

City of East  
Orange

NEW JERSEY



**EAST ORANGE BOARD OF HEALTH  
REGULAR MEETING**  
*East Orange Department of Health and Human Resources  
143 New Street  
East Orange, New Jersey 07017  
January 15, 2019  
Meeting Minutes*

**Meeting Call to Order – 5:40 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  
Horace H. Henry  
Deanna Phillips  
Angela Jones-Williams

**Board of Health Counsel:**

Joseph Campbell, Attorney

**Health Department Staff:**

Michael Hodges, Director of Health and Human Services  
Victor Kuteyi, Health Officer  
Karen Johnson-LaRussa, RN, Community Health Educator  
Chesney Blue, WIC Coordinator  
Sheila Jeudy, Nutrition Coordinator

**Mayoral Staff:**

Ajah Baldwin

**Public in attendance:**

None

**Approval of November 20, 2018 Meeting Minutes:**

The minutes were approved unanimously.

**Announcements President Harris:**

- President Harris congratulated Health Officer Kuteyi on his receipt of the Health Officer of the Year award at the New Jersey Local Board of Health Associations in December 2018. President Harris acknowledged that she, Director Hodges, Trustee Phillips, Diashana Coleman, and former Director of E.O. Health and Human Services Rochelle Evans attended the event in support of Health Officer Kuteyi. The ceremony was well attended, and

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pictures are posted on the state associations website. The Association Newsletter is expected to be available for distribution by the third week of January 2019.

- President Harris informed the board of Trustee Samuels resignation in December 2018 and a replacement representative is needed from the 5th Ward. She congratulated Trustee Samuels' appointed to the Planning Board.
- On January 10<sup>th</sup> President Harris attended the NJ Department of Health's Listening Session for the 2020 Budget in Trenton, New Jersey. Commissioner, Dr. Shereef Elnahal and several of his Deputy Commissioners were in attendance. The listening session was well attended and well-received. Stakeholders from throughout the state were present and advocated for additional funding. President Harris indicated that public health funding had been removed from the budget several years ago and discussed the importance of public health funding.
- President Harris announced the need to conduct the yearly election for officers of the Board. The floor was opened for members to submit their nominations for Board President and Vice President. President Harris was nominated and unanimously elected as East Orange Board of Health President. Vice President Henry was also nominated and unanimously elected to continue his tenure as Vice President.

**Director Hodges - Updates:**

Director Hodges attended a meeting with Beth Israel, to discuss their Community Health Assessment findings. However, the statically insignificant number of East Orange participants, rendered their assessment inadequate for our use. Robert Wood Johnson, parent company of Beth Israel, plans to address the factors of social determinants of health in their footprint areas, which includes the City of East Orange. Director Hodges will receive an invitation to attend the initiative meetings as indicated by Kim Cook, Director of Social Impact and Community Investment at Beth Israel.

President Harris asked about East Orange General's Community Health Assessment. Director Hodges stated that to implement a successful Community Health Improvement Plan for accreditation, it is essential that a hospital be involved. The hospital can provide pivotal data and the expertise of their team can convene with us regarding that data. Director Hodges also contacted The Center for Research and Evaluation at Montclair State University to assist in facilitating an assessment. The director obtained a cost estimate, which was relayed to City Council.

Director Hodges identified East Orange resident Dr. Andrea Barrett as the Health Department's new dentist. A start date has not been decided, as we are rebuilding our dental program. Community outreach with special emphasis in our schools are underway to increase our dental clientele as it is an essential community-based program. The Delta Dental grant operates the dental program. The City of East Orange is one of possibly three Health Departments in NJ, with a dental program which is open only to East Orange residents. Trustee Phillips asked the age range, eligibility criteria and the procedures performed. Director Hodges indicated the age range is 2 years to 18 years; must be an East Orange resident; and most entry level dental procedures are performed such as, cleanings, fillings, and x-rays.

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Director Hodges has an upcoming meeting with the City's CFO Juan Uribe, and QPA Lisa Jackson in anticipation of this quarter's bids for EMS services and other bids for the Health Department.

President Harris asked Director Hodges about his impromptu meeting with Pulse EMS. Director Hodges reiterated the impromptu nature of the meeting but stated the owner wanted to address the city's trepidations with Pulse's services. The owner of Pulse, mentioned he acquired new equipment, expressed a desire to continue serving, but failed to relay what residents felt they were lacking in service nor did he provide any solutions to problems. Director Hodges has not seen the specific complaints against Pulse but acknowledged that the owner is aware of resident's dissatisfaction.

Director Hodges indicated that, by law, the city is required to accept an offer of the lowest bidder however, another company can be chosen if the recommendation is in the best interest of the municipality, even if the expenditure is higher. The recommendation requires accompanying documentation supporting the expenditure. Trustee Phillips asked if we had any data referencing Pulse's shortcomings or formal complaints which would assist her decision making of whether to accept or deny Pulse as our EMS service. Director Hodges indicated that he would make a concerted effort to obtain documentation regarding complaints against Pulse. President Harris asked Ajah Baldwin if she was aware of any complaints against Pulse to Constituent Services or otherwise. Ajah stated that she has not heard of any. Trustee Corbett queried if David Williams from our OEM Department was informed of any complaints about Pulse. Director Hodges indicated that he would speak with Mr. Williams since he works closely with Pulse as a part of our Office of Public Safety.

A Letter of Intent was submitted the Office of Local Public Health for the Disease Intervention Specialist position. To receive funding, it is a requirement to currently have an employed Disease Intervention Specialist on staff, therefore, the funding was denied. President Harris inquired how long the DIS title has been in existence. Director Hodges replied he is uncertain, but that it is not a Civil Service title. That brought to the state's attention the need to possibly create a certification for that title. President Harris asked if we were looking to employ a DIS and if we are what is the basic criteria for that position. Health Officer Kuteyi acknowledged it was a subject that required more research.

Millennial Strategies (a grant procurement company), tasked with acquiring grants to assist our efforts for trap-neuter-release and feral cat colonies, etc. will resume their meetings in 2019 and Director Hodges anticipates MS will have information for us upon their return.

The Lead Program received a \$1.6 million-dollar HUD lead grant. This was the first time in East Orange's history, to receive the grant and is the only city in New Jersey and one of 48 municipalities in the country to receive this grant. Currently the lead program tests for lead and upon discovery mandates site remediation. The new grant will allow East Orange to appoint someone to manage the remediation companies while they are servicing our constituents. Vice President Henry

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questioned if HUD conveyed any criteria for that position. Director Hodges stated no criteria has been submitted so far but he's expecting to receive some soon. Additionally, there are training sessions in Washington D.C., requiring Director Hodges and HO Kuteyi to attend.

The Health Department also received funding for an additional HIV counselor, which will bring the total number to 3 full-time training and counseling employees. Hazel Lucas, HIV Coordinator, went to Trenton, NJ and demonstrated a need to have an additional HIV counselor for 2019. The bulk of the expense is covered within the grant.

Director Hodges disclosed that East Orange General has space available for relocation of our WIC Program. The space will be near the Women's Health and Family Clinic, which is ideal in developing a continuum of care for the health services WIC clients need and qualify to receive. President Harris asked about the time frame for the move. Director Hodges mentioned the legal department must draw up the lease and the space will need to be configured to WIC's needs. Ms. Blue indicated she will need 6 months to notify clients to comply with states guidelines. President Harris noted this will be a great way for East Orange General to become more engaged with the community. Trustee Jones-Williams asked if the move will create an increase in clientele for WIC. Ms. Blue indicated that she did not think it will increase her clientele, but it would be more attractive.

Director Hodges revealed he attended a follow-up meeting today, addressing the homelessness and mental health meetings in conjunction with the Mayor's Office and was well attended. Councilmen Gomez and Brent also attended the meeting. The initial meeting which took place last week, and consisted of the clergy, social service agencies, mental health agencies, and other nonprofit in East Orange and surrounding municipalities who address the needs of homeless and mentally ill populations. A portion of the meeting was set aside for networking and information sharing. Director Hodges commended Zarifa and Sala on their ability to engage and inform our community partners on the homelessness issue prior to the meeting. The transcribed minutes will be used to pinpoint a few objectives to address the homelessness situation. Director Hodges noted the lack of presence from any of the boarding homes located in East Orange. Councilmen Brent and Gomez are currently examining legislation regarding boarding homes to make sure those homes are operating in compliance of local state and municipal requirements. The Mayor in conjunction with City Council is looking to hold the boarding/group homes accountable for their residents. Board members inquired if the boarding homes were state owned or LLC's. HO Kuteyi stated that some of the boarding homes are state owned and some are LLC's.

**Health Officer Kuteyi - Updates:**

HO indicated there are 10 boarding homes and 5 shelters in the City capable of accommodating approximately 150 residents. Some homes are considered temporary solutions to homelessness. Once those residents leave the group/boarding homes we consistently follow-up to assist with the prevention of their return.

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Extensive discussions were held discussing issues of: voluntary or temporary employment of the transient homeless population and those with mental health issues with an accompanying legal perspective, and identifying ancillary health service needed; shelter owner's compliance with establishment statutes and housing regulations; and, the need to review current City statutes of oversight and create, if needed, new ordinances to foster regular inspections of shelters.

The Quality of Life Task Force (Property Maintenance, Health Department, and Zoning Department) was created to inspect and investigate housing issues/complaints. The sites are investigated and thereafter subject to code enforcement via remediation or citation. The Planning Department, Fire Department and Police Department are brought onboard to assist as needed.

Health Officer Kuteyi detailed that the task force, is the same committee that will be working on the plan review for the city. The committee will review proposed new business construction, and upon approval the plans are submitted to City Council for final approval prior to construction.

Health Officer Kuteyi indicated that he is working diligently on detecting stores suspected of violating their original licensure agreement. If found to be noncompliant, owners are informed of corrective options and fines are issued and paid in court. Based on their decision, new licenses are issued to reflect either the original license status or the new retail activity.

HO Kuteyi discussed factors such as the number of seats and amount of space utilized that determine current retail food licensing fees. There is a plan to revise the licensing rates by amending some of the criteria, to also include risk factors. Vice President Henry posed the question regarding the procedure for changing a stores current operation model? Health Officer Kuteyi responded indicating that once a store makes it known that they wish to modify their operation it is posed to zoning who would review the plans and give an answer based on their criteria for such a space. The Health Department would then revise their risk level and advise on the appropriate certifications or training needed to operate under the new risk level. Shops such as, nail salons, beauty salons, and barber shops are currently able to open these without paying East Orange for permits. As a result, the Health Department consistently receives complaints about the operations of those businesses, without the ability to inspect them or enforce regulations.

Health Officer Kuteyi has visited a few restaurants, discovering that not many of them have basements and those restaurants that do have basements many do not have access. He remarked issues usually occur when restaurants are dumping their grease in an improper manner, creating a backup in the basement drains. The Health Department has been utilizing the assistance from Property Maintenance, the Water Commission, and Passaic Valley to address those backups.

Health Officer Kuteyi requested the status of the WIC Grant, to which Ms. Chesney stated that she submitted the application for breastfeeding funds and is awaiting the approval of her application.

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Health Officer Kuteyi disclosed that signage is available for designated smoking areas within multi-family/unit dwellings. Working in conjunction with Nurse LaRussa, a template was created for distribution and is available on the City's website. Owners must inform resident if the property is smoke free or, if allowed, designated smoking area(s) is/are available.

**Health Department Staff:**

**Ms. Blue WIC Program Updates:**

Ms. Blue is still waiting for the information regarding the approval of the breastfeeding grant. Ms. Blue was recently informed she will be speaking at the National WIC Association's Annual Conference in Baltimore Maryland. The Conference will take place April 7<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup>. She'll be speaking on maternal mortality and the significant role WIC plays in keeping mortality rates low. Ms. Blue will also speak on the work that she does on the WIC maternal mortality task force.

**Nurse LaRussa - Updates:**

Nurse LaRussa suggested regular health education sessions to address issues such as diabetes smoking and other healthcare concerns among residents of group/boarded homes. Utilizing interns as visiting public health educators is a great internship option to serve this population. More than 20 students applied for internship this semester. Nurse LaRussa met with a working homeless gentleman who hopes to become a part of the City's homelessness initiative. His first-hand experience can provide valuable information regarding the disparities that homeless people face and how systems, which are supposed to interconnect to assist, do not work. Nurse LaRussa will provide a list of annual health events.

Nurse LaRussa met with 2 students attending Rutgers Public Health Program, who are working with the Essex Passaic Wellness Coalition that includes East Orange and surrounding municipalities. Their project is to follow-up on ordinances that were petitioned in 2016 with the mapping of places that sell cigarettes nearest schools. She tasked the students with highlighting ordinances related to smoke shops or any place that sells cigarettes near a school in East Orange, to review what we're doing right or possibly what we can improve on. Nurse LaRussa explained how the BOH operates, which encouraged the students to inquire about seeing the BOH in action. Nurse LaRussa asked the BOH for permission to have those students at the February 2019 meeting. President Harris extended the invitation for the next Board of Health meeting to those students.

**Sheila Jedy Coordinator of the Nutrition Program:**

Following her introduction, Ms. Sheila Jedy indicated that the East Orange Nutrition Program is the largest in the State of New Jersey, catering both children and adults; and sponsoring over 43 sites, approximately 20 in the City and the remainder are in the surrounding areas of, Belleville, Bloomfield, Montclair, Irvington and Newark. 3000 children are served meals daily, at no cost, and ages range from 0 to 12 years. East Orange is also one of a few cities participating in a pilot program where infants are also fed. The current vendor for the program is the Whiston's Culinary

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Group. This federally funded program requires annual bidding by vendors from an approved list provided by the Department of Agriculture. Ms. Judy discussed in detail the operation of the program, budget, employees and training, possible certifications based on field scope of work, program application process, compliance monitoring and record keeping. Ms. Judy noted the nutrition program is also a part of Emergency Services where meals are served to those affected; the State reimburses for this. She has received interest from multiple vendors who would like to conduct Health initiatives at the various sites. ShopRite, Snap It, and East Orange General were among those interested. Sheila expounded upon various methods the nutrition program can expand those include but are not limited to, health education and activities.

**Attorney Campbell Updates:**

Attorney Campbell referenced the employment of boarding home employees as a good idea, however there are serious issues to consider such as: job positions; responsibilities, liabilities; employment hiring and screening processes, etc. Attorney Campbell wishes to approach it strategically with thorough discussion and perhaps it is something that could be supported in conjunction with the Mayors initiative to address the issues of this population.

Attorney Campbell announced that Attorney Dorsey has returned to work, but he will most likely remain as the BOH's legal counsel.

Attorney Campbell disclosed that the ordinance related to the board's autonomy went to the Health and Education Committee. Board autonomy issues were discussed, and suggestions made in order move forward. The State Association (NJLBHA) submitted the updated Orientation Manual for LBH to the Office of Local Public Health, DOH, which provides insight on this issue. Once review is completed, Attorney Campbell will receive a copy and arrangements will be made to follow-up on tonight's suggestions.

Attorney Campbell provided insight to the status of other ordinances that were brought before the Health and Education Committee on July 26<sup>th</sup>, 2018. Those ordinances consist of body art and tattoos, barber shops, and amending the e-cigarette ordinance and several others. Extensive discussion ensued on board autonomy, procedures and ordinances.

Attorney Campbell addressed the issue of feral cats and the question posed: are there any prohibited regulations regarding management of established feral cat colonies on city property? The city has an ordinance prohibiting the harboring of wild animals and it appears to Attorney Campbell, it includes feral cats. Chapter 132 article 1 states: "No person shall keep, maintain, or harbor any wild animal within the city." He researched the Department of Health's stance on feral cats and it states that it's not illegal to trap, neuter, or release the feral animals and concurs that it is a more humane solution, but their opinion was that any municipality who wishes to address the feral cat issue should be implementing their own ordinances and creating their own regulations. Attorney Campbell believes that addressing the issue of autonomy assist in wrapping up the feral cat issue and he will forward a link relating the State's position on feral cats to assist this cause.

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**Open Discussion:**

**Ajah Baldwin - Updates:**

President Harris requested Ajah to provide updates on topic of citizens interest in farming, manufacturing, and/or distribution of marijuana. Ajah indicated that inquiries on marijuana have slowed down, possibly because they are waiting on passage of legislation. Ajah shared that she discussed the topic with Council Chairman James when she received the initial inquiries. Councilman James and Ajah discussed the idea of hosting a town hall with experts speaking on the topic. Ms. Baldwin has stated that she will provide more information as received and ensure the BOH is involved.

President Harris mentioned that she was on a conference call with the Public Health Association Collaborative and officials from Washington State, who passed recreational marijuana legislation. President Harris shared their encountering of many unanticipated issues since passing this law and wants us to be informed and aware so that we can address them, within the structure of legislation, to protect the public.

Trustee Corbitt posed the question of how the Health Department addresses shops or businesses that sell alcohol or tobacco within the proximity of schools. Health Officer Kuteyi responded indicating that liquor stores in existence prior to a school's construction, zoned and licensed as a liquor store, is exempt from the proximity clause though the grandfather clause. However, should it close and someone else wanted to open a liquor store in that exact location they would be denied due to the proximity of the school.

Health Officer Kuteyi also mentioned that the Health and Police departments work closely together to ensure no alcohol or tobacco is sold to minors. If the police suspect a child has been sold cigarettes or alcohol they ID them, then immediately cite the store if found in violation.

At the end of Board business, President Harris adjourned the meeting at 8:07 pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jo-Ann Mills  
Board Clerk