

COUNTY OF



ALLEGHENY

RICH FITZGERALD
COUNTY EXECUTIVE

**Meeting of the Allegheny County Board of Health
July 12, 2023**

1. Call to Order
2. Approval of Minutes for the meeting of May 3, 2023
3. Public Comments on Agenda Items
4. Director's Report
5. New Business Action Items

No Action Items

6. Public Comment on Non-Agenda Items



ALLEGHENY COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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Allegheny County Board of Health
May 3, 2023
Minutes

Present: Dr. Donald Burke
Patrick Dowd, Secretary
Anthony Ferraro
Caroline Mitchell
Dr. Joylette Portlock
Dr. Edie Shapira
Dr. Ellen Stewart
William Youngblood, Vice Chair

Absent: Dr. Lee Harrison, Chairman
Dr. Kotayya Kondaveeti

1. Call to Order

Board Vice Chair William Youngblood welcomed everyone to the Allegheny County Board of Health meeting.

2. Approval of Minutes

Mr. Youngblood asked for a motion to approve the minutes.

Action: Tony Ferraro moved to approve the minutes from the March 22, 2023 meeting and Dr. Donald Burke seconded the motion. **Members approved the motion unanimously.**

3. Public Comments on Agenda Items

Kim Joyce, Deputy Director for the Bureau of Administration, reported there was one written comment regarding the proposed revisions to Article VI: Houses and Community Environment.

Kevin Quisenberry spoke on the proposed revisions to Article VI.

4. Director's Report

Patrick Dowd, Acting Director and Chief Operating Officer provided the board members with administrative updates as well as an overview of the Plan for a Healthier Allegheny.

Thanks to the hard work of the Air Quality Program, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) awarded the Health Department and Pittsburgh Regional Transit (PRT) a \$10 million Targeted Airshed Grant for purchase electric buses. PRT will deploy these buses in the Mon Valley region.

The ACHD Housing and Community Environmental Program finished their annual treatment of wetlands in the county to abate mosquito larvae. The team will now focus on catch basins mostly in the City of Pittsburgh.

The Health Department responded to the American Lung Association's "State of Air" which consistently misrepresents the quality of air in our region.

Mr. Dowd updated the Board regarding the stipulated penalties of \$766,000 for physical violations at the Clairton Coke Works in the first and second quarters of 2022. These funds will go directly to the Community Benefit Trust. ACHD does not have control or distribution of these funds. The goal is to utilize these funds for appropriate projects that the community serves.

Lastly, the Chronic Disease Program has launched the ReThink Your Drink campaign which is to promote non sugary beverages for families in Allegheny County.

Mr. Dowd then provided an overview of the [Plan for a Healthier Allegheny, 2023-2027](#).

The Board asked how we are combating ticks. Dr. LuAnn Brink, Deputy Director of Data, Reporting and Disease Control provided information regarding Lyme Disease surveillance and encouraged members of the Board of Health to check out the tick report recently updated on the website.

Dr. Barbara Nightingale, ACHD Medical Director and Deputy Director for the Bureau of Clinical Services, provided the Board with updates on COVID. She explained that the Covid-19 public health emergency will end on May 11, 2023. Vaccines, testing and treatment coverage will now transition to a more traditional healthcare model. The ACHD is still waiting for updates from the CDC, but for now vaccines and testing will be free. The ending of the emergency will impact the data available to the ACHD, which, in turn, will influence the frequency of reporting.

Dr. Nightingale reviewed vaccination rates and explained that we still have a good amount of work to do here. We continue to see disparities. We continue see older residents having higher rates of vaccinations but is still only around the 40% rate and there is a significantly lower rate for younger individuals.

- Dr. Nightingale reviewed three PA Department of Health Alerts related to a)Candida Auris (C. Auris) b)Lyme Disease and Tickborne diseases and c)Hepatitis A.

The Board asked how Allegheny County compares to other jurisdictions when it comes to the vaccination of those residents age 65 and older. Dr. Nightingale explained that we are about average. The Health Department continues to reach out to senior high rises and targeting lower income neighborhoods where people may not have access to vaccines. We also work with many community organizations and other resources to help them get vaccinated.

The Board also asked if there was a timeline when the vaccines will not be free and when they may be covered under health insurance policies, and will the cost be another barrier? Dr. Nightingale said, as of right now, we are waiting for the CDC to develop their national

strategy and hope that they will have continued support for people who do not have access to vaccines. In our immunization clinic we still provide free vaccines and hopefully we will receive updates from the CDC when and if they are no longer free so that we will have time to come up with a strategy.

Mr. Dowd introduced Dannai Wilson, Deputy Director of Family and Community Health to provide updates regarding the ACHD's Women, Infants & Children Program (WIC).

Ms. Wilson provided an overview of the history and purpose of the WIC program.

In 2022, Ms. Wilson explained, 11,312 families applied for, interviewed and have been accepted into the program. The participation rate for families currently receiving WIC benefits is 10,016 (91%). Over the past three years we have steadily increased our appointments and have offered both telehealth and in-person visits.

In 2020 the ACHD WIC Program received an infrastructure grant for \$800,000 to improved conditions in WIC offices. The WIC program partnered with the Children's Musuem to make the waiting rooms and other spaces more family friendly.

Additionally, under the direction of Dr. Bogen the WIC Program launched a partnership with UPMC to create a satellite WIC office as Magee Women's Hospital, the region's largest birthing facility.

With a Public Health Improvement Fund, the WIC Program has retrofit a van that will assist families in lesser served communities. Of equal interest, Giant Eagle has recently approved the use of WIC vouchers for its mobile unit. Together, these two new initiatives should increase access for families across Allegheny County.

Ms. Wilson provided an update on breastfeeding in Allegheny County. According to the Plan for a Healthier Allegheny, the goal is to increase human breastmilk feeding from 81.7% to 84% and to increase the proportion of infants who receive human breastmilk for eight or more weeks.

WIC is focusing on ways to improve how the program operates in Allegheny County. With the state's help we would like to see remote card access, electronic filing, and better shopper experiences. USDA and state partnerships are working on a modernization plan which includes a number of these practices.

Wrapping up her presentation, Ms. Wilson showed images of the new waiting rooms, areas and offices that were designed in partnership with the Children's Museum.

5. New Business – Action Items For Public Comment

A. Proposed revisions to Article VI: Houses and Community Environment

Otis Pitts, Deputy Director for the Bureau of Food, Housing and Public Policy and Tim Murphy, Program Manager for the Housing and Community Environment Program

presented proposed revisions to Article VI: Housing and Community Environment. They requested that the Board of Health send the proposed revisions to the public for comment.

Mr. Pitts explained that what these proposed revisions to Article VI were the first in 25 years. The proposed revisions are smart updates that lay a foundation for improving further housing standards in Allegheny County. While the Housing and Community Environment Program does not have an advisory committee, the program reached out to nearly two dozen organizations including municipal agencies, property owner, advocacy and legal aid organizations and others. The program believes that in addition to receiving good feedback from these organizations, they have primed the community to provide public comment. They plan to continue this engagement through this process.

Turning to the proposed revisions themselves, Mr. Pitts outlined the broad categories of change, which include administrative updates, modernizing requirements, improving readability, safety standard improvements, and clarifying tenant and landlord responsibilities. Mr. Murphy explained that included in the administrative updates are revisions to more than 20 definitions. The proposed revisions also clarify the categories of violations and when penalties are appropriate. Where appropriate, these proposed revisions also align with recent changes to Article III: Food Safety.

Mr. Murphy discussed modernizing requirements and explained that the goal here is to align this public health code with industry standards and international codes. The proposed revisions also help improve the readability of the regulation, making it possible for all residents to have a better understanding of the code. Greater readability should also lead to better compliance.

Mr. Murphy walked us through the improved safety standards. He also discussed roles and responsibilities for both tenants and landlords.

Mr. Pitts explained the proposed timeline. The goal is to launch the public comment period in May and leave the period open for 60 days. The program plans to bring the comment response document and the modified proposed revisions to the Board of Health in September. Ideally, the new regulations would be approved with the effective date of July 1, 2024.

The Board wanted to know how many housing units in Allegheny County in Allegheny County would be impacted by these proposed revisions. Mr. Murphy explain that while we have estimates, we do not have a precise number because the Housing and Community Environment Program does not issue permits for rental units. Some members were surprised to learn this.

The Board also wanted to know what type of community engagement the program performed Mr Pitts explained that we have a new program manager in Mr. Murphy, who is eager to do more community engagement. At this time, thought, the program has reached out to more than a dozen stakeholders regarding the proposed revisions to Article VI. The program engages various groups regarding the issue of lead. At the same time, its

inspectors reach out to families daily regarding testing. The program also engages the public in its vector control work, both related to mosquitos and ticks.

The Board wondered if radon was addressed as a housing safety unit and if it's in our code or being considered in the updates. Mr. Murphy explained that radon is not listed in Article VI or the proposed changes. As of right now there is no industry standards that radon is enforced. The state is doing education around it.

Mr. Youngblood asked for a motion.

Action: Dr. Burke moved to send the proposed revisions to the public for comment and Dr. Shapira seconded the motion. **The Board approved the motion approved unanimously.**

For Final Approval:

B. Environmental Health Fund Request for \$6,000 to support Plumbing Program digitalization of Plan Review process.

Kim Joyce, Deputy Director for the Bureau of Administration asked the Board to approve the Environmental Health Fund Request of \$6,000 to buy new equipment for the Plumbing Program to digitalize our plan review process. There were no questions.

Mr. Youngblood asked for a motion.

Action: Tony Ferraro moved to approve the request and Dr. Joylette Portlock seconded the motion. **The Board approved the motion passed unanimously.**

6. Public Comments on Non-Agenda Items

Ms. Joyce reported that there no written public comments on non-agenda items

Angelo Taranto spoke regarding Metalico.

Barbara Lee Pace spoke regarding communications.

Jay Ting Walker spoke regarding the Clean Air Fund.

7. Adjournment

Mr. Youngblood adjourned the meeting at approximately 2:05.