



City of Milwaukee

200 E. Wells Street
Milwaukee, Wisconsin
53202

Meeting Minutes

BOARD OF HEALTH

DR. WUJIE ZHANG, CHAIR

Tahira Malik, VICE-CHAIR

*Caroline Gomez-Tom, Dr. Ian Martin, Ericka Sinclair, Penelope
Stewart, and Dr. Darlene Beck*

Wednesday, September 3, 2025

5:00 PM

City Hall, 200 E Wells St, Rm 301A

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

Excused 1 - Sinclair

3. Approval of Meeting Minutes from August 6, 2025

Vice Chair Tahira Malik motioned to approve, Board Member Dr. Ian Martin seconded, and the motion passed with all in favor and none opposed.

4. Election of Board Officers

Chair: Board Member Dr. Wujie Zhang self-nominated for Chair and Board Member Dr. Ian Martin seconded the motion. The vote passed with all in favor and none opposed.

Vice Chair: Chair Dr. Wujie Zhang nominated Board Member Tahira Malik for Vice Chair. Board Member Ruthie Burich-Weatherly seconded the motion. Board Member Tahira Malik accepted the nomination, and the vote passed with all in favor and none opposed.

5. Community Updates

a. Recognition of Ruthie Burich-Weatherly for her service on the Board

Commissioner Totoraitis presented a proclamation from Mayor Johnson's Office to Board Member Ruthie Burich-Weatherly. Commissioner Totoraitis thanked Ruthie for her dedication to civic service as well as her mentorship to the board and MHD over the years.

Board Member Ruthie Burich-Weatherly thanked her fellow board members for their shared service and affirmed the incredible value of the Board to the health department and community.

b. Recognition of Alder Zamarripa

Chair Dr. Wujie Zhang recognized and thanked Board Member Alder JoCasta Zamarripa upon her exit from the Board of Health.

c. Future Board Letters

Commissioner Totoraitis followed up with the Board on the publication of their community letter. Commissioner Totoraitis notified the Board that the City has since joined an additional lawsuit. Commissioner Totoraitis welcomes additional letters from the Board as they see fit.

Board Member Ruthie Burich-Weatherly noted that the Board serves as a connection between the community and the health department and encouraged letters and outreach to serve that function.

Board Member Caroline Gomez-Tom noted the importance of lifting up science for the community and encouraged the Board to consider how to help with this education. Board Member Caroline Gomez-Tom asked if there were opportunities to work with the state and other LHDs. In response, Commissioner Totoraitis reported back on recent conversations with the state to provide vaccines no longer recommended by ACIP.

6. Communication from Health Commissioner Dr. Mike Totoraitis

a. Flood Response

Commissioner Totoraitis reported on flood response updates, including: (1) the role of public health in response and recovery, such as education, investigating related health hazards, coordinating resource distribution, and cleaning data from the response portal; (2) assisting in damage assessments; (3) the City is awaiting a presidential disaster declaration; (4) and remaining unmet need for basement cleanup.

Board Member Caroline Gomez-Tom asked about the response timeline for federal disaster declarations. Commissioner Totoraitis responded that it varies.

Board Member Dr. Ian Martin asked if those who had already invested in repairs might be reimbursed in the event of a federal disaster declaration. Commissioner Totoraitis confirmed.

b. Process for Releasing Board Communications

Commissioner Totoraitis said the Board's letters will be sent to the Mayor's Office; clarification of this process will allow for future communications to be published faster.

Board Member Ruthie Burich-Weatherly said it was important for the Board to clarify who they wanted their audience to be and how letters would be distributed.

Publication options include media op-eds, the MHD blog, and e-Notify.

c. Measles planning and preparedness

Commissioner Totoraitis presented that:

(i) MHD has been focusing on schools that don't have herd immunity for MMR. MHD strongly advises parents to follow the vaccine schedule for children's health. Children will be kept home for 21 days after exposure if unvaccinated. MHD has been working on letting the community know the vaccine is safe and very effective.

(ii) MHD will be hosting clinics out of various schools to get students up to date. MHD has purchased MMR in advance of these events to offer the vaccines free of charge.

Board Member Caroline Gomez-Tom asked about the vaccination rate of Milwaukee compared to the state or nation. Commissioner Totoraitis responded some schools are under 60% vaccinated, whereas herd immunity is around 95%. The statewide rate is around 84% vaccinated for MMR. There are some issues with records/data error as well for people who have moved across states.

Board Member Caroline Gomez-Tom asked if there was data on why people aren't vaccinated. Commissioner said it was possible to see if exemptions are on file.

Board Member Dr. Ian Martin asked what constituted a personal exemption. Commissioner Totoraitis said it's very loosely defined and that use of the personal exemption waivers has increased tremendously.

Board Member Caroline Gomez-Tom asked about the timeline for replacement members of the Board. Commissioner Totoraitis said the Mayor's Office is communicating with the recommendation for Ruthie's vacancy. The Mayor's Office is also working with alders to get Alder Zamarripa's vacancy filled.

7. Overview of Opioid Settlement Fund Framework with Senior Health Strategist Anna Narvey

Senior Health Strategist Anna Narvey introduced the City's strategy for investing Opioid Settlement Funds (OSF). Anna presented on (1) the background of OSF, (2) vision for OSF use, (3) the Continuum of Care framework (including its categories of promotion, prevention, treatment, and maintenance with examples of activities), (4) survivorship as a promising area for focusing upcoming efforts, and (5) an update on the creation of a collaborative, cross-departmental working group. Next steps include convening the action team, applying the continuum of care to a five -year Strategic Plan, and implementation of activities.

Board Member Caroline Gomez-Tom asked about collaboration between Milwaukee County and the City. Anna responded that the City and County share membership in a lot of community strategic groups that allow the two entities to stay up to date on efforts. Anna mentioned that there is also some division between the city's and county's scope of work that helps to prevent duplication.

Commissioner Totoraitis also said Anna had been a key part of the Public Health Collaborative, which has served as a forum for discussing settlement funds across the region. MHD, after public input, is looking into ways to award funding to the community. Also, MHD has served on the County's advisory board for deciding funding allocation in the past, too. Board Member Caroline Gomez-Tom recommended intentional collaboration with the County, such as one on ones, to really take advantage of this opportunity. Commissioner Totoraitis meets with DHHS Director Shakita LaGrant-McClain quarterly.

Board Member Tahira Malik said Milwaukee County and City of Milwaukee have worked very cohesively in this space, leading to a decrease in fatal drug overdose deaths.

Board Member Ruthie Burich-Weatherly asked for an estimate of how much funding will go to city-led initiatives vs community-led programs. Commissioner Totoraitis said it's undetermined at this point. MHD is investigating grantmaking from a dedicated community fund. Commissioner Totoraitis is interested in bringing this item before the Board in the future to continue getting their input as community representatives

8. Branch Collaboration Updates

Tabled due to time.

9. Future Agenda Items

- (a) Clinical Branch Presentation in October
- (b) Improving Branch Collaborations
- (c) Built Environment MKE Elevate

10. Adjournment

Chair Dr. Wujie Zhang motioned to adjourn, Board Member Ruthie Burich-Weatherly seconded the motion, and it passed with all in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 6:02 pm.

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