

EAST ORANGE BOARD OF HEALTH
REGULAR MEETING
East Orange Department of Health & Human Services
143 New Street East Orange, New Jersey 07017
February 15, 2022

City of East Orange

NEW JERSEY



MEETING MINUTES

Meeting Call to Order – 5:35 pm

Board President Christine Harris read the following **Sunshine Law**: This meeting, which conforms to the provisions of the Open Public Meeting Act, Chapter **231**, and Public Law of **1975** is a regular meeting of the City of East Orange Board of Health. Notices have been filed with our official newspaper, with the City Clerk, and posted on regular bulletin boards. The public is permitted to participate at this meeting.

Zoom Communication ID: 988 9958 5888

Meeting Link: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/98899585888?pwd=SkZvUHVtT0djQ1czS1BJS0dWUjZdz09>

After the roll call, it was determined there was a quorum to convene the meeting.

Board Members Present:

Christine Harris, President
Horace H. Henry, Vice President
Tobbia M. Corbitt
Deanna Phillips
Angela Jones-Williams
Dr. Tonya X. Cook

Council Liaison:

Tameika Garrett-Ward - absent

Board of Health Counsel:

Attorney Farah Abuobead

Health Department Staff:

Dr. Griffith, HHS Director
Victor Kuteyi, Health Officer

Mayoral Staff:

None

Public in attendance:

None

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Approval of January 18, 2021, Meeting Minutes:

Approved Unanimously

Announcements President Harris:

Announcements:

1. President Harris congratulated Secretary Joann Mills for her new role as the Exec. Assist. in the Office of Policy, Planning and Development.

HO Kuteyi Updates:

Hotdog Truck Ordinance

President Harris asked: what resulted in our (BOH) being requested to review the ordinance for the hot dog truck? HO Kuteyi shared that the main crux is that the ordinance is written so broadly that food carts could be defined under the same ordinance, which created a loose definition for a food truck and its regulations. President Harris asked if we could modify the existing ordinance to narrow the definition and reflect specific rules regarding how they are regulated. HO Kuteyi shared that we must continue to regulate the food trucks as stipulated in the ordinance per the conversation with legal.

After an inspection, we made various recommendations to protect the food from dust; the handwashing sink was too close to the line food prep area, cross-contamination, etc. The food truck owner was advised that we are ready to collaborate with him, and if he has any concerns, he can reach out to us. President Harris asked if he had made any of the recommended changes. HO Kuteyi stated he has not returned since the inspection on February 2, but we are hopeful that he should be good to go once he is compliant with what we were asking him to do. President Harris asked if he was operating the food truck. HO Kuteyi stated he is not currently in operation.

Trustee Corbitt expressed frustration with being presented with another item that the BOH was not privy to before its inception yet is being asked to share their input on managing it. BOH members concurred with these sentiments and asked for clarity regarding input on items they have not had any involvement with and where the responsibility lies for the legislation.

HO Kuteyi thanked the Board for bringing up this issue. HO Kuteyi shared he only realized the ordinance had been changed a few years ago when an individual from Planning said he wanted to register a food truck. In his request, he wanted a food truck to be located at a particular location on Central Avenue for the entire day. In response, HO Kuteyi advised the

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The ordinance does not support a food truck remaining in the exact location all day. HO Kuteyi was advised the Planning Department had changed the ordinance to support their initiatives. After that conversation, the Health Department became inundated with requests for food truck inspections. President Harris asked if the first ordinance was drafted by Planning or the Health Department. HO Kuteyi stated the original ordinance came from the Health Department but was replaced by the ordinance drafted by the Planning Department as a part of their initiative to attract businesses.

Trustee Corbitt suggested clarifying who is responsible for creating these ordinances that cross over into other areas of responsibility for enforcement. President Harris stated the problem is that there has been only intermittent inter-departmental cooperation with the health department, and it is the inconsistency that causes problems.

President Harris remarked that the ordinance should be revisited, with recommended food handling, safety, and sanitation specifications. It does not make sense that we are inspecting the food trucks and enforcing regulatory issues but are being excluded from creating the ordinance. During the discussion of food trucks interfering with the same structured businesses, VP Henry asked what role zoning plays. HO Kuteyi responded that zoning is under the Department of Planning.

Vaccination Efforts

HO Kuteyi reported a need to remain on course for the vaccination efforts. We have enough supply to last us approximately six-nine months, so we are looking to ensure that everyone eligible to be vaccinated is vaccinated. We are also partnering with multiple agencies to ensure that children are vaccinated. We have also discussed providing incentives to achieve vaccinations amongst our youth and adults. These efforts will continue regardless of whether a mask mandate is in place. HO Kuteyi shared his belief that the city still has leverage in extending the mask mandate for residents. President Harris remarked that we should also emphasize educational efforts and other safety aspects, short of wearing masks.

Local Vaccination Numbers

Residents in: zip code 07018, age group 50 to 64, fully vaccinated 4,182, about 82%; zip code 07017, 80+years, approximately 1,000 fully vaccinated, about 84%; zip code, 07017, age group 12 to 15, 40% fully vaccinated; zip code 07018, age group 12 to 15, 45% fully vaccinated. As time progresses, we should see the number of fully vaccinated children increase.

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President Harris asked about FEMA efforts, and HO Kuteyi stated the FEMA testing stopped around January 24th; however, they are using their resources to inform the community. They are helping us, going from store to store, giving our flyers, educating people, and directing them to our vaccination site at 90 Halsted Street. FEMA is doing an excellent job for us.

Barbershop, Nail Salon, & E-Cig Ordinances

President Harris asked if any revisions were made to the barbershops, nail salons, and E-cig ordinances. HO Kuteyi shared that he has begun to focus more on the sanitation aspects of the barbershop, hairdressing, cosmetology, nail salon ordinance, licensing sanitation, and inspection. They looked at every sanitation stage regarding single-use equipment, plumbing, towel/cleaning cloth usage, sufficient numbers, water supply, hot water, discouraging multiuse cosmetics, and encouraging more minor cosmetics that people can use and throw away. President Harris remarked that some inroads were made regarding these ordinances and asked if they would be completed soon.

HO Kuteyi announced they should be completed very soon. HO Kuteyi shared the operators will be addressed in the ordinances to ensure they are keeping sanitary practices such as hand washing, using aprons, keeping them clean, the general environment of the place, no rodents, proper extermination records, etc. Once the ordinance is ready, he will disseminate it accordingly.

Hookah Parlors

President Harris asked for an update regarding hookah parlors and how existing bars share spaces with this kind of apparatus for smoking. HO Kuteyi identified three well-defined and identified smoking stores in East Orange that sell various items, including food and drinks. Unfortunately, we were not part of their licensing or regulation as we do not have a direct ordinance for these establishments. These entities obtain their city licensing as general rather than health-related businesses. We are looking to change this and redirect their licensing as health-related so that we can inspect and cite them. Having looked at the E-cig ordinance, we may be able to modify a few things. Hopefully, with those amendments, legal may agree to reduce the licensing fees from \$750 to \$500 or \$450 and reduce the fines from \$1200 for the initial fine to a lower figure. The maximum fine is \$2,500.

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HO Kuteyi shared he is also reviewing things relating to locations and ensuring that even if e-cigarette retailers want to visit fairs, they do not come with the cigarettes or their paraphernalia. They can come with handouts, business cards, etc., but not to market. Trustee Corbitt asked if there is a similar measure with hookah parlors regarding distance from schools. HO Kuteyi shared there are no measures regarding hookah parlors and schools but hopes this legislation will provide that. HO Kuteyi shared that a store in Central and South Arlington was shut down due to selling cigarettes to minors.

President Harris asked if the Open-Air Act applies to hookah parlors and smoking parlors. HO Kuteyi indicated that a review of the existing mortar from 2016 indicates that smoking is prohibited within a 50-foot radius of schools. There may be information in the document that would provide standards for hookah parlors.

Retail Inspections

HO Kuteyi shared that the inspections are going well, but we have very few retail food inspections in February. So, we have focused a lot of our efforts on complaints and collaborating with the school district in different areas, especially regarding flu vaccines, to ensure that they are all compliant with the state regulations. The State has given the school district a timeline for compliance, and after that period, the kids would not be allowed in school. We are also providing flu vaccines as needed.

CareWell Health

President Harris asked about our connection with CareWell Health. HO Kuteyi shared we have a good rapport with them. Mayor Green recently invited the medical director to the town hall meeting. HO Kuteyi shared that the CEO and medical director remain along with other staff with which we are familiar. President Harris expressed hope that we develop a closer working relationship with them, and it will be interesting to see what other services they are going to provide.

President Harris asked if there are initiatives in addition to the expansion plans for mental health and detox services. Health Officer Kuteyi noted we have also been focusing on expanding our HIV and STD services. We are also working towards obtaining a grant designed to merge the HIV and STD divisions. Dr. Hoskins is in charge of our STD services, Ms. Lucas for HIV services, and Ms. LaRussa for health education.

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Open Discussion:

Trustee Corbitt stated her belief that the Governor may lift the mask mandate and asked how that would relate to us on a municipal level. HO Kuteyi believes if the mandate is an executive order, it might be difficult for us to wiggle through that. But if it is coming through as regular legislation, we might be able to pass stricter legislation locally, allowing us to extend our mask mandate.

President Harris shared a conversation between herself and Dr. Griffith where the possibility of having a meeting between teachers, students, and parents would occur. The meeting would gauge their thoughts on focusing on safety measures once the mandate has been lifted. President Harris expressed the need for solutions post-COVID, as the virus is now endemic to our environment and will reoccur in some form the same as other viruses. Dr. Cook concurred with HO Kuteyi stating that if the mask mandate is an executive order, there is not much we can do; however, she believes each county and municipality will be able to draft their legislation regarding this. The health centers and hospitals state-wide will continue to wear masks.

Dr. Cook also believed that herd immunity across the State would be achieved as our numbers have significantly dropped. Dr. Cook congratulated the Health Department as East Orange has the second-lowest positivity rate for COVID in the State after Bergen County. So, we are moving in the right direction.

President Harris asked how the distinction between COVID and flu symptoms is being made when testing children. Dr. Cook stated the pediatricians would be able to distinguish as the tests are accurate and can be done on the spot. We are also encouraging parents to get their children vaccinated against the flu. That way, even if they get the flu, it will not be severe and should prevent them from having the flu and COVID at the same time.

Board Members discussed the renovations at Brick Church Plaza and asked for updates. HO Kuteyi shared that the renovations at Brick Church Plaza have resumed. HO Kuteyi stated much of the plaza is closed except for ShopRite, as they continue to serve the community during the renovations.

At the conclusion of Board business, President Harris adjourned the meeting at 6:35 pm.

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Respectfully submitted,
Jo-Ann Mills
Board Clerk