

City of East Orange

NEW JERSEY



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

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: *845 6374 5810*

Meeting Link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84563745810?pwd=K2dhTnFYQzBsSHF6UFBpMUZmdGg2dz09>

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 - absent
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

Guest:

Dr. Anju Mehta, Chief Medical Officer, CareWell Health Medical Center.



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Public in attendance:

None

Approval of February 15, 2022, Meeting Minutes:

Approved Unanimously

Announcements President Harris:

1. Introduction of Dr. Anju Mehta, Chief Medical Officer, CareWell Health Medical Center,
2. Barber Shop, Cosmetology, and Nail Salon Ordinance.
3. VP Henry to report on the Annual REHS Conference.

HO Kuteyi Updates:

Barbershop, Nail Salon, & E-Cig Ordinances

President Harris asked if board members had an opportunity to review the barbershop, cosmetology, nail salon, & tattoo parlor ordinances and asked if any revisions were required. Board members stated the ordinances were very comprehensive but had questions regarding item D which states “payments for permits should be made to the BOH”. President Harris remarked the permits should be paid directly to the Health Department or another City Department.

Trustee Phillips stated that all three were comprehensive in their intent.

Trustee Corbitt asked for clarity regarding language within the body art licensing and procedures ordinance relating to the board of health revocation of licenses; would that responsibility fall under the BOH, the courts, or the Health Department as an entity. Vice President Henry explained the steps that occur prior to the revocation of licensures, such as meeting with the individual to discuss violations and creating an action plan for course correction; and the health officer can issue a notice of revocation or suspension. If the individual wishes to contest the revocation notice they may do so during their administrative hearing with the court.

Trustee Phillips suggested that a committee be formed to address licensure revocations. HO Kuteyi stated the wording can be changed in that portion of the ordinance with the possibility of a committee being formed to avoid bias before a final decision is made. HO Kuteyi shared an instance where he shut down a business following police notification, and the owner was allowed to explain himself to the health department. We would operate similarly when



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dealing with revocations of licensure, allowing the owners to present their cases to the Health Department for consideration. HO Kuteyi remarked from the New Jersey statute, that the health officer reports to the board of health, whether the BOH is autonomous or advisory.

HO Kuteyi explained the steps taken after a business violation has been discovered during an inspection: 1. serve the business owner a notice of warning or violation; 2. allow seven days to abate the problem; 3. reinspect on the seventh day, and assess the level of abatement; if nothing has been done, a court summons is given; 4. after the court summons is given, the defendant must appear in court and explain to the prosecutor, reasons for noncompliance; 5. if reasons for noncompliance are insufficient, the owner goes before the judge where the judge imposes an agreed-upon fine determined by the inspector and the prosecutor; 6. the defendant may be granted an alternative option such as mitigating the issue instead of paying a fine, and; 7. the judge then selects an outcome based on the severity of the issue.

Board members expressed concern that they are being asked to review revocations after decisions have been made instead of being given information in advance to review. HO Kuteyi mentioned the need for updated software that can amass comprehensive notes and data which would make it easier to share information amongst a committee and other entities for review.

President Harris asked Dr. Griffith if she had an opportunity to review the ordinances being discussed and Dr. Griffith stated she has not seen them. HO Kuteyi agreed to forward the ordinances for Dr. Griffith's review.

President Harris stated that upon the Board's review, a couple of terms and statements were noted that require amending; one issue is that a BOH committee would review certain violations. The Board would like for the role to be clearly defined. HO Kuteyi will update the ordinances and the legal department will review them.

Marijuana Ordinance

President Harris shared that the latest ordinance with addendums, signed last night and the State legislation regarding recreational marijuana, will be disseminated to the BOH by City Council.

President Harris remarked that during the H&E Committee meeting, health-related concerns were not addressed, and the discussion was limited to the business aspects. Trustee Corbitt concurred stating that during the meeting earlier in March committee Chair President Councilwoman Garrett-Ward indicated they had not had an opportunity to review the position paper, previously submitted in June 2021 and again updated in August 2021. Councilwoman Garrett-Ward stated the Health & Education Committee had just received it a couple of days before, or the day before we met. So, in fairness to them, they needed the opportunity to



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review it in its entirety. Councilwoman Garret-Ward did share that some of what was documented in our position paper had been taken into consideration and we may see some of it in the amended ordinance.

Board members discussed the many health consequences, social influences and legal implication of marijuana uses and its presentation in many forms. It is anticipated that the Health Department will be responsible for providing some elements of psychological support, mental health intervention, education, counseling, and other services.

President Harris shared that the composition of the City's multi-person marijuana commission should contain representation from the health department. Trustee Corbitt concurred and shared the same sentiments during the H&E Committee meeting.

REHS Inspectors

President Harris asked if the REHS inspectors had any important takeaways from the annual REHS Conference. HO Kuteyi stated they benefited from the knowledge shared and their ability to obtain the educational credits to keep their licenses. HO Kuteyi stated he has obtained many of them virtually, due to his busy schedule.

President Harris asked if three REHS inspectors are enough to maintain COVID protocols, regular retail and home inspections, and the additional marijuana components that will affect inspections. HO Kuteyi shared he plans to see how the inspectors adjust to the heightened workload and then hire additional help if needed.

President Harris asked how seniority is being managed and if the REHS inspectors are satisfied with their roles and current operations. HO Kuteyi stated he assumes they are satisfied but they are attempting to align their positions with that of the State. There should be a Senior REHS, Chief REHS, etc. HO Kuteyi shared Mr. Besra is still our Senior REHS inspector in the capacity of the HO's assistant, and we are in the process of potentially making him Chief REHS.

President Harris asked if the organizational structure exists which supports having a Senior REHS, Chief REHS, etc. HO Kuteyi shared that structure was disrupted a long time ago, making it difficult to restore. However, we are attempting to gradually revive that structure according to State guidelines. VP Henry asked if there is anything the BOH can do to assist in facilitating this request. What we do not want is for people who are functioning well in their roles, to leave due to a lack of upward mobility. President Harris concurred stating even at the advisory level the BOH can make suggestions to facilitate this process.

Community Health Assessment

President Harris asked if we will be undertaking the Community Health Assessment (CHA) soon. HO Kuteyi stated we will be conducting the assessment soon. Dr. Griffith stated Newark



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Beth Israel recently completed its CHA. Unfortunately, the information they collected during COVID underrepresented East Orange, as only ninety-five out of five hundred participants' data was collected. We plan on structuring something small-scale but with a wider reach. Board members concurred that ninety-five participants is a low number when compared to our population of over 60,000 residents.

Attorney Farah Updates:

Cannabis Ordinance

President Harris asked if Attorney Farah was going to share the local ordinance regarding marijuana. Attorney Farah stated she will disseminate the ordinance to members of the BOH. President Harris stated the State legislation was to be shared as well including information about the commission on recreational marijuana. Attorney Farah stated she is not aware of that specific language in the State legislation because it encompasses hundreds of pages.

Open Discussion:

President Harris introduced Dr. Anuj Mehta Chief Medical Officer of CareWell Health Medical Center and asked him to speak briefly about himself and the hospital and how we can form a greater partnership. Dr. Mehta introduced himself and stated that he has four years of tenure with the hospital but began a direct partnership with Mayor Green over the last two years during the pandemic to educate everyone around it, holding town halls, etc. This partnership has transitioned into various things such as being put into direct contact with the East Orange board of health. President Harris asked where we stand within the hospital in terms of COVID and what we are doing to move forward.

Dr. Mehta stated he is happy to announce that we are at zero COVID-positive cases. We continue to screen all patients getting admitted to the hospital, as well as any patients coming in for surgery, for COVID. Additionally, we continue to be universally masked, although we are looking at it closely in the context of the new world order and trying to see whether we need to drop it or not. We are also providing community testing from Monday through Friday 7:00 AM to 7:00 PM at no cost to the patients for the duration of the public health emergency, just making sure that patients can get tested. It is a walk-in clinic right across from the emergency room with a zero-wait time. Our vaccine clinics are every Friday from morning 9:00 AM through 1:00 PM, through our family health center. So that is like a very brief overview of what we have been doing with all the things COVID and where we stand right now.

President Harris expressed the desire that he would have for a close working partnership with the health department and with CareWell Health now under a new administration, we are assuming that some of your services would be pivoting with other emphasis. Your



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website shows that you have a strong mental health component and that will be greatly beneficial.

President Harris asked Dr. Mehta if he was familiar with Dr. Griffith. Dr. Mehta stated he works very closely with Dr. Griffith and HO Kuteyi. President Harris expressed delight that Dr. Mehta was able to join the meeting and made him aware of the meeting date and time.

Dr. Mehta stated he would be happy to join the meetings when possible, going forward, expressed a desire to be a true community partner, and tasked the BOH with sharing any opportunities or inclinations that you think the hospital needs to be aware of or be available for.

Vice President Henry recalled his attendance at the Environmental Health Specialist annual conference in Atlantic City. The conference was well attended, and the presentations were excellent. VP Henry expressed happiness that East Orange was well represented as all three REHS inspectors were in attendance. The conference allowed VP Henry to converse and gain insight into the daily roles and operations of the East Orange REHS team.

VP Henry shared that, Bill Manley; food safety guru of the NJ Department of Health gave a presentation on the Cottage Food Industry. Bill Manley shared NJ was the last state to sign an agreement to be a part of the Cottage Food Industry. Each state will provide a license for a Cottage Food Operator who will inspect businesses that would fall into this category. The Cottage Food Operator would apply for the license via the State website and pay a fee of \$100. The license is renewable every two years. Board members asked for clarity on Cottage Food Operator's role. VP Henry gave an example stating, that at a farmer's market, various people come in with their products and their produce to sell. So, the EO Health Department would inspect these businesses, but the licensure would be granted by the State instead of the City since our health department does not have the power to license them or to regulate them. In the event someone makes a purchase from one of these businesses and expresses dissatisfaction, the State will come out and do an investigation and make the Health Department privy to collaborate during the inspection if they see fit.

HO Kuteyi believes there will be webinars to share more information regarding the cottage food industry in the coming months and could be enacted within the next few years. President Harris asked which foods will be applicable for sale in this industry. HO Kuteyi shared the operators are allowed to sell non-temperature foods. So again, if the health inspector, sees temperature foods being sold at a farmer's market setting, then they are empowered to pull it and caution the sellers. Board members asked if this new legislation legalizes these sales practices; including for individuals who were previously operating illegally and without licensure. HO Kuteyi stated yes, they will be legally allowed to sell items such as foods out of the cars or homes if they are licensed, and their area is clean and sanitized.

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President Harris shared with Dr. Griffith, Dr. Mehta's attendance at the meeting and provided a recap of his presentation. President Harris shared her belief that Dr. Mehta and CareWell Health will be strong community partners in support of our endeavors.

President Harris asked Dr. Griffith if she had any additional information to share. Dr. Griffith stated not at this time, but she will be sharing more about our homelessness efforts throughout the City at the next meeting. We are developing a larger plan regarding these efforts and once the plan is reviewed with the administration, we can disseminate it amongst the Board to gain their input.

At the conclusion of Board business, President Harris adjourned the meeting at 7:05 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Jo-Ann Mills
Board Clerk