



**EAST ORANGE BOARD OF HEALTH**  
**REGULAR MEETING**  
*East Orange Department of Health & Human Services*  
*143 New Street*  
*East Orange, New Jersey 07017*  
*February 19, 2019*  
**MEETING MINUTES**

**Meeting Call to Order – 5:42 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.

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

**Board Members Present:**

Christine Harris, President  
Tobbia M. Corbitt - excused absence  
Horace H. Henry  
Deanna Phillips  
Angela Jones-Williams - absent

**Board of Health Counsel:**

Attorney Joseph Campbell

**Health Department Staff:**

Dr. Monique Griffith, Director of Health and Human Services  
Michael Hodges, Former Director of Health and Human Services  
Victor Kuteyi, Health Officer  
Karen LaRussa, RN, Community Health Educator  
Chesney Blue, WIC Coordinator

**Mayoral Staff:**

None

**Public in attendance:**

None

**Approval of January 15th, 2019 Meeting Minutes:**

The minutes were approved unanimously.

**Announcements President Harris:**

- The BOH has not been informed of a representative from the 5th ward to fill the vacant seat of former Trustee Samuels.
- Welcomed the new Director of Health and Human Services, Dr. Monique Griffith. President Harris disclosed her prior work with Dr. Griffith on the current administration's HHS transition team. Dr. Griffith informed the Board of her tenure as



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Director of Health in Irvington. She also worked within the medical field, Public & Behavioral Health, and the Department of Probation.

- Announced that the NJ Chapter of American Academy of Pediatrics has a petition on [Change.org](http://Change.org) - supporting amendment A3818 to mandate immunizations excluding those with medical exemptions. The petition is a direct rejoinder to a major measles epidemic which has recently afflicted children worldwide and caused numerous fatalities.
- Announced an educational seminar, *Promoting Health and Harm Reduction from Drug Policy Alliance*. on April 5th, 10am - 1pm. in Ewing, NJ. The seminar concentrates on prevention of drug overdoses and the treatment of overdose survivors. Those wishing to participate should RSVP at [www.eventbrite.com/e/overdose-prevention-centers-promoting-health-and-harm-reduction](http://www.eventbrite.com/e/overdose-prevention-centers-promoting-health-and-harm-reduction). Their website features copious amounts of information on the various types of drugs, how they are manufactured, their chemical composition, their effects on the body, and much more. The seminar would be of benefit in understanding drug usage and its effects and will assist our preparation after legalization of recreational marijuana.

**Michael Hodges, Former Directors - Updates:**

Director Hodges had a discussion with OEM Coordinator David Williams, who provided data, and indicated he did not possess any substantiated complaints against Pulse. Director Hodges included data in the bid specs detailing an average of 15,000 calls for ambulatory service within the City of East Orange each year. The new RFP is requesting 4 ambulances, which based on the data received, is sufficient; stipulates that ambulances be housed within East Orange to ensure they can transport patients in a quick and efficient manner; and, that all EMT personnel be required to have a valid Driver's License, a previous non-requirement.

Director Hodges provided copies of the minutes from the Homeless and Mental Health meeting that occurred on January 8<sup>th</sup>. Director Hodges noted there were several persons in attendance especially, those from Faith-based organizations. The meeting was held to approach shared concerns of those faith-based organizations and businesses. The goal was to address persons perceived to be either homeless or mentally ill causing disruptions and panhandling within their organizations and throughout the city and create a mutually beneficial solution. The only invited organizations that did not show were the boarding home owners. This gave cause for Councilmen Gomez and Brent to review possible legislation that would compel the boarding homes to attend meetings going forward. Director Hodges researched codes for boarding homes, (information available on the Department of Community Affairs website), and discovered the codes only regulate the conditions of the homes themselves, not monitoring the arrivals and departures of its residents. By law residents of boarding homes can come and go as they please, so the City may want to come up with more stringent policies managing the whereabouts of residents residing in the boarding homes. Director Hodges asked HO Kuteyi to share his input on the matter. HO Kuteyi stated that making more stringent laws is possible, but he fears the boarding home owners would become less cooperative with the City. Director Hodges



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seconded HO Kuteyi's fears asserting, that the laws be formed as a collaborative effort by the City and the boarding home owners. Director Hodges explained that there are multiple categories relating to homelessness. We have some residents who are chronically homeless some that fall under the HUD definition of homelessness but few that are actually homeless. He suggested that the disruption is coming from those who reside in boarding homes.

Director Hodges sent evidence-based data to Mayor Green relating to homelessness. President Harris asked if East Orange currently has any ordinances, regulating the behaviors of those residing in the boarding homes and Director Hodges responded that we do not, however, we do have an ordinance requiring those residents to carry a state issued ID. This assists the Department of Public Safety in identifying which boarding homes those residents are living. Director Hodges also provided Chief Bindi, with a color-coded resource guide for officers if they need to refer those with mental illness, homeless persons, or food resources.

Director Saldida of Public Safety, informed Director Hodges of Newark's Mobile Health Unit operated by officers trained in managing persons with mental health issues. Director Hodges stated he would explore grants to facilitate financing of a Mobile Health Unit for East Orange. President Harris queried as to whom would be the signatories on the MOU referencing boarding homes. Director Hodges stated the MOU should be a joint effort between the Health Department, Property Maintenance, The Mayor's Office, and representatives from boarding homes and other concerned partners. President Harris posed the question should the BOH prepare an outline for the MOU?

Director Hodges stated, and Director Griffith concurred that the BOH should prepare an initial outline for the MOU. Attorney Campbell also agreed the MOU should be developed by the BOH with City Council bestowing final approval. Director Hodges announced a Health and Education Committee meeting occurring on March 1st, 2019. Director Hodges suggested it may be beneficial for the BOH to supply Director Griffith with an outline of the MOU to address the Health and Education Committee during the meeting. President Harris asked if the transcribed notes from the Homelessness meeting, would be the basis of creating the MOU outline. Director Hodges acknowledged the BOH should rely on the transcribed notes to formulate an outline. HO Kuteyi suggested the BOH extend the invitation to the owners of the boarding homes when creating a final draft of the MOU. President Harris stated the scarcity of notice between the March 1st meeting and now, does not afford the board enough time to create an outline, but they will make it the focus of their March 19th, BOH meeting.

Trustee Phillips mentioned agencies in New York that recently began sending their homeless populations to East Orange and other municipalities. The landlords housing these homeless families are presented a check equaling one year's rent. Director Hodges expressed dismay, as the City recently discovered two families who were sent to East Orange from NY living in abhorrent conditions at 76 Amherst Street. President Harris asked about an agency to agency contact prior to allowing residents to move into the home. HO Kuteyi confirmed the



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NY agency, did not contact East Orange Code Enforcement to ensure the home was habitable. Therefore, Health Officer Kuteyi was forced to condemn the residence. HO Kuteyi suggested an ordinance should be in place forcing LLC's to provide contact information including email address for agents responsible for such properties. In this case the owner of 76 Amherst Street gave an address that turned out to be a UPS Mailbox in South Orange, so we were unable to locate him. HO Kuteyi also mentioned originally, they were aware of one family which was placed in a hotel upon detection of the home's inhabitable nature. The first family relocated back to NY to stay with relatives. A second family contacted Channel 2 News to divulge their story. The issue was addressed on air by Mayor Green & Director Barner of Property Maintenance. President Harris asked which department would be accountable for mediating this situation in the future. Director Hodges suggested that Property Maintenance could be that agency.

Director Hodges confirmed the Disease Intervention Specialist (DIS) position was not part of the \$55,000 STD grant. We discovered that the City did not qualify for the \$55,000 grant because we did not have a DIS employed during the application process. There is another grant for a Technical Assistance that Director Hodges is confident we will receive. That grant will pay for a DIS to assist with STD prevention and education, which will pay salary and fringe benefits. There will be no cost to the city in having a DIS on staff. Director Hodges believes the combination of compiled data from our STD Clinic, and the ability to service multiple municipalities puts everything in place for us to obtain this grant. Director Griffith and HO Kuteyi will be attending the DIS training in Minneapolis, Minnesota in May 2019.

Director Hodges updated the BOH on the status of the Millennial Strategies meetings. He indicated he was expecting to have some news regarding grants for TNR/Cat Colonies but since they have remained on hiatus since November 2018, he has no material to share. Director Hodges has been in frequent communication with Ms. Pat of *Pat's Cats* who gave him a list of resources allotting funding for the Community Cat Care cause.

Director Hodges stated the Health Department received another grant for an outdoor fitness court. It will comprise of 7 stations and provide users a 7-minute workout. The grant is a component of the National Fitness Campaign and will provide \$120,000 with the City being responsible for matching a \$30,000 subsidy. Director Hodges will send a video to the BOH to present them with a visual for the projected park. Trustee Phillips asked where the fitness center will be located. Director Hodges stated Francis-Haire Park is the projected location. Trustee Phillips questioned would the choice of location be favorably utilized by East Orange residents. Director Hodges explained the center must be in a location that is very visible and accessible to the public, but that it was not set in stone.

**Mr. Kuteyi, Health Officer – Updates:**

HO Kuteyi explained that his research of the DIS position, revealed that in some states it's called a Public Health Investigator and its main objective is to support those with STD's and



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HIV. The qualifications are extensive, including training in Passport to Partner Services, and he surmised that a qualified person must be a very good investigator. A major component of their responsibilities would be going out and following-up on all positive cases and their contacts. Health Officer Kuteyi stressed those in the DIS role would be accountable for making referrals. As new cases are identified, the DIS must refer them to specialized physicians and work with those physicians to ensure patients are following through with their prescribed treatments. Health Education is also an important facet of the job.

President Harris followed up on the status of the HIV Division. HO Kuteyi informed the board the HIV Division is doing well and an employee who represents the LGBTQ community was placed in the counselor role. HO Kuteyi stated the HIV Division was looking to employ a Spanish speaking person.

President Harris asked if we currently have access to telephone language translation services. Health Officer Kuteyi stated we do not. President Harris explained that allowing clients to use family members to serve as translators is detrimental to the patient confidentiality and the integrity of the information being conveyed. Ms. Chesney added that WIC and the Municipal Court both utilize Language Line software to assist with translations. Director Hodges confirmed the Health Department is obligated to provide translation services, but it is expensive. Attorney Campbell mentioned that he was unaware if the court had an exclusive contract to utilize Language Line and we should inquire if the service was open to all departments.

Health Officer Kuteyi reported his submission of documentation to Attorney Campbell referencing the City's Smoking Ordinance 230-5, section 3, for rental housing and condominiums.

HO Kuteyi completed the draft of the general smoking template which can be modified by landlords. It also contains the smoking policy. Nurse LaRussa participated in the template creation. The disposition of the document should state whether the property is non-smoking, or all conditions and areas in which smoking is allowed. The document will be signed by the landlord and tenants. Health Officer Kuteyi indicated that this would not become an ordinance.

Health Officer Kuteyi, brought to the BOH's attention his submission of a mold ordinance for rental properties to Attorney Campbell.

**Attorney Campbell Updates:**

Attorney Campbell stated he found ordinances dated August 1<sup>st</sup>, 2018 regarding barbershops, hair & nail salons, etc., but that they had not been received by the Clerk's Office for submission to City Council. President Harris advised that several of the ordinances created by the BOH in 2017 had not been passed. Attorney Campbell avowed to impart the BOH with copies of the ordinances prior to submitting them to the Clerk's Office. He also touched upon the Board's



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autonomy status with Richard whom is the advisor to Chairman James. Attorney Campbell informed Mr. Richard of the impending orientation manual explaining the types of boards as autonomous or non-autonomous and rules and regulations that apply to each status. Mr. Richard asked Attorney Campbell for a copy of the orientation manual upon receipt. President Harris announced the orientation manual's release date has been pushed back due to the State's demanding workload and will make copies available upon her receipt.

President Harris indicated the importance that the Health Department and BOH become more aware of the issues concerning recreational marijuana and its many forms of consumption including edible candies such as gummies and attractive packaging which may be enticing to minors. She will pass along any educational materials she encounters on recreational marijuana usage. Attorney Campbell shared the City's plans to contract with a major law firm to provide council on all legislation concerning marijuana.

**Health Department Staff:**

**Ms. Blue WIC Program Updates**

Ms. Blue acknowledged WIC received a \$24,000 grant to fund additional hours for her breastfeeding staff. This is phenomenal news, as it will increase the hours of her part-time breastfeeding staff to accommodate their growing breastfeeding clientele. President Harris asked about the relocation of WIC to East Orange General. Ms. Blue voiced several more favorable reasons to relocate to the space at 7 Glenwood Avenue as opposed to the Hospital. Director Hodges toured both locations and agreed with Ms. Chesney, he also added that it would be more cost effective to rent a space at 7 Glenwood Avenue then to keep WIC at their current facility. At this juncture WIC is awaiting a response from the City prior to relocating.

President Harris inquired as to the status of Ms. Blue's impending speech at the National WIC Association's Annual Conference in Baltimore Maryland. Ms. Blue identified her plans to commence producing a draft this week, as the speech entails a joint effort between herself and other speakers.

**Nurse LaRussa Updates:**

Nurse LaRussa stated that 6 of her students have begun their internships. Their current focus is health education programs, held at Cicely Tyson High School, discussing such topics as; sex, STD's and dating violence. The students are also working with the school nurse to address topics such as: medicinal roots as an origin of medicine; and age-appropriate introduction to sexual control practices for middle schoolers. Nurse LaRussa commended Sala Small and Zarifa Raheem, for their assistance.

Nurse LaRussa presented a Heart Healthy initiative at Senior Services for their Valentine's day event. Nurse LaRussa and her students met with The Horizon Foundation (who



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provides funding for health education-oriented activities throughout various municipalities) and received encouragement for East Orange to apply.

Nurse LaRussa discussed some of the upcoming projects: Pink out of the Oranges, Autism Walk, Lincoln Park Music Fest, Asthma Walk, and, Meet, Move and Mingle. Director Hodges mentioned they will be including an annual Lupus Walk in our forthcoming developments. Nurse LaRussa regrettably informed the BOH that the two students working through the Essex Passaic Wellness Coalition were unable to attend today's meeting. The students are mapping stores and smoke shops selling cigarettes near schools in East Orange.

**Open Discussion:**

Trustee Phillips was given a tour of the East Orange Animal Shelter by Animal Control Officer, Mike Burton. She found Mr. Burton was very knowledgeable and indicated his enthusiasm to contribute in educating the community on animal awareness and to collaborate with students and volunteers in transforming the appearance of the shelter. Trustee Phillips stated Mr. Burton revealed a need for various items which would benefit the shelter such as, bleach, toys, blankets, etc.

Trustee Phillips met with Jane Guillaume, President and Executive Director of *People for Animals*. Ms. Guillaume is 100% on board to assist us in any way she can. *People for Animals* has a mobile unit currently operating in Newark, Irvington and other municipalities. Ms. Guillaume offered to operate her mobile unit in East Orange to assist with animal spaying and neutering and community education. Trustee Phillips indicated that they are a significant resource for future endeavors. President Harris asked if *People for Animals* was a private company. Trustee Phillips stated that they are privately owned.

Vice President Henry queried the colors of placards assigned to retail food stores by the Environmental Division. HO Kuteyi indicated that placard lettering is black, but the background colors are: white for satisfactory, yellow for conditionally satisfactory, and red for unsatisfactory.

VP Henry requested the Health Department's relocation status. Director Hodges indicated that there are monies budgeted for repairs of the current building and that relocation is temporarily postponed.

**At the conclusion of Board business, President Harris adjourned the meeting at 7:30 pm.**

Respectfully submitted,  
Jo-Ann Mills  
Board Clerk