



Washtenaw County Board of Health

Minutes

April 23, 2021, 9:00 AM – 11:00 AM
555 Towner St., Room 2102B, Ypsilanti, MI 48198
Zoom Meeting

Present: James Carty, Gina Dahlem, Leon Golson, Neel Hajra, Justin Hodge, Carrie Rheingans, Katie Scott, Kathleen Stroud, Elisabeth Vanderpool
Absent: Morghan Boydston
Staff: Jimena Loveluck, Kristen Schweighoefer, Adam Paberzs, Juan Marquez, Ruth Kraut, Gregory Dill, Alize Asberry-Payne, Crystal Campbell, Russell O'Brien
Guests: Alex Thomas

1. Call to Order

Justin Hodge called the meeting to order at 9:04 AM.

Roll-call check-in.

2. Public Comment

None.

3. Board Member Response to Public Comment

None

4. Get to Know Board of Health Members

Board members introduced themselves, talked about their work or community role outside of the Board of Health (BOH), and listed one goal that they have for the BOH this year.

5. Approval of Agenda (Action)

*Motion by N. Hajra, seconded by J. Carty, to approve the agenda.
Motion approved unanimously with a roll-call vote.*

6. Approval of March 26, 2021 Meeting Minutes (Action)

*Motion by K. Scott, seconded by C. Rheingans, to approve the minutes of the March 26, 2021 meeting.
Motion approved unanimously with a roll-call vote.*

7. Executive Committee Report from March 11, 2021

Board members received the Executive Committee minutes.
No discussion about the report.

8. Community Voices and Health for All Report

Alex Thomas, Community Voices member, spoke about needing more clarity around the invitation to attend BOH meetings. Would Community Voices have a spot on the BOH or just a chance to regularly appear and give updates and would they have the opportunity to inform policy? Alex would like some clarification via email or through a future meeting.



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Alex sent an email with questions and a report called It's About Time to the BOH listserv just before the meeting today. The report highlights disparities within the community and includes census tract data. The questions center around the role of Community Voices with the BOH moving forward.

Carrie Rheingans said she thinks it would be best to discuss the role on the BOH together and see what seems best, before Community Voices decides about what it thinks the role should be. She thinks the Community Voices group has deep community connections to people who may not be represented in decision making and she wants them to have power to help make decisions and that should happen via a voting role on the BOH.

Justin Hodge added that this has been an ongoing conversation for a while. He has attended a few Health for All meetings but scheduling conflicts have not allowed him to attend a Community Voices meeting yet. Alex said he thinks getting Justin to a meeting is a good way to move forward. Justin pointed out that any changes to the voting body of the BOH would require a change to the by-laws and then approval from the Board of Commissioners (BOC). James Carty added that the BOH is an advisory board, and we need to do a better job of explaining the role and powers of the BOH to the public. He also suggested that the board engage with Alex and other members the next time there is a vacancy on the BOH to see if anyone is interested in applying.

9. Future Investment in Public Health – Jimena Loveluck and Justin Hodge

Justin Hodge discussed new funding coming to public health through state/federal funds and a potential millage. The Health for All Steering Committee has decided to take on doing an assessment of existing data and a needs assessment to get recommendations for new and/or expanded Health Department services, as part of their charge.

Jimena Loveluck said we still have a lot to learn about the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) and particularly about the funds that will be available. Michigan is set to receive \$90 million from the CDC to support ongoing COVID-19 work as well as to help build public health infrastructure to address workforce issues. 60% of the funds must be designated to local health departments, but Jimena cautioned that money from the state is very prescriptive and not always very flexible on the usage. Should the BOC move forward with a public health millage, Jimena is very interested in a participatory budget process that uses community engagement to help inform budget priorities.

Justin proposed the creation of a subcommittee that would focus on what future investment in public health looks like. Work would occur in-between BOH meetings, possible collaboration with the Health for All Steering Committee, and report back to the BOH and BOC with recommendations. Carrie Rheingans said she thinks this is a good idea and a good way to do some concerted community engagement to identify needed services and policy advocacy that needs to be done. Neel Hajra said he is supportive of a subcommittee and part of their charge should be looking into any changes needed in the budgeting process to make it more participatory. Jimena responded that because of mandated services and requirements, the whole budget process is not really open to a participatory process, but she thinks there is a way to identify a portion of the budget that lends itself more to a participatory process.

*Motion by K. Stroud, seconded by J. Carty, to create a subcommittee as stated by the chair.
Motion approved unanimously with a roll-call vote.*

10. Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Program – Gayathri Akella

Gayathri Akella, WIC supervisor, presented to the board on the WIC program and how it has adapted and stepped up during COVID-19 to meet increased community needs. Board members received a copy of the presentation



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through email. Gayathri discussed her background and how she started with the WIC program. WIC helps participants to eat healthy and stay healthy. The criteria to participate in WIC was discussed as well as the history of the program. Participants must be residents of Michigan but do not have to be citizens of the United States and do not have to live in Washtenaw County to visit the office at 555 Towner. The similarities and differences between WIC and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) were discussed. The WIC program provides nutrition education, one-on-one counseling by a registered dietitian, EBT/Bridge card to buy healthy food, support/help with breastfeeding, and referrals to Medicaid, SNAP, parenting classes, health care, immunizations, and other programs. WIC dietitians are the health care workers, use motivational style interviewing to empower clients to improve their health, provide client centered care/consultation, assess parenting practices, and screen for child abuse/neglect. Washtenaw County WIC breastfeeding initiation rates have gone up from 20% in 1997 to almost 80% in 2019 due to developing local agency policies on a breastfeeding friendly clinic, a breast pump program, developing the Black Mothers Breastfeeding Social, and Ramadan Support Groups. Gayathri talked about Washtenaw County WIC breastfeeding counselors and what their role is. There will be an increase in cash value to purchase fruits and vegetables from \$9/\$11 per month to \$35 per month as part of the ARPA.

James Carty said he is very appreciative of the information in the presentation, and it was one of the best presentations the BOH has seen.

Katie Scott commented that if we could get more money, we could look into expanding the hours and satellite locations for WIC in 48197/48198.

11. BOC Liaison Report

Katie Scott shared that the BOC is thinking about how they can get a millage on the November ballot and they are also talking about the ARPA and what will be done with that money.

12. Old Business

- **COVID-19 Updates**

Very focused in vaccination efforts. The HD is seeing a little dip in terms of demand for vaccine, but still working hard to fill the clinics. Jimena thanked community members that have helped with outreach and shared that at the BOC meeting last week, there was an acknowledgment of the great contributions that local pastors made in making vaccine accessible in various neighborhoods and community settings.

- **Gelman**

Board members received an email about a state letter requesting Gelman be put on the National Priorities List (NPL).

- **NALBOH**

The best way to move forward appears to be by designating a BOH member to become a member of the National Association of Local Boards of Health (NALBOH). Organizational membership does not give individual board members the same benefits as the organization. Carrie Rheingans shared it is \$400 per year based on the county population size. Justin Hodge said he is supportive of the county joining NALBOH and having Carrie be the person responsible for the relationship with the BOH. Carrie agreed.



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13. New Business

- **Governance in Action for Public Health Training**

Developed and updated by the University of Michigan School of Public Health and their Region 5 Public Health Training Center. A training for boards of health so that they can understand their role in various areas of public health. It is a more general overview that would be helpful to new and existing board members. Jimena will share the link and information with board members.

- **Opportunity Index**

Board members received a link to information about the launch of the updated Opportunity Index and an event next week via email.

14. Adjournment

*Motion by K. Scott, seconded by G. Dahlem, to adjourn the meeting.
Motion approved unanimously.*

Meeting adjourned at 11:03 AM.

Minutes taken by Russell O'Brien

