

COUNTY OF



ALLEGHENY

**Allegheny County Board of Health
May 13, 2026 at 5:30 p.m.
Gold Room, Court House
Minutes**

Present:

Joylette Portlock, PhD, Chair
Elizabeth Cuevas, MD Vice Chair
Dr. Margaret Larkins-Pettigrew, MD, Med, MPPM
Ms. Laura Dagley, BSN, RN
Khlood Salman, DrPH, RN
Ms. Lisa Scales, JD
Michael Yonas, DrPH, MPH
Graham Snyder, MD MS
Iulia Vann, MD MPH, Secretary
Dara Mendez, PhD, MPH

1. Call to Order

Dr. Joylette Portlock called the meeting to order at 5:47 p.m. and announced an executive session was conducted prior to the meeting to discuss personnel and legal matters.

2. Approval of Minutes

Dr. Joylette Portlock called for a vote to approve the minutes of the March 18, 2026, meeting.

Action: Ms. Lisa Scales motioned to approve the minutes from the March 18, 2026, meeting and Dr. Margaret Larkins-Pettigrew seconded the motion. **The motion was unanimously approved.**

3. Public Comments on Agenda Items:

Ms. Kim Joyce stated there were 3 written comments submitted, two (2) around fracking and three additional written comments submitted around air quality and H2S particularly in the Mon Valley.

Public Speakers – In Person

- a. Daniel McCarthy- Paid Parental Leave
- b. John S. Detwiler – Air Quality -Permitting – **not present**
- c. Nino Testa – County Resources for People Living with HIV/AIDS
- d. Jenny Johnson – County Resources for trans youth



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- e. Benjamin Chiszar – Public Health & Environment
- f. Jean Stone – Paid Parental Leave
- g. Edith Abeyta – Hot Strip Mill Application
- h. Lucy Rose Ruccio – Paid Parental Leave
- i. Jada Shirriel – Paid Family Leave
- j. Naomi Umbaugh – Body Modification Regulations
- k. Ashley Russo Harland – Paid Parental Leave
- l. Rebecca L. Coward – Air Quality – **not present**
- m. Gwen – Nippon ET Investment
- n. Naomi Curtis – Please don't put more chemicals into the air- not present
- o. Matthew Mehalik – Community Engagement

Public Speakers- Via Zoom

- p. Aarushi Pant – Air Quality
- q. Howard Rieger – Air Pollution
- r. John Kalisz-Tonsor – Permit Application for Hot Strip Mill at Edgar Thompson Works

4. Committee Updates

Ideation Committee: Dr. Michael Yonas stated updates on the Communications Plan and the Communication Strategy will be provided at the next scheduled meeting.

Fracking Committee: Ms. Laura Dagley provided no updates but will continue to work on issues presented at the previous meeting.

Policies and Procedures: Dr. Graham Snyder stated that communications are continuing with leaders of the Plumbing Advisory Board and the Food Safety Advisory Committee and plans to provide some recommendations and a slate of renewals of board membership to the next meeting.

5. Director's Report

Dr. Vann began her report highlighting the following important facts regarding the Andes Virus (Hantavirus):

- Can cause severe respiratory disease in people
- Not a new virus and is found in areas of South America
- Spreads through contact with infected rodents, touching an object or surface and person to person and signs.
- Symptoms appear between 4 to 42 days after exposure to the virus
- There is no specific treatment – patients receive supportive care, including rest, hydration and treatment of symptoms
- Low risk to public.

Dr. Vann then provided the following general updates and information:

- Launched the Community Health Assessment Survey (CHA)
- Tattoo Regulations Townhall with artists May 12th
- Continued partnership with University of Pittsburgh School of Public Health
- Launched community survey on Vaccine Attitudes
- Supervisors Enrichment Course
- 2026 Women's Infant & Children (WIC) Public Comment
- Finalizing the 2025-26 School Immunization Report
- Allegheny County Public Health Symposium, Monday, November 16, 2026

QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS:

Dr. Graham Snyder commended Dr. Vann on the clear and reliable communication informing the public related to the recent Hantavirus outbreak.

6. Presentations

Communications Development Plan - Mr. Ronnie Das, Public Health and Information Officer.

Mr. Das began by sharing that June 4th will be the 175th anniversary of the first Pittsburgh Board of Health meeting and continued with the following presentation:

- Communication Plan is a requirement of the Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB)
 - Lays out purpose, goals, key messages and roles for everybody in the department.
 - Communications toolkit which includes interactive worksheets, checklists and interactive pieces.

Dr. Joylette Portlock thanked Mr. Das for the presentation and stated the work is critically important and essential for the continued progress of the Allegheny County Health Department in communicating both internally and externally.

Dr. Michael Yonas thanked Mr. Das for the presentation and all the work recently accomplished.

Dr. Graham Snyder asked if Mr. Das would be bringing a sheet cake for the board and guests at the next board to celebrate the 175th anniversary.

Measles Table Tabletop Update- Dr. Jillian Irwin, Medical Director of the Allegheny County Health Department and Deputy Director for Services.

Dr. Irwin began her presentation highlighting the Regional Measles Preparedness Stakeholder Session held on May 1st. adding a variety of stakeholders involved in healthcare and public health were in attendance:

- Dr. Graham Snyder- UPMC
- Allegheny Intermediate Unit
- Casa San Jose – Trusted Messenger – ACES
- Allegheny County Health Department

Dr. Irwin continued with providing information that an effective response is the product of four interdependent systems (the four s')

- Staff – People to deploy, redeploy and protect
 - Stuff – Vaccine, PPE, test kits, isolation supplies
 - Space – Triage, Isolation, Vaccination, surge sites
 - Systems – Reporting, coordination, decision pathways
- Continued efforts which focus on a larger conversation about the coordination structure and the expectations.
 - Communication and the communication ecosystem which is important not just to get people to get vaccinated in general, but also in the context of an outbreak.
 - Layered communication approach.
 - Adapting appropriately in due course.
 - Anticipate future sessions both with individuals who participate in this session but also continue stakeholder coordination.

Dr. Irwin added Dr. Chad Herman from the Trusted Messenger program has provided invaluable research into the best ways to convey messages to those who are members of their own cultural groups, religious leaders or physicians.

Dr. Joylette Portlock thanked Dr. Irwin for her presentation.

QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS:

Dr. Khlood Salman asked if any members of the Allegheny County Immunization were present at the coalition and would appreciate an invitation to future meetings as the members are active in community outreach concerning measles and vaccines.

Dr. Irwin responded that there were several members who participated in the Allegheny County Immunization Coalition

Dr. Margaret Larkins Pettigrew inquired about the inclusion of community individuals in community driven development.

Dr. Irwin responded that community members and members of religious groups were part of the discussion.

Dr. Dara Mendez asked about networking in surrounding counties.

Dr. Irwin responded there are plans to engage further with The Healthcare Coalition in Southwest Pennsylvania.

Dr. Vann added that infectious disease response in public health is jurisdiction based and would welcome continued conversations with partners outside of Allegheny County.

Lisa Scales suggested the Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank be added as a partner.

**Allegheny County Health Department Community Engagement Strategy Overview-
Ms. Michaela Avino, Community Engagement Coordinator**

Ms. Avino presented a high-level overview of how the health department engages with communities to inform, shape and implement the public health programs and services and outline shared expectations across all the staff of the Allegheny County Health Department. In addition, Ms. Avino provided the Spectrum of Community Engagement to Ownership and Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnership (MAPP 2.0) Evaluation Framework developed by NAACHO.

Dr. Portlock thanked Ms. Avino for her presentation, adding what a pleasure it is to see the department grow to become better at community engagement.

QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS:

Dr. Dara Mendez asked about the timeline for the draft and Dr. Portlock asked if a link to the document would be provided.

Ms. Avino responded ideally it would be finalized in the fall and a link could be provided and sent to the board.

Ms. Lisa Scales asked for a brief description of the Community Health Ambassador Program.

Ms. Avino responded that it is in the very early stages and deferred to Dr. Vann.

Dr. Vann stated project was a continuation of the Community Health Worker Program, which was funded through COVID, however there is no funding at this time.

Dr. Khlood Salman asked about specific strategies when reaching out to culturally diverse communities in the county?

Ms. Avino responded that that would be coming from the Community Ambassador Group when organized.

Michael Yonas added to consider there is a lot of responsibility and accountability when engaging and to be mindful of how advocacy works and how it would be transparent with the skills and capacity, we have and what the limitations are.

Dr. Joylette Portlock called for a 5-minute break

7. New Business

Mr. Otis Pitts, Deputy Director, Allegheny County Health Department Bureau of Environment Health requested a 30-day Public Comment Period for Article XV- Sewer Line Language Amendment and a mandate that photo-initiated cures be the model in Allegheny County.

ACTION: Dr. Michael Yonas motioned to approve the request and Dr. Khlood Salman seconded the motion. Motion passes.

Mr. Otis Pitts, Deputy Director, Allegheny County Health Department Bureau of Environment Health requested another 30-day Public Comment Period for Article VI to clarify existing language.

ACTION: Dr. Margaret Larkins-Pettigrew motioned to approve the request and Ms. Lisa Scales seconded the motion.

Ms. Kim Joyce, COO, Allegheny County Health Department requested a 30-day Public Comment Period for Article XXIV Revisions to Paid Sick and Parental Leave.

ACTION: Dr. Margaret Larkins-Pettigrew motioned to approve the request, and Dr. Graham Snyder seconded the motion.

Dr. Iulia Vann then announced two (2) recent appointments at the Allegheny County Health Department:

- 1) Dr. Jillian Irwin, Medical Director and Deputy Director
- 2) Dr. James Weeden Deputy Director for Health

8. Adjournment

Action: Dr. Joylette Portlock entertained a motion to adjourn. Dr. Margaret Larkins-Pettigrew motioned to approve, and Dr. Graham Snyder seconded the motion. The board approved the motion unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 8:46 p.m.