr. Varner provided information on revenue changes in 2026. A graph compared the revenue balances for 2024 to 2025 and 2025 to the estimated 2026. He then provided a graph for revised expense changes for 2026 and the anticipated changes from 2024-2025 to 2025-2026.

Mr. Varner provided a snapshot of 2022-2027 general fund balances which show net positives in the general fund. He then showed the restricted fund and consolidated fund balances of the last few years.

Mr. Varner explained a revised expenditure budget for the 2026 and 2027 estimated expenditure budget. He noted that these documents are sent to the Hamilton County auditor. He then reviewed from a high level the grant revenue from prior years and YTD 2025. He listed the different 2026 grants that were already awarded and the timelines of some of the CDC and ODH grants.

Mr. Miller asked about the 2027 expenditures and if they were conservative. Mr. Varner noted that expenses for the Hamilton County Central move used high estimates to provide a budget cushion, and open staff positions that aren't immediately filled could also provide relief. Mr. Miller asked about the concerns about the projected deficit. Commissioner Kesterman noted that there is a larger fund balance that will help with the move. Mr. Miller noted that the budget is conservative, and Mr. Varner agreed.

Ms. Puthoff asked where the general fund balance is currently. The estimated 2025 general fund is \$5.28m and the restricted funds are \$2.797m YTD estimated, Mr. Varner said. Commissioner Kesterman also noted that the food methodology will begin to incorporate the HealthSpace expenditure for a rate increase to be effective this time next year. Mr. Miller noted the expenditure needs to be monitored closely due to the anticipated increase.

Mr. Meloy asked about the staffing numbers from 2022-2025 and if the number of staff is down. Mr. Varner noted that they are down a bit regarding staffing, and they will wait to see if certain positions need to be filled. Mr. Meloy asked Mr. Davidson about which fee increases were initiated this year. Mr. Davidson projected that the next scheduled fee increase is for the sewage fee.

Mr. Miller expressed concern regarding the budget space and the staffing situations. Mr. Varner echoed the concerns and said the agency is hopeful that the clinic will receive more revenue than what was in the estimated budget.

Mr. Miller noted that in the future, if the proposed budget can be presented in November to the Board of Health, they can have more time to review. Mr. Varner agreed that they can adjust the schedule if necessary for future budget presentations, with a draft budget presented in November for Board discussion and decisions with a final budget presented for approval to the Board in December.

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

Mr. Knapp moved to approve the monthly disbursements.

Mr. Miller seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote – All Aye

9. New Business

Ms. Puthoff moved to approve Resolution I-2025: 2026 Revised Budget and 2027 Estimated Budget.

Dr. Kelly seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote – All Aye

10. Adjournment

Mr. Knapp moved to adjourn the meeting at 4:57 p.m.

Ms. Puthoff seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote – All Aye

Next Board of Health meeting: January 12, at 4 p.m.

Elizabeth Kelly

Dan Meloy, President *Vice*

G K

Greg Kesterman, Secretary
Health Commissioner