



City of Milwaukee

200 E. Wells Street
Milwaukee, Wisconsin
53202

Meeting Minutes

BOARD OF HEALTH

DR. WUJIE ZHANG, CHAIR

Tahira Malik, VICE-CHAIR

***Ruthie Burich-Weatherly, Caroline Gomez-Tom, Dr. Ian Martin,
Ericka Sinclair, Penelope Stewart, Ald. JoCasta Zamarripa
and Dr. Darlene Beck***

Wednesday, February 12, 2025

5:00 PM

Virtual

1. Call to Order

Chair Dr. Wujie Zhang called the meeting to order at 5:05 PM.

2. Roll Call

Present 8 - Zhang, Malik, Burich-Weatherly, Gomez-Tom, Sinclair, Martin, Stewart and Beck

Absent 1 - Zamarripa

3. Approval of Meeting Minutes from January 8, 2025

Board Member Caroline Gomez-Tom motioned to approve, Board Member Dr. Ian Martin seconded, and the motion passed with all in favor and none opposed.

4. Community Updates

There were no community updates.

5. Communication from Health Commissioner Totoraitis

Commissioner Totoraitis presented on respiratory season data (highlighting flu trends), federal updates (including effects of the uncertain federal grant situation, such as a pause on grant hiring at MHD and the resulting temporary restraining order halting the federal grant freeze), and the investigation of lead at Milwaukee Public Schools. On the latter subject, Commissioner Totoraitis shared the timeline for creating reports, that risk assessments for two more schools were upcoming, and that MHD was working with clinical partners to stand up mobile screenings for students of the impacted schools.

Board Member Ericka Sinclair asked about how information on the federal funding situation is being communicated to staff. Commissioner Totoraitis shared the process for evaluating information for credibility in order to share with staff.

Board Member Penelope Stewart asked about the timeline for frozen grant funds. Commissioner Totoraitis spoke to multiple possibilities, such as immediate grant recessions or end of fiscal year terminations.

Board Member Ericka Sinclair asked about impact to community partners for bridging services. Commissioner Totoraitis responded that more work with community partners is ideal but difficult when MHD is uncertain about its funding situation. With additional clarity about funding, either federally or from the levy, MHD can move forward with further community partnership.

Board Member Ruthie Burich-Weatherly asked about for a program and staff member level list of those at risk for federal funding loss. Commissioner Totoraitis said the list exists and it can be sent after the meeting. Commissioner Totoraitis shared that the Big Cities Health Coalition and NACCHO are preparing the media approach to sharing the impact of the potential funding loss.

Chair Dr. Wujie Zhang about risk level for lead program funding. Commissioner Totoraitis said it was not any more at risk than other MHD programs and that HUD funding would be much more difficult to cut given its complex nature.

Chair Dr. Wujie Zhang asked about the impact of the undecided Supreme Court case regarding preventive services (*Becerra v. Braidwood*). This will be a topic for future discussion when more information is available.

Board Member Penelope Stewart asked about MHD's proactive media strategy for the MPS situation. Commissioner Totoraitis answered that it's difficult given that MHD's role is to respond to lead poisoning cases, leaving MHD to react to situations. MHD does not investigate schools regularly, as it's not indicated under state statute that MHD has that authority. It is currently unknown who is responsible about communicating about the school buildings, possibly either DPI or DHS.

Board Member Ericka Sinclair asked about working with facilities like schools and daycares on what they should be doing to prevent lead poisoning; Commissioner Totoraitis pointed to the 2/5 letter to the school district that outlines interim controls that can be taken.

Board Member Ruthie Burich-Weatherly expressed her thanks for the MHD team for their work on the lead poisoning investigations. Commissioner Totoraitis said he had concerns about staff capacity as lead poisoning cases increase. Staff are working early morning and weekends to investigate schools when students are not present.

Board Member Caroline Gomez-Tom said she would like to see more future collaboration with MPS to avoid lead poisoning. Commissioner Totoraitis spoke to new connections, such as with the facilities teams, that could improve future collaboration. Commissioner Totoraitis said the realistic, ideal future would be lead-safe schools, as completely lead-free schools might be unrealistic.

Board Member Penelope Stewart said fundraising and donations could be a possible future funding source for MHD in the face of uncertain federal funding.

6. State Legislative Package Presentation

This item was held to the next meeting due to time constraints.

7. Branch Collaboration Updates

The tour of the MHD lab will be rescheduled due to the winter storm warning in effect today.

8. Future Agenda Items

- Maternal & Child Health MKE Elevate Presentation
- Public Health 3.0 Analysis Synopsis
- State Legislative Package

9. Adjournment

Board Member Caroline Gomez-Tom motioned to adjourn, Board Member Ericka Sinclair seconded the motion, and it passed with all in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 6:03pm.

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Communication relating to the documents submitted to the Board of Health for its meetings in 2025.