



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, May 7, 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 5:01 pm.

2. Roll Call

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

Excused 2 - Malik and Zamarripa

3. Approval of Meeting Minutes from April 2, 2025

Board Member Dr. Ian Martin motioned to approved, Board Member Ruthie Burich-Weatherly seconded, and the motion passed with all in favor and none opposed.

4. Community Updates

No updates at this time.

5. Communication from Health Commissioner Dr. Mike Totoraitis

MPS

Commissioner Totoraitis informed the Board of school closures: one school (Brown) closed in late April and another is slated to be closed on 5/12. Sometimes individual rooms have been closed within schools as an alternative to full school closure. Commissioner Totoraitis also reported that the MPS Lead Action Plan has been released publicly, with a focus on lead stabilization for paint hazards and lead dust control. MHD has lent Michael Mannan, Director of MHD's Home Environmental Health, to MPS to support these efforts.

Regarding screenings, Commissioner Totoraitis said there was a clinic going on today (5/7) at North Division with plans for two more large clinics in the works. Around 400 children have been screened; 4 cases are associated with the schools, and MHD is investigating 3 complaints lodged by parents. This work is in addition to the ~1200 regular referrals that MHD investigates ever year.

Commissioner Totoraitis stated that third party inspection of the schools has begun. MHD has advised the new contractor. MHD has been utilizing national media coverage to inform the post-Flint lead narrative, communicating that the primary source of child lead poisoning in Milwaukee (and many other places) is lead paint.

Board Member Ruthie Burich-Weatherly asked if the recent media stories contained any new information. Commissioner Totoraitis said generally no. Commissioner Totoraitis noted there is an intergovernmental agreement between MHD and MPS in progress for data sharing; this is currently in legal review at MPS. MHD is encouraging MPS to work with a third party on screenings to ensure the screenings could happen at school with a waiver.

Chair Dr. Zhang asked about CDC support. Commissioner Totoraitis said there has not been any communication since April 3 when MHD's request for support was denied. MHD is interested in bringing some of those former CDC staff members on as temporary staff for their expertise.

Chair Dr. Zhang asked if other lead programming has been impacted by the MPS situation. Commissioner Totoraitis stated that as of right now, MHD's system is managing the additional work. The state does not have enough spare capacity to lend to MHD. Commissioner Totoraitis said MHD is asking for funding in the next city budget for new Lead Program staff and the start of a complaint-based program.

Chair Dr. Zhang said that the MPS situation is not unique nationally, but has been discovered because Milwaukee is more proactive. He would like to see this idea reflected in public communication. Chair Dr. Zhang also suggested emphasizing the bigger picture in the lead crisis, which is that public infrastructure is failing broadly. Commissioner Totoraitis responded that this is a long-term investment in infrastructure because even remediated schools need regular maintenance to stay lead-safe.

Board Member Dr. Darlene Beck asked about school closures and if they will be reopened. Commissioner Totoraitis said the plan was for all schools to be eventually reopened and that the

school prioritization list contains an order for remediation urgency.

Board Member Dr. Beck asked if the DPI school superintendent was involved. Commissioner Totoraitis outlined the sections of DPI administrative code that contain the school board's responsibility for maintaining healthy schools. However, while DPI has a role in ensuring the district has a plan, Commissioner Totoraitis does not believe DPI has an enforcement mechanism.

Board Member Penelope Stewart asked about the location of pop-up clinics. Commissioner Totoraitis said MHD had put a call out to all the FQHCs and health systems in the city. 16th Street and Children's WI hosted additional screenings. MHD has 5-6 staff members with the skills to conduct screenings and is investigating how to meet people where they are using that small team.

Board Member Caroline Gomez-Tom asked if there had been an increase in testing given that lead screening rates went down during the pandemic. Commissioner Totoraitis confirmed there had been an increase. Board Member Gomez-Tom asked if the Board could see data on where testing rates are low and if the Board could help with outreach. Commissioner Totoraitis will check how granular the data is to see if it's appropriate to share and will follow up on activating the Board for outreach.

Board Member Burich-Weatherly asked if the testing rates for closed schools were close to 110%. Commissioner Totoraitis said the testing rates were insufficient for children who attended the closed schools. MHD is considering offering additional clinical guidance for children over the age of 6.

Board Member Gomez-Tom asked for the ages of the cases. Commissioner Totoraitis said the cases have been over the age of 6. Board Member Gomez-Tom asked if testing over the age of 6 was standard elsewhere. Commissioner Totoraitis said it was common for kids with comorbidities to be tested over age 6. Commissioner Totoraitis pointed out that since lead poisoning can manifest differently in kids over time, it is very important to maintain routine testing.

Board Member Burich-Weatherly asked if any parents have refused testing. Commissioner Totoraitis said there has been no evidence of parents rejecting screening and that the issue is related to access.

Board Member Ericka Sinclair asked about testing for adults. Commissioner Totoraitis said MHD's lead mandate only includes children (up to age 17). MHD flagged this issue with the CDC, and the CDC notified an occupational safety team for support since this issue would fall under OSHA. MHD does not have medical orders to screen adults, nor does MHD have expertise in adult lead poisoning.

Board Member Gomez-Tom asked about testing for custodial workers. Commissioner Totoraitis said MHD strongly recommended testing of custodial workers to MPS given the increased exposure. Best practice for custodial staff would be a venous draw due to skin contamination. Commissioner Totoraitis has not received an update from MPS on testing of staff.

Contact Information

Commissioner Totoraitis told the Board to be on the lookout for an email updating preferred contact information.

Meeting Recordings

Meeting recordings are not required. The official record of the meeting is the minutes. The Board agreed to stop recording the meetings regularly and to record on a case by case basis if a future meeting was particularly important.

6. Finalizing the Board's Community Letter

Chair Dr. Zhang handed the floor over to Board Member Burich-Weatherly. Board Member Burich-Weatherly provided the context that Board letters must be discussed in open forum before they can be published. Board Member Penelope Stewart provided clarity and technical corrections.

Board Member Gomez-Tom moved to accept changes, Board Member Stewart seconded, and the motion passed with all in favor and none opposed.

The Board thanked Board Member Burich-Weatherly for her leadership on the letter's development.

7. Branch Collaboration Updates

The lab tour will be rescheduled for late June.

Board Member Dr. Beck was informed that Director of the Sexual Reproductive Health program (Clinical Services) has resigned. Dr. Beck is planning a tour of the Keenan Health Center.

8. Future Agenda Items & Summer Meeting Dates

- Improving Branch Collaborations

Commissioner Totoraitis will send out a poll to determine summer meeting dates. Chair Dr. Zhang encouraged board members to begin thinking about candidates for chair and co-chair.

Board Member Burich-Weatherly will be leaving the Board in August. There will be an upcoming mayoral proclamation recognizing her service.

Board Members requested staff schedule clinic tours.

9. Adjournment

Board Member Dr. Martin motioned to adjourn, Board Member Burich-Weatherly seconded the motion, and it passed with all in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 6:12 pm.

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