

**Hamilton County General Health District
REGULAR MEETING – BOARD OF HEALTH
January 12, 2026 – 4 p.m.
Minutes**

1. Call to Order

At 4 p.m., Dr. Elizabeth 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: Elizabeth A. Kelly, M.D., Vice-President
Eric Knapp
Max Miller

District Staff Present: Greg Kesterman, Health Commissioner
Jackie Lindner, Assistant Health Commissioner
Stephanie Taylor, Human Resources
Nee Fong Chin, Chief Assistant Prosecuting Attorney
Greg Varner, Finance Officer
Steve Feagins, M.D. Medical Director
Allison Babka, Public Information Officer
Erinn Sweet, Public Information Specialist

Guests Present: None

3. Pledge of Allegiance

4. Clean Kitchen Awards

Health Commissioner Greg Kesterman read the list of Clean Kitchen Award and congratulated them for their efforts to maintain a high level of sanitation and staff education.

5. Approval of Minutes

Mr. Miller moved to approve the minutes of the December 8, 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 reviewing feedback from the staff satisfaction survey that was sent to employees. He highlighted several results from the survey, noting that a majority of the responses showed improvement in overall staff satisfaction and a minimal decrease in satisfaction related to support for remote work. Overall, job satisfaction increased from 93% in 2024 to 97% in 2025.

Board member Mr. Max Miller asked a question regarding the survey question "I feel adequately equipped and/or supported to work efficiently in the field and/or remotely when needed," asking if the decrease was due to technology. Mr. Kesterman agreed that technology did play a role in the results of this question and noted several database projects that were delayed in 2025 due to lost funding.

Mr. Kesterman said that employee retention is up from previous years and noted factors like a change in the economy that may be driving this result. He noted that things are shifting from an employee market to an employer market as fewer jobs are available. Mr. Kesterman and the board members discussed these results. Mr. Miller shared his belief that retention has improved because we are creating an environment that people want to work.

Mr. Miller asked if the results of this survey would be shared with the rest of the staff. Mr. Kesterman replied that yes, these results will be shared with the staff in February during an all-team meeting and he will review both positive and negative results with the team.

Mr. Kesterman thanked the board for allowing the staff to have December 26th off. He noted that the staff expressed gratitude and appreciation for getting an extra day off.

Mr. Kesterman noted that the next district advisory meeting will be March 10 at noon.

Mr. Kesterman shared that he met with Lynn Schulte, who had expressed interest in serving on the HCPH Board of Health and who knows Board member Ms. Tracey Puthoff. Ms. Schulte has agreed to attend the February Board of Health meeting to meet the board and answer any questions they may have.

Staff Reports

(a) Medical Director's Report

Medical Director Dr. Steve Feagins began his report by highlighting data from the current respiratory virus season. He noted that influenza-like illness is the highest it's been in the past six years. He also explained that there are multiple mutations that are causing issues this year. Dr. Feagins said that there was an upswing in cases and hospitalizations across the Southwest Ohio region based on data that came in two weeks ago.

Dr. Feagins reviewed the data for weekly rates of respiratory virus-associated hospitalizations per 100,000 people and explained that it is currently at 6.2. The data also shows an earlier peak to this flu season compared to the last season and noted that last flu

season had double peaks. He explained there have been 300 reported influenza-associated hospitalizations, which is 2-3 times higher than the previous year. He also explained that Southwest Ohio has more reported hospitalizations than the rest of the state due to a change in influenza reporting this season and the efforts of HCPH epidemiology staff to collect and manually track the information. Dr. Feagins also stated that the influenza mortality rate in Ohio is no more than that from previous years.

Dr. Feagins reviewed the data related to influenza concentrations detected in wastewater. He noted that the correlation of influenza admissions to wastewater levels is currently 0.67 which is the best the data has aligned. When the wastewater levels come down, this could be an indicator that hospitalizations will decrease, as well.

Dr. Feagins said COVID-19 transmissions remained low but noted that they are increasing.

He also reported that there were several changes to the CDC guidelines for the recommended vaccine schedule for children. He reviewed the full list and provided updates on current vaccine requirements for school entry in Ohio. Dr. Feagins also said that he is not anticipating any changes to vaccines available for the Vaccine for Children (VFC) Program.

(b) Department of Community Health Services

Assistant Health Commissioner Jackie Lindner began her report by discussing how Hannah Schilling partnered with the division of Health Promotion and Education to provide training and overdose prevention resources for Elmwood Place, a WeTHRIVE! community. As a result, fentanyl test strips are available in two businesses in the community, the fire department and police department are leave-behind partners, and community members received modern first aid training.

Ms. Lindner said the HCPH clinic hired social worker Somer Black and wanted an opportunity to present the work she has done. Ms. Black provided services to 150 people over the course of last year and had a huge impact on our patient population, Ms. Lindner said. Ms. Black also has helped patients with many resources, including Medicaid, SNAP benefits, and providing toiletries.

Ms. Lindner discussed the executive order pertaining to use of CDC funds under the OD2A program, which focuses on what activities and services are allowable. She shared that these changes will likely have an impact on the HCPH SAFE Services program and how the services are funded. She said that the purchase of test strips and drug checking programming remain allowable. Syringe exchange services will no longer be funded through the OD2A grant. Ms. Lindner also noted that there will be a call to discuss what this funding looks like moving forward.

Mr. Kesterman noted that federal funds may not be available for programs like the syringe exchange program, but the agency may be able to find other funds that can cover costs associated with those programs.

(c) Department of Environmental Health Services

Assistant Health Commissioner Craig Davidson was absent, so his report was provided by Health Commissioner Greg Kesterman. Mr. Kesterman began the report by discussing the annual licenses of landfills and transfer stations, noting that the 2026 applications have been reviewed and licenses are prepared to be issued for all but two facilities with outstanding items on their applications. He said that there is also a facility not seeking license renewal because they plan to begin capping the facility.

Mr. Kesterman said that H. Hafner and Sons' license was not yet renewed due to an annual site survey of elevations pending completion. The survey was requested as a special term and condition of the 2025 license. They were required to do a site survey of elevations due to the limits of waste being close to final grade for the site. This is normally done in the fall after trees are void of leaves. Mr. Kesterman reported that H. Hafner and Sons was late getting the field work completed and the drawing has not yet been completed. Once submitted and approved, they should receive their 2026 license.

Mr. Kesterman noted that Loveland landfill's license was not renewed due to a failure to provide sufficient financial assurance for closure and post closure care of the facility. This proposed denial was issued in 2014. It is anticipated that the facility will come into compliance in 2026. Mr. Kesterman said that Newtown Landfill has been preparing to close for the last year and did not seek renewal for a 2026 license.

Mr. Kesterman shared that HCPH is actively working on updated regulations for the nuisance and waste hauler programs, which are from the 1960's and 1940's, respectively. He indicated that the new regulation was sent to key stakeholders to solicit feedback on the drafted changes and anticipates that during the February Board meeting, staff will seek to set a public hearing and adopt the updated regulation in March. He noted that all EH regulations will now be on a five-year review cycle.

Mr. Miller asked about the landfill capacity and raised concern with the decreasing number of construction and demolition debris (C&DD) landfills with so many demolition projects occurring around the county. Mr. Kesterman said that Rumpke has 45 years' capacity, including for C&DD waste. In addition, while not currently being filled, Rumpke owns a second facility on the West side that could be an active site in the future.

8. Finances

The December 2025 disbursement reports are included in the board packet.

Dr. Kelly moved to approve the monthly disbursements.

Mr. Miller seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote – All Aye

Finance Officer Mr. Varner presented information from the 4th quarter and year-to-date final financial review. He discussed details and noted that the year finished quite strong and exceeded the 2025 budgeted projections. The fund balance numbers are \$140K better than the projection at last month's board meeting and are approximately \$25K higher surplus than the report in the packet, he said.

9. New Business

Stephanie Taylor provided an overview of the proposed changes to the HCPH personnel policy manual. The majority of the changes are legal in nature to ensure that the personnel policy reflects any federal employment law changes. She said that under the changes, the parental leave policy will create a bank of 16 weeks of leave available for an employee rather than allowing eight weeks with each eligible event. She added that the social media and branded apparel policies are both new for HCPH.

Mr. Miller moved to adopt HCPH personnel policy updates: Section 1.0, 1.1, 4.0, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 5.10, 5.11, 6.1, 6.18, and BOH core values and preface, which includes definitions, purpose, scope, disclaimer, and severability.

Mr. Knapp seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote - All Aye

Mr. Knapp moved to authorize the Board of Health Vice-President to enter into a 3-year contract with Mercy Health for medical director services.

Mr. Miller seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote – All Aye


10. Adjournment

Mr. Max Miller moved to adjourn the meeting at 4:47 p.m.

Dr. Kelly seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote – All Aye

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



Dan Meloy, President

Greg Kesterman, Secretary
Health Commissioner

