



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, March 5, 2025

5:00 PM

City Hall, 200 E Wells St, Rm 303

1. Call to Order

Chair Dr. Wujie Zhang called the meeting to order at 5:02 PM.

2. Roll Call

Present 7 - Zhang, Malik, Burich-Weatherly, Gomez-Tom, Martin, Stewart and Beck

Absent 1 - Zamarripa

Excused 1 - Sinclair

3. Approval of Minutes from February 12, 2025

Board Member Caroline Gomez-Tom motioned to approve, Vice Chair Tahira Malik seconded, and the motion passed with all in favor and none opposed.

4. Community Updates

Chair Dr. Wujie Zhang announced MHD's new Deputy Commissioner of PIE, Dominique Hyatt-Oates. No further updates were given at this time.

5. Communication from Health Commissioner Totoraitis

Commissioner Totoraitis provided information on department updates (such as the Public Health 3.0 report), MPS lead investigations, communicable disease, and federal updates.

(1) Public Health 3.0

Workforce Development Director Kirsten Lezama presented on the Public Health 3.0 planning process, including the “Navigating the Shift” recommendations report. This presentation included an introduction to Public Health 3.0 (including the history of the shift and benefits of Public Health 3.0), the methodology for the report, program data, discussion (of the overarching themes), limitations, recommendations, and next steps for MHD.

(2) MPS Lead Investigations

Commissioner Totoraitis presented on the current status of MPS lead investigations. Commissioner Totoraitis covered the phases of response and prioritization of additional schools. Regarding prioritization, Commissioner Totoraitis shared that within the MPS district, there are over 100 schools built before 1978 that are attended by more than 10,000 children under age and approximately 17,000 children with developmental needs. Commissioner Totoraitis said there will be a Friday (3/7) press conference with an upcoming announcement of testing clinic dates. Commissioner Totoraitis shared where to find further education and parent guidance. Commissioner Totoraitis said there was no new information at this time on the reopening of Trowbridge School. Commissioner Totoraitis said there may be an update during the upcoming Friday press conference.

Board Member Caroline Gomez-Tom asked about the messaging strategy to parents. Commissioner Totoraitis responded that it was a multifaceted approach. First, all information is available online on MPS’ and MHD’s linked websites. Regarding information concerning a school under investigation, MHD communicates to MPS so that MPS can message parents. The news media and social media are additional avenues for getting information out. Commissioner Totoraitis said one communication challenge has been the need to quickly act upon emerging information. Often, MHD has to respond to new reports urgently and are not able to hold parent forums in advance of school closures. Commissioner Totoraitis shared that MHD is working with federal partners to communicate occupational hazards to MPS staff who might be at risk of lead exposure. Commissioner Totoraitis referenced the MHD website, which has a hotline and feedback form where people can ask questions and get follow-up.

Board Member Caroline Gomez-Tom asked about testing recommendations for parents of children that attend schools not currently under investigation. Commissioner Totoraitis said it was recommended that parents consider testing for any child that goes to a pre-1978 school, especially children with developmental needs and children under the age of 6. Based on the results of MHD’s first testing clinic for the students in schools currently under investigation, MHD will plan additional testing clinics. MHD is also working with the CDC to set up a larger set of screenings. For adult MPS staff, Commissioner Totoraitis recommended they work with their healthcare provider to get testing.

Caroline Gomez-Tom suggested more lead poisoning testing events open to the public in the future. Commissioner Totoraitis said the fact that lead poisoning screenings had gone down since the pandemic drove MHD to begin working with the Milwaukee Healthcare Partnership to assess the success of providers in promoting screening. Commissioners Totoraitis also emphasized MHD's updated childhood lead poisoning screening guidance established last year. Board Member Caroline Gomez-Tom mentioned that it might also be a good opportunity to get children connected to a primary care provider if they do not already have one.

Board Member Ruthie Burich-Weatherly asked for an update on DPI's responsibility and guidance related to lead-related maintenance. Commissioner Totoraitis said DPI requires a long-range Facilities Plan, and the plan has sections that cover lead-related maintenance. The school district also has a maintenance plan separate from the long-range Facilities Plan required by DPI. MHD provider feedback on the plan, and overall found the issue was not the content of the plan, but the lack of implementation of it. Commissioner Totoraitis clarified that MHD does not have the authority to ensure that preventive maintenance is completed, although MHD is discussing this with the Mayor's Office to investigate policy changes that could prevent this kind of situation in the future.

Board Member Penelope Stewart asked about if MHD was involved in providing cleaning related guidance to teachers and maintenance staff. Commissioner Totoraitis responded that MHD's technical assistance in this area has been hands-on, and DHS also works in this area to provide advice. Commissioner Totoraitis said that on March 21 the district will be providing MHD with a plan on how to make the school safe (in addition to the existing facilities maintenance plan).

Board Member Penelope Stewart asked about if parent communication was only online. Commissioner Totoraitis said MPS has been using robocalls and texts to provide the information. MHD has been providing flyers and literature in both English and Spanish to the district.

(3) Communicable Disease

Commissioner Totoraitis provided the latest data for respiratory season, including the apparent peak and subsequent decline in flu (coverage for the flu vaccine this year was relatively low) and COVID trends that indicate people likely had immunity from over the summer. Commissioner Totoraitis expressed concern over the federal pullback on vaccine planning for next year and the way that action could negatively impact future flu rates. Commissioner Totoraitis shared that MHD is actively doing wastewater monitoring for H5N1.

Board Member Dr. Ian Martin asked if there had been reports of measles in Milwaukee recently. Commissioner Totoraitis said there had not been any reports of measles; however, there has been concerning low uptake of the MMR vaccine statewide; the immunization team at MHD has been working to get people caught up on the MMR vaccine.

6. Presentation on the MKE Elevate (CHIP) Maternal and Child Health Action Team

Melissa Seidl, Public Health Strategist, presented on the work of the Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Action Team of MKE Elevate. The presentation included background on the Community Health Improvement Plan, the MCH priority areas, relevant data including disparities, media coverage of the issues, the multilevel strategies in the MCH space, the work the MCH Action Team and Work Groups are doing, and ways for the Board to get involved (including attending events, providing referrals to prenatal healthcare providers, reviewing the maternal behavioral health survey language, and providing input on outreach strategies).

Board Member Caroline Gomez-Tom asked about if the maternal mortality data gave secondary indicators for cause of death. Health Strategist Melissa Seidl responded that the data was from the 2020 MMRT Recommendations, and that she believed the cardiovascular causes of death were broken down into further detail. She did not believe the mental health causes of death were broken down in any more detail.

Regarding working with prenatal care providers on syphilis, Board Member Caroline Gomez-Tom suggested that a way to reach independent providers may be to go through the healthcare providers and managed care organizations in Medicaid for reaching providers not in the major health systems. Board Member Caroline Gomez-Tom said DHS might be able to support gathering this information.

Board Member Caroline Gomez-Tom asked about waiting periods and expediting access to mental healthcare for pregnant women. Commissioner Totoraitis said the new Epic OCHIN system will help make these referrals better for care coordination. Health Strategist Melissa Seidl said that care coordination, referrals, and warm handoffs have been noted as a theme and a need in the MCH work; she said was interested in investigating if this was a theme in the upcoming survey of people with lived experience of pregnancy with substance use disorder.

Board Member Caroline Gomez-Tom volunteered to assist in a language/sensitive review of the Maternal Behavioral Health survey.

Board Member Penelope Stewart asked for a link to the news article about debunked stereotypes regarding black maternal health. Health Strategist Melissa Seidl will provide the references in the slides.

Board Member Penelope Stewart recommended Ascension WI's Blanket of Love program as a possible resource or partner in infant mortality work.

Board Member Penelope Stewart highlighted an upcoming symposium in April on infant mortality.

Board Member Penelope Stewart said there was an opportunity to utilize the lists that HMOs generate of women who lack a primary care provider or are missing appointments.

7. Branch Collaboration Updates

This item was tabled due to time constraints.

8. Future Agenda Items

- Introduction of Dominique Hyatt-Oates, new Deputy Commissioner of PIE
- State Legislative Package

9. Adjournment

Board Member Penelope Stewart encouraged reconsideration of the length of the Board of Health meetings given the extent of work being covered in a meeting.

Chair Dr. Wujie Zhang motioned to adjourn, Vice Chair Tahira Malik seconded the motion, and it passed with all in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 6:14 pm.

[241393](#)

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