



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,
Erica Sinclair, Penelope Stewart, Ald. JoCasta Zamarripa
and Dr. Darlene Beck***

Wednesday, April 2, 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, Sinclair, Martin and Zamarripa

Excused 2 - Stewart and Beck

3. Approval of Meeting Minutes from March 5, 2025

Vice Chair Tahira Malik motioned to approve, Board Member Alder JoCasta Zamarripa 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 Totoraitis

Communicable Disease

Commissioner Totoraitis shared that it is now the tail end of respiratory season; MHD is continuing to monitor the situation as it is typical to see an increase in Influenza B this time of year. At this time, respiratory illness is still tracked via wastewater surveillance (although this may be impacted by federal funding cuts moving forward).

Board Member Ericka Sinclair asked about the status of measles in Milwaukee at this time and activities to prepare for and prevent measles. Commissioner Totoraitis reported that suspect cases have been reported to the department but none were confirmed. Commissioner Totoraitis said this was not worrying because providers tend to overreport possible measles cases out of an abundance of caution when they're aware of measles cases elsewhere. MHD's team then tracks the case. In the event of confirmed measles cases locally, MHD would reuse its response plan from 2 years ago since it functioned well. MHD has recently conducted data analysis to inform future MMR vaccination campaigns.

Federal Updates

Commissioner Totoraitis shared that the 3/26 funding cuts from HHS (related to COVID long term recovery and infrastructure capacity) would result in a ~\$5 million funding loss for MHD. The cuts will lead to disruption or termination of the following initiatives: improving indoor air quality in congregate care centers such as nursing homes and homeless shelters, training cohorts of community health workers at AHEC, and the pilot of Neighborhood Nursing Program (which will still hire roughly 1/3 of the planned staff, funded by opioid settlement dollars). MHD will need to find new funding streams for program continuation. MHD has just 30 days to close out the awards, and MHD has formed a Strategic Health Action Response team to do so.

Board Member Alder JoCasta Zamarripa asked about how the federal cuts will impact staffing levels. Commissioner Totoraitis said for this particular federal funding cut, most of the funding was not allocated to staffing and usually only paid for a fraction of a staff member's time. However, additional CDC funding may result in layoffs.

Commissioner Totoraitis said the CDC National Center for Environmental Health was partnering with MHD on lead response prior to the funding cuts. As a result of the cut, the whole CDC NCEH team was laid off, so MHD is being transitioned to a new support team, albeit with potential deficiencies in the resulting technical support.

Board Member Ericka Sinclair asked about MHD's Strategic Health Action Response team. Commissioner Totoraitis explained it was an internal MHD team that focused on federal awards, which comprise roughly 55% of MHD's non-levy funding. Board Member Ericka Sinclair further asked about how MHD is messaging these changes to the community. Commissioner Totoraitis explained funding cuts had yet to impact direct service and that MHD's Public Information Officer would be activated in the future when any such changes occur; MHD would also utilize the Board of

Health to communicate to the community.

Board Member Ruthie Burich-Weatherly asked for the breakdown of the specific federal awards terminated so that the Board can begin writing letters for the community to explain how the funding cuts impact community health. Commissioner Totoraitis will share the materials. Board Member Ruthie Burich-Weatherly asked for the Board to get together in the next week to write a letter for the community. Board Member Ericka Sinclair requested the Board formulate a communications plan at that time.

MPS

Commissioner Totoraitis shared that the new MPS superintendent, Dr. Brenda Cassellius, has started in her new role and attended the last lead screening clinic. 249 students and siblings were served at the Bradley Tech screening clinic. The MHD team is conducting investigations in response to the clinic's results. Planning is underway for additional screening clinics on Milwaukee's North Side. MHD is recommending MPS message the importance of testing more before school ends for the year.

MHD has reviewed and provided feedback on MPS' Lead Action Plan draft and held a working meeting on it today (4/2).

Regarding intergovernmental cooperation: The State has also issuing orders for hazards, and MHD remains the lead entity on the investigations. MHD has local authority as well as state authority when operating as an agent of the state. The EPA has been partnering with MHD to enforce asbestos and lead regulations and has also been involved in site investigations.

MHD is following up on parent complaints about conditions at their children's schools. There will be a virtual town hall next week for parents of the schools already investigated; further town halls are in planning. MHD's website continues to be updated to serve as an up to date information source.

Board Member Caroline Gomez-Tom asked about the communication relationship with the school board. Commissioner Totoraitis explained it was similar to how the board works here at the city; the school board is providing additional oversight and examination during the process. School Board Members have been able to join meetings to stay up to date on information and assist in public communication on matters. MHD's guidance to the District also cc's/includes Dr. Tina Owen-Moore, the Board's Director/Board Clerk.

Board Member Ruthie Burich-Weatherly asked about recent efforts at the state to lower the threshold for lead poisoning. Commissioner Totoraitis said this was good news and that MHD looks forward to seeing what funding is allocated during the budget process. MHD spends most of its funding for lead on lead abatement.

Board Member Dr. Ian Martin asked about collaboration with health systems for screening and

treatment. Commissioner Totoraitis responded that the framework for collaboration was the Milwaukee Healthcare Partnership. There has been interest in assembling a work group as well.

Board Member Alder JoCasta Zamarripa asked, based on community perspective, about accountability and the resignation of the MPS Facilities Manager. Commissioner Totoraitis said collaboration with MPS has seen progress and improvement over time. Commissioner Totoraitis said that MHD, in response to community feedback, has been focused on getting information to parents before it gets to the news. Commissioner Totoraitis said the decision to do anything with the Facilities Manager role is in the jurisdiction of the district and new Director Dr. Cassellius.

Commissioner Totoraitis shared a follow up from last meeting about policy changes. Commissioner Totoraitis had previously said that MHD's work is primarily reactive to elevated blood lead level tests, and so he clarified that that no policy change is currently needed for MHD to continue its current work investigating schools and supporting MPS' planning. MHD has authority to do this work without having to wait for lead poisoning results because of a provision in Chapter 66 of the City Charter related to the existence of lead nuisances.

6. Introduction of Dominique Hyatt-Oates, new Deputy Commissioner of PIE

Chair Dr. Wujie Zhang welcomed Deputy Commissioner Dominique Hyatt-Oates. Deputy Commissioner Hyatt-Oates introduced herself, including her background and history at MHD.

Board Member Ericka Sinclair asked for a brief introduction to the Deputy Commissioner of PIE's role. Deputy Commissioner Hyatt-Oates spoke to the Health Strategy, Data & Evaluation, and Marketing/Communication teams and their work.

Board Member Caroline Gomez-Tom asked for time on Deputy Commissioner's calendar as part of her branch assignment.

7. Presentation of the State Legislative Package

Research & Policy Coordinator Bethany Kasprzyk presented MHD's section of the 25-26 State Legislative Package, including background on the city's lobbying situation, the timeline for development of the legislative package, and MHD's current policy priorities.

Board Member Caroline Gomez-Tom asked about how the legislative package is used and about collaboration on advocacy between cities and other entities. Bethany said that MHD responds to legislative review requests from the city's Intergovernmental Relations Department, which then go to Common Council; once approved, these reviews are used to inform the city's official registered opinion on a bill. Commissioner Totoraitis shared that WPHA and WALHDAB coordinate efforts between cities to respond to bills of interest.

Board Member Ruthie Burich-Weatherly asked about how MHD reports this legislative work back to the community. Bethany responded that MHD shares legislative progress information with the community through MKE Elevate.

Board Member Ericka Sinclair thanked staff for the presentation and spoke to the importance of policy communications during this time.

8. Branch Collaboration Updates

Board Member Caroline Gomez-Tom will be setting up future meetings to stay informed on PIE operations with Deputy Commissioner Hyatt-Oates.

Staff will reshare branch collaboration assignments to the Board.

Board Members should reach out to Shadonna Vickers about rescheduling the lab tour.

Board Member Ruthie Burich-Weatherly highlighted that next week (starting April 7) is National Public Health Week.

9. Future Agenda Items

- Continued MPS updates

10. Adjournment

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 6:09 pm.

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

